

THE ROOM OF NO EXIT

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For

Wilmer Stampede Mesteth
1957—2015

SPIRIT TALK

A student asked me, what is the title of your first passion book?
I told him, "The Wound of Existence."

Student= "what is wounded?"
I did not answer his question. I asked him what he thought.

He fell silent. Then he suddenly saw something, and looked at me as he voiced it.

"What is wounded? The design. The ink is smudged. Words are missing. Lines are scrambled."

Yes, I thought, the logos of creation is undermined, troubled, reversed, by the mystery of spirit.

The ink has to be smudged, words must be missing, lines have to be scrambled, for the spirit to break in, and force us to relate to mystery. This is 'spirit talk.'

You think you can put a design on it, or find a design that is already there, but the design is wounded.

This throws the heart in, at the deep end.
The heart is wounded by, and carries the weight of, what is absent.
The heart bears all the cost and consequences of what is present, in its place.

This is why the way the heart contends with the mystery of spirit can only be told in spirit talk.
Spirit talk tells the story of the experience of a wound.
I cannot tell you more. You know it already.

When we speak of it together, we do so to acknowledge what binds the heart to the spirit and its mystery in the sharing of a wound.

FOREWORD

John Gibbens

This is not a book of a readily recognizable species. It is more of a fabulous beast, and some will say, a monster.

Do not expect theology; metaphysical philosophy; intellectual argument; a programme for action. At one point the author wanted to call this material 'notes in the life.' It is a companion to living the life of passion; a handbook for a future Christianity, forged out of the sufferings and raptures of this hard time of the world.

Reading this book is a long journey, but it is hoped the reader will undertake it from beginning to end. At one point, the author considered shuffling the pieces like a pack of cards, and letting them lie where they fell. But his wife persuaded him that there was an 'inner line' to be found among them. It's a line that spirals sometimes, taking up a theme, dropping it, returning to it with variation. There are also branchings to include a diversity of voices from many parts of the world, and from many times. Occasionally, the caravan pauses on a plateau, to look back over the terrain that has been crossed. Nevertheless, in essence the book tells a story. This is the central story of the 'world' in many senses: on the ground, and in time. This story is hard, and terrible, as we all know in our heart of hearts.

It will immediately be clear to the reader that a major voice in this book is that of the Bible. But, Scripture here is not used to intimidate, indoctrinate, or provide false and easy comfort. This book is not for those already consoled, rather, it is for those without consolation. It meets people on the waste-ground where they have been abandoned by God – and have abandoned God.

If it can give one gift, it would not be hope, but courage.

Hoka hey: let's go!

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I: THE WAY THE WORLD HAS BECOME

“It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking system. For if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning.”

Henry Ford

“For the Spirit searches all things, indeed, the deep things of God.”
St Paul, 1 Corinthians, 2, 10

MAMMON [1]= “You Cannot Serve Two Masters”

PRELUDE

One of the most central things ever said by Christ — and arguably the most ignored — was: “No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and Mammon.” These words are from the Sermon on the Mount [Mathew, 6, 4]. They seem especially relevant at this moment when the financial structure, and the banking system locked into it, have come to collapse. A mildly right of centre politician in England once spoke of “the unacceptable face of capitalism.” The economic collapse that is now affecting the entire world, and threatening the ‘real economy’ not just the abstract phantasy realm of speculative money, is the unacceptable face of capitalism with a vengeance!

With a few honourable exceptions, most comment about the current ‘melt down’ and ‘credit crunch’, as it is styled here, keeps to technical lingo, in order to avoid having to face the obvious truth that capitalism, particularly in its neo-conservative [Reagonite and Thatcherite], or so-called ‘neo-liberal’, form, does not work, and cannot ever be allowed again to just let rip. The problem with capitalism, especially unregulated capitalism, is not technical, a question of fixing a flaw in the structure. Rather, it is a moral problem. It is a moral failure on the part of ‘money people’ that has brought everyone to this current perilous state.

So, let’s stop dissembling about this, and call a spade a spade. We need to use words that name what happened, who is responsible, and what it means. Deeds that long ago lost any moral compass, becoming amoral at best and immoral at worst, have brought us to this calamity. If only those whose moral failure engineered the current crisis would pay for it, things would not be so bad. But those most responsible will get off lightly, while those who did nothing but go through the hard grind of working 9 to 5 will bear the brunt. Already thousands of ordinary people, middle class and working class, are cast out of their jobs, thanks to a few greed crazed ‘big money’ people. Sure, you can rationalize this by talking of it purely technically: there was ‘too much liquidity’ in the system, and this encouraged get richer even quicker in the already rich... Fine, but this is really about greed, and all that such greed really implies: a radical selfishness, a willingness to seize one’s own happiness at the cost of the misery of others.

Capitalism corrupts the human beings who think they profit from it. The more they profit from it, the more corrupted by it they are. In fact ‘greed’ is not strong enough a term for what is spawned in people, particularly those at the top of the pile, in capitalism. The word we need is the old English ‘avarice.’ Capitalism spawns avarice as a kind of sickness of devouring, a vampire-like frenzy of blood sucking, in all those it infects.

Avarice is much more than simple greed. This is because avarice is a 'worship' of money, and its power, that makes money the ruling 'god' of this world. Mammon does not refer simply to a mistake, an error, a lapse, but rather to an entire system of values and living rooted in a false religion. Capitalism, as Mammon, is spiritually deceptive and destructive of all the humans it gobbles up. Those advantaged by it [the few] are emptied of their humanity, whilst those disadvantaged by it [the many] are harmed in their very human condition. But everyone touched by this contagion is adversely affected. In the West, Capitalism has destroyed community, and ravaged the earth; our prosperity has come at a very high price. In the end, neither human beings nor the planet will be able to afford this price.

We need some very old fashioned straight talking. Some home truths need to be faced up to.

1,

Christ did not speak Hebrew, but a local vernacular of 'Aramaic'; this dialect was a member of a family of ancient Middle Eastern Semitic languages stretching from Mesopotamia to the Eastern Mediterranean. Aramaic became the lingua franca of the Person Empire that overthrew Babylon in 500 BC. It is still spoken by Eastern [Syrian] Christians living in Iraq.

The Aramaic word 'mamona' is quite close to the Latin *mammon*, the Greek *mamonas*, and the Mishnaic Hebrew *mamon*. Middle English settled on Mammon -- a word that would be instantly recognizable to Arabs, Jews, Greeks, and Latins.

It is the connotations, and nuances, of this word that are so significant.

2,

In Aramaic 'mamona' refers literally to 'riches', so mammon is about worshipping riches, seeking a lot of money as the chief purpose for being in the world. In the ancient world, mammon in fact signified the evil influence of money, particularly big concentrations of money in stupendous wealth. Monetary wealth has an evil influence because it abandons human values and human concerns, and puts in their place a crass aim of 'worldly gain.' It was of this Christ was speaking when he said it would not profit any of us to gain the whole world and lose our soul.

What he termed 'worldly gain' is seeming gain, but in actuality, it is human loss. Worldly gain produces despair in those who seek and really pursue it; these are the people who come to the conclusion, after a life devoted to chasing trash that glittered as gold, that existence is 'full of sound and fury signifying nothing' [Macbeth], or that 'everything is vanity' [Old Testament]. The reward for the worldly gain that sacrifices everything more human, and more humanly good, is the loss of all soul: the loss of all meaning in living, and the loss of all warm connection to anybody or anything outside you. You gain the world, but as a human being you are entirely defunct.

The Jews were not 'other worldly.' The Jewish religion is the least other worldly religion in the history of the world [though Shamanism runs it a close second in some respects]. The Jews believed in justice, honesty, truth, governing all the dealings of the world, including business dealings. In the ultimate, they awaited the Messiah who would redeem 'this world' of time, space, and matter, not remove humans to a different, better, and inherently dematerialized higher world. Yet the Bible also castigates 'worldliness.' What is the difference between redeeming the world process and becoming worldly? The difference is heaven come to earth vs. allowing the earth increasingly to become a kind of hell.

Worldliness is what happens to time, space, and matter when not redeemed; or to put it another way, worldliness is using this world for false purposes that harm its potential to be made sacred, and even to be divinized. Worldliness is making the world the worst it can be, as distinct from the best it might become, if its possibility were worked with, and sacrificed for. The Bible makes a similar distinction between 'flesh' versus 'body'; the body houses the spirit, but the flesh eliminates the spirit.

There is a spark in everything, and if you learn how to live you ignite it; this spark's ignition makes all the difference, not just to the deep and serious things, but equally to the everyday and ordinary things. When the spark goes out, what your soul yearns for and your heart seeks is lost; you go out as a living flame when the spark in things dies.

Worldliness is therefore deadness and hollowness, but covered over by glamour and status. For the worldly, death is going to be a mere formality; they died in their humanity long ago.

To stay truly alive in this world is therefore a challenge, and by no means straightforward. The zombies and vampires predominate... A person truly alive needs a touch of 'gentle as doves' and a big dollop of 'cunning as serpents' to keep their flame going, and to become a liberator of the spark in all things.

3,

Worldly gain — gaining the world in its worldliness, but caring nothing for redeeming the world nor growing in genuinely human qualities — is not only about acquiring 'riches beyond the dreams of avarice.' It is also about ambition, and power. It is a whole 'complex' of attitudes and motives and skills. This complex has governed human beings in the West increasingly since the Renaissance and through the Reformation, but obtained its biggest boost during the period of the European Enlightenment, from the 1700s until today.

Seeking worldly gain as the only reason for being in the world, and the only thing to do with one's life, has gone into and totally marked the Western personality over the past 500 years; speaking psycho-dynamically, we can

call it the modern Western 'ego complex.' Our entire sense of identity, of competence and success, is educated for and geared to worldly gain. Soul and heart disappear, and the ego allies with mind and will. We are highly organized and controlled, but for what? We are monomaniacally pointed in one direction and keep to it, but for what? We are organized to be able to get ahead; we are goal obsessed to be able to get ahead. We think in abstract and cold concepts, the better to 'calculate' and 'figure out' the best way to harden ourselves for the demands of getting on in the world and gaining the world's prize.

Jung rightly saw the soul as lost to the ego complex by which modern people are taught, even forced, to live. Existentialism sees the heart as obscured by this same ego complex. Here is the modern personality: uni-dimensional, semi alive only above the neck, coldly ambitious, disconnected from all contact but rationalizing this as being independent, shallow but rationalizing this as mastery over the world. Crazy and criminality keep escalating, and we are unaware one of the major causes is the dehumanized world we are creating in the West. I hear commentators, and politicians, rhetorically and bombastically going on about our 'values.' I think, what values? What are the real values of the West nowadays? Freedom? Tolerance? The only freedom we tolerate is that needed for worldly gain, which means making money, exercising the ambition which is worldly, and acquiring power

Worldly gain needs ambition, and wants power.

MAMMON [2]= “The False ‘god’ Of This World”

1,

The Greek term in the Gospels, 'mamonas', occurs both in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Parable of the Unjust Steward [Luke, 16, 9-13]. But what is Mammon?

In Aramaic the word 'mamona' had many subtle spiritual connotations, but its root or core was 'worldly riches' or 'material wealth regarded as having an evil influence.' Though some scholars point out that the equivalent Hebrew term, 'matmon' is more spiritually neutral, meaning 'treasure', and that therefore figuratively Mammon can be equated simply with 'money', it is clear that Christ is using the term not in this neutral way, but in the Aramaic way which implies a spiritual criticism. Given St Paul's claim that the “love of money is the root of all evil”, so Mammon is not simply money, but the 'love of money.' But even that does not do justice to its full meaning. I love pizza, but hopefully I would not pursue the acquisition of pizza as my whole life's purpose. But Mammon carries precisely this connotation in Aramaic: Mammon is the love of money, material wealth, worldly riches, as the chief significance and overriding aim of living. Nothing is weightier with importance. Nothing is more captivating with attraction. Nothing is more worthy of relentless effort. This is what life is about, this is the end-all and be-all of existing in the world. The lover of money who obtains his desire has cracked it; he is the world's success story and deserves to be its prince.

Hence, Mammon is not simply the love of money, it is in actuality the worship of money as a 'god.' This god replaces any and all other gods. This is the god at whose altar everyone bows down, and offers fidelity, obeisance, service. This god's temples are in the City of London, and on Wall Street in New York. China is this god's latest convert; they are raising his temple in Shanghai.

The love of money that in fact is really a worship of money gives a special meaning to the other translation of Mammon as 'greed' or 'avarice.' A child can be greedy for a second chocolate bar after having eaten one, but Mammon carries a far heavier connotation than our tendency toward material excess, or confusing desire and want with genuine need. The greed or avarice stirred up in Mammon is far more powerful: it is the 'possessiveness', the 'clinging to', the need to 'have and hold onto', that the love of money as a god engenders as its main drive. In the Eastern Christian Desert Tradition, it is this kind of greediness or avariciousness which is the first sin in the Fall of mankind, not pride [pride is the last, and crowning, sin in a sequence of 8 sinful steps].

The description of greed or avarice in the Desert Tradition is complex. It is the root of our inability to trust that God is looking after not just our spiritual well-being, but our material welfare. Therefore, greed or avarice is the first major sign of religious disbelief, of the loss of faith in the Great Mysterious, as Shamanism calls God the Creator. When human beings stopped the nomadic

life after the last ice age -- it was preserved only by the northern Shamanic peoples -- and became settled crop-growing farmers, the hoarding of grain became a substitute for having trust in God providing for our physical, not only our spiritual, needs. With this loss of trust, the material 'good things' that feed our need, that make life abundant with goodness, are no longer seen as gifts from God, which we thank God for, and handle in a sacred way as channels of communing and participating with divine energy. The things we grasp onto for our survival become bereft of God, and as such they become ends in themselves: this is the real implication of 'worldly riches' or 'material wealth regarded as having an evil influence.' When we treasure all these 'worldly goods' as the things we need not so much to survive, as to put us in control, to make us comfortable and at ease, and to expand our egoic power, then it is that we turn to them instead of God. They are wrenched away from God, and so they are latched onto by us in order to make us into a tin pot god in our own eyes. Henceforth we rely on only what is tangible, because this is what we can grasp hold of, to protect, secure, make safe, and to enhance, our destiny in the world. Our destiny in the world ceases to be in the hands of, or to have anything to do with, the Mysteriousness of God.

Greed or avarice, then, makes people mean and small, killing their generosity and largeness of heart; it also makes them scheming in mentality, and entails that cunning must become their main intelligence. Sharing among everyone becomes impossible; each of us becomes a self-enclosed and self-promoting 'individualist', grabbing onto all he can get, because possessing more and more is the 'whole object of the exercise.' The basis for the brotherhood of humanity, the community of all persons, is fatally injured and undermined. Rivalry for 'limited resources' puts everyone at everyone else's throat. 'Private property' is theft: each seizes what he can gain, and keep, no matter the selfish unjustness towards others that is involved in this; and then he calls what he has stolen away from the 'common good', the 'common interest', his very own, and he justifies any violence to defend and preserve it. This is why in some translations of Luke 16,9 and Luke 16,11, for example Spanish, Mammon is rendered as 'dishonest wealth.' Mammon is a way of seeking and obtaining material gain that shoves aside any ethical laws or morals concerned with justice; those who seek Mammon in the world are Biblically not only thieves, but also gangsters. Such 'unjust' people are willing to depart from and destroy the respect for justice that holds all people together and prevents their 'trading' among themselves from becoming a cause of division and factional hatred. The doing of 'business' that is governed by Mammon is Biblically 'unrighteous.' A human being cannot 'thirst and hunger after righteousness' and serve Mammon. Thus, not only covetousness but also injustice are always operative in Mammon.

Consequently, Mammon becomes that specific kind of selfishness in which I am wholly given over to the seeking of my advantage at your disadvantage, and I can see no objection to that; if my gain costs your loss, tough titty said the kitty. It is how things are. It cannot be otherwise. The individual, or some select group, feels no conscience that the cost of their 'advance' is the deprivation of some other individual, or some non-select group. Have a nice day, get out of my way. If to succeed myself others must be made losers,

well, that does not matter at all. It is their problem. I am motoring ahead with number one, and let them do likewise; if they cannot motor ahead, well that is bad luck, but it should never be allowed to stop those who can get on. We are in a meritocracy, right? Think of it like this: if my gain is your loss, if my advantage costs your disadvantage, if my liberty to rise to the top of the heap entails your oppression at the bottom of the pile, then regard that as like 'collateral damage.' When getting the job done in a war -- and worldly success and worldly satisfaction requires we engage in war on so many levels [think of those old samurai manuals adapted to guide business strategy] -- there are bound to be quite a lot of innocent civilians blown away. But we have factored that into the calculation. It is regrettable, sure, but for the sake of a greater gain in the end we have to tolerate some losses among the non-combatants.

Greed or acquisition seeks worldly advantage, and thus not only doesn't care 'who gets hurt in the process', but is a kind of [unconsciously motivated] drive that lives by seeking advantage, and evading disadvantage, in every part of life. It has to have, it cannot let go; it has to succeed, it cannot fail; it has to get the best, it cannot endure the worst. Ending up in loss is a sign that the greedy and acquisitive drive has been too weak, has not done its job, has not fought its way to the top. Thus to be in material deprivation is a sign of being 'a bad person', or being part of a humanly 'backward culture.' In Protestantism, which flung Christianity's doors wide open to Mammon, material wretchedness was a sign of divine disfavour. Now that Mammon has erased any lingering surrender of all of human existence to God, the disfavour is conveyed by the god of money. But the net effect is the same; the wretched are looked down on, occasionally patronised with a few crumbs from the master's table, but basically dismissed. They are not producing anything so they do not deserve to be consuming anything.

What greed and acquisitiveness cuts to pieces is the wider network in which not only all humans but all living and material things are interdependent, completely connected. Thus damage to one is damage to all. John Donne: "Do not ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

All this is summed up in the spiritual meaning of Mammon: 'wealth as an object of love and false worship.' It is for this reason that Mammon is personified in Luke 16,11 and Luke 16,13 [Mathew, 6,24 repeats the latter] as a 'false god.' Mammon is 'material wealth worshiped as a god'; worship of this god is the world's leading religion, and the chief prophet of this religion is America. But it was the English who first welcomed and established Mammon. The writer De Plessy -- who came after Spenser [whose 'Faerie Queen' depicts Mammon as overseeing a cave of worldly wealth] and Milton [whose 'Paradise Lost' describes Mammon as a fallen angel who values earthly treasure above all things and hence treasures the earth in the wrong way] -- was not in error when he called Mammon "Hell's ambassador to England." The widespread conviction that the Devil is a suave English gentleman, dressed like he is on the way to the opera, who talks smoothly and is a 'plausible fellow', but is lethal behind the charm, is rooted in reality. It was indeed England that first provided the moral justification, and

philosophical rationalization, for embracing Mammon as 'perfectly alright' and indeed 'quite a decent chap.'

Though all of Europe embraced capitalism after the Middle Ages, England led the charge. It was therefore the evil spirit Mammon whom the English took to the New World, and who came ashore with the Pilgrim Fathers; they came to America to create a new nation where Mammon would have free reign, and therefore America pushed Mammon much farther than England had done. To this day, England looks on its child America with both utter fascination and captivation, and some lingering moral horror and disdain. The English started the move to Mammon in human affairs, but some of the 2000 years of Christianity in the British Isles has slightly restrained them, and made them a little ashamed. They cannot be so open in Mammon as the Americans, whose buccaneering pursuit of Mammon has unashamedly been the main pirate on the high seas for some while; but this flirting with Mammon, embracing it but trying to remain 'nice' at the same time, is typical English hypocrisy. The Americans, by contrast, make no apologies. After all, they built Mammon into their Constitution; 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness', with its premise and rationale 'private property', is Mammon's very own 'mission statement' for corrupting the entire world. As a young man in my early twenties I had a 'culture dream' of America as a glittering tower for the few built over a vast pit of misery for the many. Mammon is the Tower over the Pit; the Pit is the cost of the Tower: the human cost the Tower won't pay because of the worldly gain that matters to it. The day is coming when the Tower will fall, in order that the Pit can give up its dead.

2,

For Judaism, and for Christ in the Gospels, to worship money as a god is to worship an 'idol.' Mammon is at the root of the pursuit of a false god who is an idol, and in early Jewish practice the term 'demon' was used to speak of any 'idolatry of a false god' engaged in by human beings. Only later, and especially in Christianity, did Mammon become fully identified as a demonic spirit, an evil spirit. Nicholas de Lyra, commenting on the passage in Luke, says: 'Mammon is the name of a demon' ["Mammon est nomen demonis."]

In this demonic guise, Mammon was referred to as Satan's 'second in command', but this should not be taken literally; what it implies is something more subtle. Mammon is the love of money as a false god, an idol; and this is a love of something evil that is destructive to each as a person and destructive to all as a community. This love of something we think of as highly prized but which is in reality very evil is the root of all other evil; this love is the first step into greater and deeper evil: the doorway into the kingdom of the Evil One. Once Mammon is well rooted in human soil, then come Satan and Lucifer, to build on that foundation. This is why St Paul refers to the love of money as the root of all other evil. Mammon is the 'in' that more profound evil uses to get into us. This is the real point of the 'second in command' metaphor.

This is the rationale behind the Biblical trinity of evil: 'the world, the flesh, and the devil.' The 'world' refers to the worldliness engendered by Mammon, the 'flesh' refers to the false attachment to this worldliness which makes us spiritually blind and weak, and the 'devil' refers to the more potent evil that sneaks into us through that blindness and weakness.

And this is why Mammon's phony worldly riches are in conflict with the genuine spiritual riches latent and hidden in the soul; the real cave where treasure is buried is the soul. The soul brings treasures into the world, but the false treasures of the world blot these out. We cannot have both. The heart must choose which wife he cherishes, the earth as consort of the devil and gateway to hell, or the earth as the daughter, wife, mother, of God. Which wife does the heart 'husband'? In the Old Testament the former is Lilith, and the Woman in the House of Death, and Dame Folly. The latter is the Shekinah, Sophia, Mary. Israel as a nation is identified with the former, not the latter, by the prophetic voice which describes Israel as 'whoring' after 'foreign' or 'alien' gods, rather than remaining faithful to the only real God, the true and faithful husband of Israel as wavering wife.

3,

The strict judgementalism which William Blake describes as 'Satanic' can walk hand in hand with Mammon; we see this today in 'conservative' religion. Those who kow tow to God's tyrannical authority will be financially rewarded with worldly wealth, those who defy God's tyrannical authority will be financially punished by worldly poverty.

But Mammon makes a more natural conjunction, especially in 'high capitalism', with the devil the Old Testament named as Lucifer. Capitalism, as it grows and expands, seems to walk hand in hand, and work hand in glove, with the Luciferian spirit of self-glorification, self-development, self-shining, that invariably creates a vast gap between 'winners and losers.' Even the way Mammon is marketed, through glamorous people in glamorous settings with glamorous products, has the sheen of Lucifer all over it. Lucifer is no harsh moralist; he believes in one law for the charismatic, and a different law for the ordinary. Thus the shining 'stars' constituted by the winners obey a higher law of self-expansion, while the dull clods of clay constituted by the losers need rules and regulations to keep them docile and in line, like herding sheep.

Consequently, the Luciferian spirit is contemptuous of law: it is for those small enough to need it. The big don't need it, and follow their own law, which is the law of being true only to Self, and being true to the 'inner necessity' of becoming ever more that Self. Spiritual narcissism and spiritual fascism are Luciferian. Material wealth allows Lucifer 'to do his own thing', uninterfered with and unrestricted by other people; Luciferian spirituality always attracts and manages to secure immense monetary riches to itself. But to look at it the other way round, it is the Luciferian spirit in the rich that makes them feel they are above 'the law of the herd', and can 'get away with murder', in the pursuit of 'doing what they will.' The notorious moral laxity and moral corruption of the old upper class rich comes from this alliance of Lucifer and

Mammon. Social conscience among the rich is still rare; and even where it exists, it is often only for show, and a way of the winners patronising the losers: dazzle a bit of stardust on the poor dears' heads, but of course never live with them, never share with them, and as for making any real sacrifice for their sake, don't be absurd, darling!

MAMMON [3]= The Bourgeois Mentality

1,

Mammon is at the root of the 'bourgeois project' the modern West has been entirely taken up with for nearly 500 years, and wants to spread to and impose upon the rest of the globe.

'Bourgeois' is a French term, and originally meant a person of the mercantile or shop-keeping class; often it was associated with middle-class life and mores as distinct from working-class life and mores. In the ancient world the bourgeois would have been the traders, and in the modern world they became those who had founded, and were running, industrial concerns. The dictionary adds 'common-place and unintellectual' to the definition; thoughtlessly going along with convention is implied.

2,

Nicholas Berdyaev pitches his analysis of the 'bourgeois way of life' at a basic level, to expose its roots. He claims that the 'bourgeois mentality' is not simply an economic, sociological, or even psychological, phenomenon. Nor is it simply an ethical problem. It is a spiritual problem, because it is in fact a state of the spirit; the bourgeois is a person of a particular spiritlessness, a lack of soul, an absence of heart, resulting in a peculiarly restricted consciousness.

The remedy: "Spirit alone can defeat the bourgeois condition; no material means will succeed. It is not a material or economic phenomenon – industrial development as such is not bourgeois. ..the bourgeois structure of a society is merely the expression of a bourgeois spirit, of a false direction of the will. It is a wrong conception of life.."

3,

Berdyaev claims that this spiritual tendency -- which is a kind of spiritual illness -- has always been with humanity. It already existed in the ancient world. What has changed is that recently the bourgeois tendency has taken over all of human life, pushing more qualitative and more noble social and cultural aims and practices aside: "This middle class mentality ripened and enslaved human society and culture."

Before the recent shift to predominance the bourgeois spirit was held in check: "Its concupiscence is no longer restricted.. as it was in past epochs, it is no longer kept in bounds by the sacred symbolism of a nobler traditional culture.."

A veritable host of angry voices were raised against the growing bourgeois ascendancy in the 19th century. "But even when the triumph of mediocrity was complete a few deep thinkers denounced it with uncompromising power:

Carlyle, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Bloy, Dostoyevsky, Leontiev.. all foresaw the triumph of the bourgeois spirit over a truly great culture, on the ruins of which it would establish its own hideous kingdom. With prophetic force and fire these men denounced the spiritual sources and foundations of middle class existence and, repelled by its ugliness, thirsting for a nobler culture, a different life, looked back to the past..” Leontiev: “Is it not dreadful and humiliating to think that.. apostles preached, martyrs suffered, poets sang, artists painted, knights shone.. – only that some French, German, Russian bourgeois garbed in unsightly and absurd clothes should enjoy life.. on the ruins of all this vanquished splendour?”

The triumph of the bourgeois spirit means "history has failed" -- there is no such thing as "historical progress." The present is not an improvement on the past. Human culture is degenerating qualitatively due to the rise of the bourgeois spirit: “The will to power, to wellbeing, to wealth, triumphs over the will to holiness and to genius. ..Spirituality is on the wane, [in] a time of bourgeois ascendancy. The knight and the monk, the philosopher and the poet, have been superseded by a new type-- the greedy bourgeois conqueror, organizer, and trader... In the new machine-made industrial-capitalist civilization of Europe and America, the spiritual culture.. based on a sacred symbolism and sacred tradition, is being irrevocably annihilated.”

Berdyayev concludes: “But antiquity knew only a tendency toward the bourgeois spirit; it never saw its final triumph. It was left to our European culture to accomplish its victory and give the world’s destinies into the hands of the bourgeois. The.. will to [a] life [given over to banality], to power [and] domination, have brought about this triumph; but our civilisation cannot endure..”

4,

The bourgeois is only focused on the expedient, the functional, the useful. The world must not be experienced as a poem if he is to use it for his utilitarian ends; thus it must be just a machine, so he can be the master who gains control over it by his uni-dimensional and narrow ‘intelligence.’ In Heidegger's terms, his mind is calculative, but lacks the capacity for contemplation. His concern is with correctness, he has no interest in truth.

For the bourgeois, making money, the doing of ‘business’, is the religious ‘absolute’ of existence. The middle class, as the leaders of the move toward bourgeois ascendancy, have created a world governed by “this money bereft of spirit.” But ‘money bereft of spirit’ now governs all social classes, and is indeed entirely dominant. Nothing else matters in Western cultures, and in many other cultures round the globe following the Western example. Human relationships, as well as cultural pursuits, to say nothing of spiritual motivation and activity, are all sacrificed on the altar of money. Money is allowed to distort and finally destroy these vital aspects of our humanity; if retained, they are secondary. Money is primary, and pervasive.

The bourgeois attends artistic events, or even religious events, just as entertainment, momentary reprieve, or an added jewel to their crown of status, 'after a hard day's work.' But nothing artistic or religious, indeed nothing simply human to do with the bonds of affection now known to be essential for building our earliest humanity, must be allowed to interfere with business. Even the Mafia is fully signed up to the bourgeois religion, for when they kill people they explain it with, 'it is just business.' Corporations can behave in ways destructive of nature, and destructive of humanity, because 'it is just business.' Socialism nowadays is 'safe for business.'

Indeed, Berdyaev claims that even Marxism in Russia rapidly became just as bourgeois in spirit as the regime it replaced: "The new bourgeois expels the old. It is the perennial comedy of history. The new man who has entered on to the scene begins by pretending that he repudiates all middle-class values and ways, that his kingdom will not be a middle class one. He is a.. revolutionary. But soon, very soon, the everlasting bourgeois features -- the same in all times and with all peoples -- reappear."

Basil Wrugh pointed out long ago that Russian Communism was simply 'state capitalism.' America has 'state capitalism' as well as 'private capitalism'; but 'corporate capitalism' has prevailed over all, so that old labels like 'conservative vs. liberal' hardly mean anything anymore. Now we have bourgeois religion, bourgeois art, bourgeois socialism, bourgeois capitalism; it is all safe for business, it is all just business. Corporations are the pinnacle of the bourgeois spirit, its flowering, and thus their high rise buildings are the temples of the religion that believes 'money is god', and it all should be made 'safe for business', because everything in existence 'is just business.'

5,

Berdyaev is in no doubt that the bourgeois spirit infected the religions of the past, though it could never dominate them quite so thoroughly as it does today. In the ancient world the priestly caste was the first to 'sell out' to the bourgeois spirit. This is why Christ took a whip to the money changers in the Jewish Temple. The mark of a culture of quality, of nobility, is that it keeps the bourgeois spirit in check, giving it only very low esteem; by this criterion, only Shamanic cultures of the primordial beginning of mankind were high in quality, high in nobility. So-called civilized cultures, East and West, began the process of submission to the bourgeois spirit that has finally produced the pre-eminence it has in our time.

Thus both in the past and in the present "bourgeois idolaters" are to be found in every religion. Berdyaev claims that the "pious bourgeois" is archetypically exemplified in the Scribes and Pharisees, whom Christ repeatedly denounced with unrestrained fury. It is to the pious bourgeois Christ is referring when he says, "tax collectors and prostitutes shall go into the kingdom of God before you"; and: "woe to you.. because you love the best seats in the synagogue and salutations in the market place"; and: "you outwardly appear to men just, but inwardly are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

6,

Mammon always works through 'respectability.'

Mammon only succeeds in promoting its cause by putting a respectable outer mask on what is in fact a despicable inner motive. From the priestly caste in ancient religion who were the first bourgeois, through the fat burghers of Holland and Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the ambitious 'new men' who came onto the western prairie of America and raised cattle where once buffalo had roamed in order to get rich quick in the 19th century, down to the bland but lethal crooks running the biggest corporations in the 20th and 21st centuries, the bourgeois has always been the "whited sepulcher" of Christ's indignation, presentable and clean on the outside, but rotten and dirty inside.

As a child my grandfather took me to parties where business people, and their lackeys the politicians, celebrated 'worldly success' together. The fake bonhomie could have been cut with a knife, and of course, the shallow affability and shallow relating left them all famished 'underneath', and so drink and drugs were a natural attempt to fill up the aching void. Addiction is the shadow of the bourgeois spirit, not simply because bourgeois living is so given to devouring, using, consuming, but because this acquisitiveness is what prevents all real human contact, all real human nourishment, all real intimacy and truth between people.

Thus, the bourgeois mentality is always thirsting, always hungry, for something missing which it has denied to itself, and does not know how to find. We consume more and more but this does not fill us, it leaves us more and more empty; thus we resort to yet more frenetic consumption. It is a vicious circle.

7,

The bourgeois mind insists 'there can be no spiritual world, there can only be the material world.' This is not a proposition that can be proved, by philosophical argument or by experimental science, yet the bourgeois mentality proceeds as if it were simply obvious, as if what is merely an assumption were a fact, and this is why the bourgeois is a signed up member of the club of naive realism, British empiricism, positivist scientism. What Berdyaev calls "the idolatry of science", and indeed what both Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky saw already in the 19th century as the increasing abstraction of the Western mind away from life as really lived, is a manoeuvre to allow the bourgeois relationship to the world to continue undisturbed.

A phenomenologically grounded 'concreteness' of awareness and thinking is needed to do justice to reality, and break free from the unholy trinity constituted by [1] the abstract mind, [2] the technology of control, and [3] the glut of endless consumption. The abstract mind is unrealistic; technological control is futile; endless consumption is unsatisfying: we want more and more because it fills us less and less.

8,

"The bourgeois does not always appear to us under the guise of a materialist enthralled by the earthly joys of life... There is a superior type that.. aspires to be the benefactor of mankind, to ensure its happiness, to organize the world for it."

All that modern conservatism 'conserves' is the bourgeois spirit as it flowers in capitalism; all that modern socialism 'reforms' is the fairness of access to capitalism so as to defend and preserve ['save'] the bourgeois project from revolutionary overthrow.

The despair so widespread in the Western liberal democracies arises from the feeling that democracy has failed, because of being hijacked by capitalism. What we have now is not democracy, but to borrow from Aristotle, "business oligarchy."

9,

Perhaps the most telling point Berdyaev makes is that the "bourgeois consciousness of life is in opposition to the tragic consciousness of life." Tragedy reveals we are not in control, that we cannot be fulfilled by acquiring and possessing, by getting and having; tragedy reveals we are not magnificent because we have proved how powerful we are by achieving worldly ambition. Tragedy is what prevents us from clinging to the shallows, and forces us to confront the profound.

The bourgeois may enjoy his glut, and pat himself on the back for earning it through hard work and think this makes him a grand fellow, but he ends up as a nihilist. The nothingness beneath his empty state of being and his weakness of action, like a numinous beast stalking its prey, comes for him.

He knows he will not get away.

The 'worldly happiness provided by worldly satisfaction' actually has no meaning and no purpose.

The tree of worldly knowledge is a life whose rising sap has nowhere to go, and nothing to do. It rises and falls, and then does that again, and again, and again, and in the end we are all bored beyond enduring and emptiness claims our interior landscape. It is not just that our spirit goes inert; we fall into that aching void, that hollow emptiness, which is so pervasive everywhere, but at its most acute in America. That emptiness, that hollowness, eats away at our vital quick, our wellspring, our flame; after all the gluttony and lust of power is satiated, there is Nothing, and it is to Nothing we are going. Any madness, any explosion, any soap opera drama however violent and stupid, is preferable to that Nothingness.

The ultimate predator is Mammon.

His wrong relation to the material world is also the Nemesis for that world. He will leave us paralyzed, disabled, unable to care about doing anything to save the material world. What is 'used' is finally 'used up' and 'thrown away.' Nothing is left. Except the Nothing.

Mammon is The Nothing.

MAMMON [4]= Can 'Organizations' Be Evil?

We are all aware of political evil -- "wickedness in high places" -- but there is also evil in the way most modern types of 'organization' are set up and run. Faceless mediocrities 'manage' the system, but do not know the vast difference between [true] leadership and [mere] management, as my friend Andy puts it. They care nothing for the work of the organization, but only care about using the organization as their personal fiefdom so they can climb the greasy pole of ambition; they are so far from being immersed in what the organization actually does as its work, or service to the community, they do not really know what is happening on the ground and could not care less about it. What matters to them is how their time in the organization will 'improve' their CV for the next job they will seek. And in their utter mediocrity, and panic to 'appear' good, they impose in a top down manner all sorts of stupid, and irrelevant, and even harmful, 'policy decisions.' For these sort of abstracted [and distracted] people, their fellow human beings have been reduced to mere marks on a sheet of paper, and once other people just become alienated from us as mere objects in some [foolish] scheme, then we can do to flesh and blood humans whatever evil we like, and not feel it for what it is. So, if you kill off livelihoods of thousands of human beings at the stroke of a pen, you need not feel and understand what this will do to real people. There are no real people, only ideas on a page-- so why not move the ideas round as your calculating mind thinks best? 'Destroying lives' can be translated into 'making the organization more efficient.' Fine. Job done!

This evil of the abstract mind -- the mind abstracted from human reality -- is so widespread today, very few see it for what it really is. All I—Thou relationship is reduced to I—It non relationship. Organizations -- in politics, in education, in economics, in religion -- are set up and run via an 'abstraction' that allows managers and bosses to behave like they were a psychopath; the whole organization proceeds as if it were a psychopath. [A film made this point a while back for big corporations in the USA, and it is true for lots of organizations.] No responsibility for harming people is ever taken. Instead, you get the 'whited sepulchres': people in neat and respectable suits on the 'outside' masking a lack of integrity, and indeed just egoic self-serving, on the 'inside.'

These dire people are evil too.. They kill bottom-up creative practice, and they kill the human factor of inter-relationship [and solidarity] wherever they run the show. This too is a vast pall on human potential, and creates widespread injustice. These people are the sheep just 'playing the game'; and the sheep come in two sizes, bigger and smaller: those who play the game better, and want to get on top of the other sheep, and those who play the game less well, and don't care if they are the bottom upon which other sheep perch.. Anything for a quiet life.

THE ALIEN POWER OF THIS WORLD

[Ego Adaptation to Reality= But What 'Reality'?)

1,

It is a common assertion in psychology and psychotherapy that through the 'ego' we adapt to reality, and therefore that without an ego we would find adapting to reality difficult, if not impossible. The ego helps us deal with the demands and threats of reality. The pre-ego child just folds in the face of such demands and threats= they simply cannot cope.

But what is the 'reality' that we need an ego in order to withstand? This question proves crucial. Yet it is very profound. It is far harder to answer than it first appears.

The more I ponder it, the more elusive it gets.

Some writers argue in a manner that suggests it is existential reality that the ego helps us face, but this is a far-reaching and fundamental error. The ego is not aware of existential reality, and blots it out. Existential reality slays the ego. It is not the existential givens that the ego 'deals' with; it takes heart, and personalness, to deal with these.

But what sort of reality is it that the ego helps us cope with? This is the reality the ego also gets stuck on, cannot move beyond, is confined to. Whether it overwhelms a weak ego, or a strong ego masters it, this reality dictates the limits of the 'world' within which the ego operates. The reality which ego sees and helps us master is called 'worldly', but that is a religious term that may not speak to everyone. The world contains many possibilities, and worldliness is but one aspect of it. But it is a very powerful aspect, and as the ego grapples with it, so it develops from the initial terror of being overwhelmed by this power to the intoxication of regarding itself in command of that power. The ego grows powerful through the sense it acquires of being able to subdue, control, get the better of, this power that is so intimidating.

What is this worldliness, this 'reality' we face more and more as we leave the warmth of enclosure in the family? Even a bad family, like a good one, still encloses us in some subtle sense. But this reality will not enclose us. It will not parent us. It will not be contactable as parents were, and it does not respond like them. This worldliness, this reality which is the child-slayer, is an 'alien' power. This is the key description that came to me as I wrestled with it. Whether the parental enclosure is good or bad, it is still an enclosure, it deals in emotional currencies, and that makes it 'familiar' to the emotional side of the child. But reality is not dealing in those currencies at all; it cares not whether the child lives or dies; it is not familiar, contactable in the currencies of emotionality in which the parents were contactable, and therefore it is not familiar, but radically alien. It is not simply the absence of a parental presence, it is a positive presence of a different kind. This alien power looms

right into us, and we cannot use childhood tricks to dent it. It isn't moved by childish magical thinking, childish tantrums, even childlike appeals to love. The world is deaf to all that. The world therefore seems cold, harsh, implacable/immovable, to the child and emotional part of us, because the world really is indifferent to that primal side of us. The world is like a door that we try to open, resorting to all we have acquired from childhood, by way of love, abandonment, abuse, all our good and bad experience, but the door does not open to any of this. It doesn't care. It is not reachable in this way, it cannot be affected in these terms. Something in the Otherness of the world is like the Otherness of God= a giant ice wall so huge, we cower before it, small, at a loss, freezing.

In part, this alien power that is reality, this alien presence that is worldliness, is what science seizes hold of, to help us vanquish it, to help us move out from underneath it and get on top of it. Mechanism= the world's lack of awareness, its lack of friendliness, its relentless ticking over according to laws obscure to grasp. The world is unforgiving in this sense= if I bump into mummy or daddy and hurt my knee, they comfort me, they are sorry it happened; if I bruise my knee against a pile of stones, I just bleed, the stones aren't sorry. But the alien power is more than the world's machine-like nature, with its relentless and impersonal cause and effect, lacking all friendliness, lacking all responsiveness to the love and human relating that sustained us throughout childhood but proves unable to help us survive in the world. There is something more to its unmovable/implacable quality, something more to its alien power. What is 'alien' to us can, in part, be explained by science, but there is another aspect to it that is much more mysterious, much more potentially overwhelming and disabling. No wonder the Jungian 'puer aeterna' [eternal child] refuses to grow up, prefers to have some connection to the Self-facilitated by early Object Relational bonding and Narcissistic support, but refuses to acquire the ego that would signify entering and accommodating the world's reality. Pre-ego people refuse to grapple with the alien power that confronts them, as they leave childhood's 'unreality' behind.

The deeper aspect of the alien reality of the world is mysterious and hugely overwhelming and disabling because it tells us something we do not want to hear. The world's reality is something that, if we were in connection with it, would respond to us, but because we are out of connection, it will not. Something in us knows it should be that if we sing to the wind, it will whisper back, in reply= but because the wind is not interested, and unreachable, this tells us that, irrespective of the connections we had as child to parents, there is a much deeper, much more far-reaching, disjunction, fissure, gap, alienation, between us and reality. Reality's unresponsiveness to us is disillusioning and frightening to the child, but it asks the child to put away toys and all other 'childish things', and grow up, by taking responsibility for our deeper disconnectedness from reality. Reality fails to answer us when we try to contact it humanly because it is we, in our humanity, who are not available to reality. We are fallen away, we are fallen into separation and duality. We are not available, as we could be, as we need to be, to 'move' reality humanly, and to induce it to open up to our humanity.

The alien presence in the world is the world after the human cataclysm of the Fall. The world is alien to us, it is unmoved by our empathy, our poetry, our proffered hand in friendship, because we are, in some depths of our humanity we can hardly sense, alien to it, turned away, indifferent and unconnected.

The reality so cruel and cold is the world once humanity has Fallen. It is the experience of the world as Fallen, as an entity locked up in itself and therefore not open to communication; but more subtly, it is really, more truthfully, the experience of ourselves as Fallen, because it is we who have become an entity locked up in itself and therefore not open to communication. In this experience of confrontation with something alienated, we are really confronted with our own alienation. We are separate, at depth, from the reality that we meet as separate from us. The alien presence in the world is a mirror held up to us, which few people want to gaze into, to see what is really there.

We know in our bone and blood we should be the key to unlock reality. But the wind blows indifferently to our song, and the animals flee at the very smell of us. The alien power so terrifying without us is in reality within us; we are the alien power.

Ego development, then, contains a vast and bottomless human lie, for at this junction-point, two very different paths open up.

The path of religion, at this point of decision, begins the quest to change the human nature that cannot be to the world what it is called to be. The wind will respond to our song, and on the day of the Sun Dance the sun in the sky will stop in its tracks, and will attend. On the day of the Cross the sun will hide his face from the earth, and not return until the Resurrection of Easter. On Easter day, the sun in the sky will stop in his tracks and dance. But don't ask for this prematurely. Reality is perfectly right to rebuff us until we have genuinely and fundamentally changed.

The path of the ego, at this same point of decision, becomes a lie. For we accept the world's alien quality as a fact, and we reinforce our separation from the world in order to be able to control, master, conquer it. Power, and all its ramifications of domination, of 'power over the other' [E.G. Howe], then becomes our quest. It is here the ego striving for adaptation changes into something different= the ambition by the ego to win out, to triumph over the alien power, to subdue it, and it is in this process that the ego becomes intoxicated with its own power, and starts to regard that as an end in itself. The lie? We use our separation from the world-- reinforcing it, armouring it, skilling it-- to conquer the world that is separate from us. This conquest freezes the world in its alienated state, and therefore confines the world to a brittle, bright, but hollow, surface; and the ego becomes the tin pot dictator of the surface.

The path of religion understands that separation is an illness, and seeks its healing.

The path of ego glories in separation, having originally been scared by it, because it cuts its teeth on it. But there is a price= as we master the separated, so we become ever more separate.

The alien power that is a 'worldly' presence in the world is the world without God and the world without the human presence that is required to open it to, and find God in, that world.

The alien power is the world opaque, resistant, closed in on itself, because that is how we are and we don't even know it and won't take any responsibility to do something about it.

Instead of asking, 'what in the world is so harshly deaf to our presence?', we should ask, 'why is our presence so harshly deaf to the world?' The answer would chill us to the bone, far more so than anything about the world we have to deal with.

For the answer is, we are the alien power.

To acknowledge this would relativize, humble, keep small, the ego from the start of its development; it would be only about helping us adapt, it would not become drunk on egoic power as an end in itself.

The ego can help us survive the situation of alienation, but that does not mean the ego has to profit from and grow fat on alienation.

We should listen to the silence of the wind, deaf to all our entreaties, and draw the true conclusion.

THE OLDEST CAVE ART

1,

We all know the famous German film director Werner Herzog is mad as a hatter, in fact he could have been one of the characters in Alice in Wonderland. The English have always welcomed, even celebrated, eccentrics -- this is the only reason I have remained in employment for the past 20 years -- but even at a gathering of the most eccentric in all of England, our dear Werner would stand out as a prize specimen.. But he is a good film maker [Fitzcarraldo; Grizzly Man]. He recently was allowed to shoot a documentary in a cave complex in southern France at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc where they found the earliest 'prehistoric' cave art ever stumbled upon. It is older than those other famous caves in France and Spain where you encounter paintings of animals on the walls.. These older caves contain drawings mostly in charcoal black, with a touch of red, and some faint yellow ochre, and they are 35,000 years old.

These luminous portrayals of animals were drawn deep in a cave where no sunlight ever reaches. Parts of these drawings may be 40,000 years old. Scholars call this time of our human pre-history 'Paleolithic.'

This film is worth walking miles to see. Its name is-- 'Cave of Forgotten Dreams.'

The Chauvet Caves were first discovered in 1994, and Herzog was allowed a brief time in which to go into them with his cameras in 2010. The general public are not allowed in, due to the destructive effect of carbon dioxide.

The black and white line drawings were not sketched on flat cave walls, but on curved and rough rock surfaces, using their rise and fall to make the animal bodies almost three dimensional.

Nothing static, all movement.. So much so, the animals on the rocky cave walls, looming out of the dark, feel alive. They are vibrating with spirit and they have a beauty that no Picasso, or any other artist, has ever captured. It is uncanny. They are spiritually energetic presences, not flat surfaces. Delicacy and sensitivity combine with élan and strength. Intelligence stares out of the eyes at you. They are personal and situated, not universal archetypes in some cosmic space above this world. These animal spirits, these animal beings, are here, in this world, with us.

The animals drawn include: rhinos, elephants, the most marvellous horses I have ever seen [in art or real life], lions, tigers, one [possible] wolf, bears, boars, and buffalo! Yes, huge and beautiful bison.. No birds are depicted, nor any crawling things. It is all 4 leggeds. Deep at the back of the cave, in extreme darkness, there is only one depiction of a human, and this seems a mother figure, though she is also part animal in a way.. No strong demarcation between animal and human as yet..

I have never seen animals like these.

All these animals were living in a verdant valley right next to a huge glacier. The people who drew them were the hunter-gathering nomads of the Ice Age. No settled life growing crops, because it was too cold for that. Our earliest ancestors were nomads before they settled down as farmers. [They were like Abel, not like Cain: the whole point of that story is that God blesses those on the move, the nomadic, and refused to bless those who have stopped moving, the settled. The latter are jealous of the former, because the former have a spirit the latter have lost.]

The cave floor is littered with the debris and footprints of animals who were there, including lots of bears, but no human remains of any kind were ever discovered in ten years of painstaking exploration of every nook and cranny. The cave feels like a sacred place, where ritual, magic, and prayer, occurred, but humans seem never to have intruded otherwise. They did not shelter there, eat there, sleep there. They built no fires and left no smoke crawling up the rock to obscure the drawings. They put the animals on the cave walls, and ceremonially related to them, but that was it.

The cave walls were drawn over, with new drawings added, during thousands of years. No attempt was made to 'preserve' the original works. As with Aboriginal cave art, people over generations upon generations just put new marks on the old pictures, adding to them, changing them. Never static, never preserved in aspic, but a tableau always on the move, like all the animals it honoured by the depiction.

The scientists who had carefully studied the caves for 10 years were demonstrably affected by the place more than scientists usually are. One spoke of the silence, and said it was a silence in which you could hear your heart beating. Other observations, trying to get at the nature of early humanity, were offered.. Only one grabbed me, because of its inadvertent accuracy to Shamanism.

Shamanism -- this is not the right term for it, but it is humanity's first religion, or as a student once put it, 'God's first thought' -- regards animals as spiritual beings, not just material mechanisms, as modern biology asserts. The observation that gripped my attention more than any others captured two qualities in the drawings that are Shamanic.

I forget the man's precise words, but he said that these animals, first of all, belonged to a world in motion, a world inherently dynamic rather than static, a world subject to ongoing and unending transformation; and he then added, even more interestingly, that in our modern thought 'a tree is a tree is a tree' but in the world wherein these animals lived, such fixed boundaries do not exist, because sometimes a human is a human, but other times a human is an animal; sometimes an animal is an animal, but other times an animal is a human. There is a fluidity about the identity of things, they flow into each other, become each other, exchange being with each other.

Being is not so parceled up, like an assembly of discrete 'things' laid out on a table, like an orange, an apple, a knife, a plate.

Being has permeable boundaries, and a sea flows through these boundaries, and in this sea, a dolphin can become the human swimming side by side, because spirit transmutes the being of the dolphin into the consciousness of the human and the human's being is changed and enlarged to admit the dolphin.

A human can go out on a dark night, and become the wolf howling at the pale moon. But conversely, the wolf lurking in shadows where the human fears to go can infiltrate human consciousness, initiating it into the being that is wolf. Henceforth, the human is invisible in shadows, like the wolf. After this change, the human delves shadows unafraid. With wolf eyes, the human gazes into every abyss, unflinching.

Transformation.. No boundaries..

What is the sea flowing through this world? Flowing through all things, moving them together on some fabulous journey, and interpenetrating them all, connecting them, allowing them and us to exchange skins, experiences, beings in this sea of being. What is this world they and we live in? Who are they, watching us, eluding us, helping us? Who are we that we dwell here, with them, and not anywhere else?

Shamanism is concerned with Spirit, and spirits. A Lakota elder once said to me, 'We walk in one Spirit, and we walk with many spirits.' There is one sea, it moves everything, and the animals and us are with each other in it, flowing into each other, sharing it and sharing each other in a constantly moving, fluid, flux..

The gods and goddesses of paganism always live above the world, on Mount Olympus, or some other high place. From there they 'direct' all humans, and 'raise' only a few. This is not Shamanism.

The spirit world is pervasive, and interpenetrates the material world. A thin membrane separates the visible and invisible domains of spirit and matter. Spirit is not 'way over there'; it is here, with us, the invisible yet always present backdrop; it is with everything, and in it, everything is with everything. The identity we cling to, as an object of possession, is not the true being of ourself, or anything else. The sea runs through all the no boundary beings, and in the sea, they connect, exchange natures, to expand and commune with each other.

It is like breathing in and breathing out. I breathe in, back to a more limited being; I breathe out, and my being is no longer mine but it is permeated by and exchangeable with all beings and the being sustaining them.

The animals and us are here, together, for a reason too profound, and too beautiful, to put in words. It is a sacred no words song.

I do not want to leave the place where the animals, and us, are here, together, in a mystery and power of spirit world and material world intersecting for anything supposedly 'better.' You can have your Platonic heaven of archetypes, or your Jewish, Christian, Islamic, heaven populated by ethereal angels. If you want to go there, I wish you God-speed in going.

I do not want to go there.

I want to live in the place where the animals, and we, are here, together.

The animals staring out at me from the cave walls, 35,000 years ago, are here, in this world, with us. This is the world, spiritual and material, sea and land, that I continue to love, hope in, and have no yearning to ever leave, under any circumstances.

Werner Herzog somehow contrives to end the eerie quiet, and tense stillness, of this powerfully moving film with albino alligators turned white by radiation. He is in Alice's Wonderland. But that is not where these animals are. They are in a world full of 'strangeness and beauty', as Black Elk put it, and they are here with us. Have you ever wondered why 'here' is with them? The gods and goddesses have animal totems, but they are a sort of Nietzschean super humanity. They are up there, not here, and not with the animals.

Herzog does not know the difference between dream, vision, and spiritual reality. He always falls back into fantasy, but his sheer idiocy saves him. He intrudes a little into his film, yet its presences walk past him, and just are what they are. Nothing can detract from that presence, that energy, that look which digs into us.

Why are you here? Why are you here with us? Why must you and us be together?

Our humanity is here, with the animals, in a world material and spiritual, sharing a life material and spiritual. Our humanity is diminished without them-- which is why, away from them, too settled and too fat from our crop growing that stops us moving with them, we are dying.

The Shamanic ancestors did not try to possess these animals, nor amass any wealth off their backs.

Instead, they simply recorded, I came here, and with the animals I lived.

Nothing more..

But that is everything, once you awake to where they, and us, really live.

THE WISDOM OF THE CREATURES

“But ask the animals, and they
will teach you,
or the birds of the air
will tell you
or speak to the earth, and it will
teach you
or let the fish of the sea inform you
which of all these does not know.. Yahweh
in his hand is the life of
every creature
and the breath of all humanity.”

Book of Job, 12, 7-12

RELIGION STINKS

1,

Religion is a disease, a symptom of our problem, despite the fact that religion presents itself as a 'solution' to our problem.

One of the reasons religion all too often has the effect of making our problem worse, rather than alleviating it, is because the people who most fervently promote religion forget that religion is the primary sign, the primary manifestation, of the very problem it wants to solve. This will always entail that religion is ambiguous and problematic, a peculiar paradox. It can help, but it can also be, and too often is, the primal hindrance, the mother of all hindrances..

The people who do not comprehend this ambiguity, this paradox, this problematic nature of religion, the people who are dewy eyed and wholly positive about religion, are always the first victims of religion's inbuilt pathology. Zen Buddhism is almost uniquely honest about this difficulty, in speaking openly of 'the stink of Zen.'

However much this reference to Zen may offend the ultra-pious, those few who are profiting from religion will immediately recognize its truth.

2,

Had mankind not 'Fallen' into what Buddhism calls the primal Ignorance, or Judaism calls the original Sin [and in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the word for 'sin' means 'failure to hit the mark', and this failure is ontological and existential, not just moral], there would be no need for religion. God did not create the world, and place humanity in it, in order to spend our time in a temple worshipping God, or spend our time in an ascetic desert sweating for God. God created us to live. Most people are so dead, as a result of the Fall, they think by 'created to live' it is meant that God created us to eat ice cream, buy computers, get drunk on drugs or beer, screw whatever is not nailed down, and do a spot of mugging to enhance one's paltry earnings. Pathetically people call all this 'wild living.' This is not 'real living.' But equally not real living are all our religious activities, designed to return us to God. If we were alive, as God created us to be alive, we would both experience God and manifest God in every small and ordinary 'everyday' activity we do, and in every great and deep 'heroic' action we do. God would have been our life, and thus neither the desert of ascetical self-control, nor the sacred temple of worshipping God, would have taken up any of our time. God wanted us to live, and to know God in the living. God had no need for any specialized and split-off area called 'religious' as opposed to another dualistically separated area called 'profane.' This split is itself the Fall= nothing is more emblematic of our Fallen condition than this split.

In those rare moments when we are really alive, whether attending to or doing something little or big, we discover how dead we are, how far from 'life more abundant', how denuded of 'real life.' In real living, everything contains God. Our coming and going is God, our sexual love-making is God, our creativity is God. Drinking and eating is God. Tying our shoe laces is God. Looking out our window and seeing the evening imperceptibly coming on is God. Parenting our children is God. The animal life all around us with whom we experience our primal affinity is God. Dancing is God. Friends are God. Sharing is God. Fighting is God. Play and laughter is God. Blood sweat and tears is God. If we had not Fallen away from this living of God-- that God was meant to be our life is the meaning of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Paradise-- then there would be no religion of any description whatever. That there is religion in the world 'is not a good thing'; it is 'a bad thing', however 'necessary' it may be.

Religion starts where we lose God, but religion disappears when we refind God. Our goal is life. Religion is not our goal. Our goal should be to shed religion and live again.

Religion recognizes the reality, the truth, of our disconnection from God, and as its name says in Latin, religion seeks to 're-connect' us to God. That makes religion more honest, down to earth, humble, than what a lot of people call 'spirituality', which easily becomes whatever you want it to be to expand you and make you feel better than the pain and desolation that reveals your Fallen condition, and points toward the need for its redemption. But it is not that simple, not that straightforward. Religion belongs to the Fallen order of things, and the wrong attitude to and practice of religion does the converse of what it promises to do= it sinks us further into Fallenness. Religion is part and parcel of our Fallen condition, indeed its main expression, and therefore we should treat it in a way that allows us to shed it as we attain what it points toward. This is like the Chinese saying that a leader should govern a nation like cooking a tiny fish= 'lightly.' Those with a 'heavy' investment in religion are almost invariably going wrong with it, being led astray ever more into Fallenness by it; those with a 'lighter' relationship to religion are those more aware of and dedicated to the living God whose goal for us is nothing like religion because God's goal for us is life.

Religion is a means to a much more wonderful end. Beware of confusing the means with the end, and beware even more of making the means the end. This is what makes religion so sick, as it so often is. The sicknesses of religion are legion= mummy worship, daddy worship, pervasive and endless childishness; the narcissism in guruism; Satanic harshness and judgementalism; Luciferian arrogance and self-love; thinking we in religion are the good children and will be specially protected and specially rewarded, uniquely loved, as distinct from the bad children not in religion who will be abandoned, punished, unloved. Or another example= using the Zen disciplines, including meditation, which were set up to overcome the ego, yet allowing the ego to infiltrate even the methods designed to slay it, so that in the end the person is doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Or= impatiently wanting mysticism as exit from this world, a quick and painless

transcendence of the world and all in it, giving up on its slow, difficult redemption; or using asceticism to aim at getting rid of the body in order to become an angel, rather than a human being, like so many of the monastics. Or the priestly caste always, because they are householders not nomads, selling out to the bourgeois spirit. Religion stinks. It contains every pathology that afflicts humanity, and because it sets itself apart, and regards itself superior, it becomes less redemptive, less the salt in the earth, less the leaven in the bread, than the worst Fallenness in the world. In the end, religion has the capacity, even the likelihood, to become worse in Fallenness than the Fallenness it is supposedly trying to remedy.

The paradox and danger of religion= the cure becomes worse than the illness.

For religion makes us think worshipping God in the sacred temple is in opposition to 'just living' in the world, and that worship in the sacred temple is better than living in the world; but in the unFallen condition, just living in the world will itself include worship and yet be fuller than it. The same applies to asceticism= religion makes us think the restraint of something distorted is better than living out the distortion, but in the unFallen world the true life of what has been distorted is far greater than any restraining of its twisted form.

William Blake wanted to shock the pious into this realization when he said, 'sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.'

3,

This is why those in no religion, those who have rejected all religion, also witness to the coming redemption that is coming for all, and will end any Fallen notion of winners and losers, saved and damned, rewarded and punished. Christ, in the parable of the sheep and goats, points to the fact there are two ways to dwell in Fallenness, one that is Christlike toward its 'least' and 'worst' = a redemptive way, and another way that is not Christlike and redemptive. It should be noted that the latter includes, mainly, the religious people who are keeping the rules but missing the whole thrust, missing the real point. But by the time Christ dies on the Cross, and says 'forgive them all, they none of them know what they do', he performs the deed that overcomes even the duality of sheep and goats, he pays for all, and wins redemption even for the religious who have got it so wrong, as well as for the non religious who are simply manifesting Fallenness. Among the goats, there are plenty of religious people, as well as the ordinary sinners who have never tried to do anything else. Nonetheless, it is in the Cross that Christ grows to his full stature, ceases being the prophet, ceases being the Oriental healer and teacher, and becomes finally what he was born to= he becomes the [universal] Redeemer.

But the sheep and goats is a terrible warning, and the warning is as much, if not more, to those in religion, as it is to those outside any religion. Those in no religion, and outside all religion, are not the damned, the rejected, the lost. Their refusal to do anything religious also bears witness to the truth= for these

people are no more or less sinning than religious people, but what they witness to that so often religious people fail to witness to is Life. Just living, in the world, doing little and big things. This Life, without religion, may not yet be fully flowered and in full fruition, because redemption has not arrived, but it is a witness to that coming Life in its way. Zorba the Greek is an ikon of the redemption to come, precisely by staying away from religion and finding God in the living of life, whilst many religious people, whether monkish or priestly in orientation, have given up on Life, and fallen in love with religion as the ultimate idol= the final substitute for real life.

God says, 'I am the God of the living.' He never said, I am the God of the religious; he never said, I am owned by the religious. And Christ said of God, the sun shines on the just and the unjust alike, and the rains come down on the good and the bad no different. The bigger truth is that in the Fallen condition of mankind, religion is one extreme side of that Falleness, for in religion we do not live in any fullness, whilst being outside any religion at all is the other extreme side of Falleness, for in turning to the world for an answer to our personal and communal deadness we do not live either. There is 'a' truth in religion -- we must reconnect -- but there is 'a' truth in just living without even a hint of religion -- we were created to live, created to find God in life.

But we preferred the Tree of Knowledge to Life. Religion is part of the Tree of Knowledge, as is no religion; one tells us to refind life, the other reminds us that, in the end, life is all, and life is enough.

4,

The abuse of religion, which has always been so widespread and is pervasive today, will not be tolerated by God forever. God is perfectly capable of sending lightning to bring down the temple, the mosque, the church. If religion does not help us shed religion and return to life, then in Christ's own words, religion becomes the salt that has lost its savour and is 'good for nothing.' Much religion is no longer any salt to the earth, any leaven in the bread, but is itself part of the toxic poison killing the earth and polluting the bread.

This cannot go on, and I do not believe God will tolerate it going on. When God strikes worldliness, as a tower built over a pit, and brings that tower down in order to expose the pit beneath it, religion too will be part of the crumbled and wrecked tower. Worldliness is one idol, but religion is the greater idol, and both will come down, and crumble to bits.

Thank God!

When worldliness and religion both end, then there will be Life. Our goal is Life. Our God is living and is the God of the living. Redemption will return all, with no sheep separated from goats, to Life.

Life is what we were created for, and Life is our end.

THE WILD

“Modern maps have an odd characteristic. They never show wildness. They cannot show it, for they are implacably opposed to it. Maps are cages in which to imprison wild land. Maps put wildness in chains of measurement, corral it till its wildness dies. ..Cartography hunts down wildness, tracking nature in the cross-hairs of the grid, shooting it like an animal and pinning the parched dried skin up on the wall; the map is the ultimate hunting trophy..

There is a perfection to maps. Land is perfected, over finished, and there is no life left in it. But wildness slips away, swims through the net of the map. The wild world is simply too wonderfully four-dimensional to be caught. Waterwild, especially, is unmappable and flows through the grasping fingers of mapmakers. You may net the world in grids of latitude, but you will never net the water..”

Jay Griffiths [pp 224-232, and p 230 especially, 'Wild, An Elemental Journey', 2008]

II: EROS AND THE DAEMONIC

“The hidden harmony is better than the obvious.”
Heraclitus

“Greater dooms win greater destinies.”
Heraclitus

OVERVIEW= After The Fall

1,

In the Beginning, God, nature, humanity, live in unity.

The Eternal renders the moment timeless.
The Infinite dwells in the finite.

To hear the sound of the soundless.
To see the form of the formless.

Different peoples call this by different names.

Shamanism called it the Sacred Origins.
Greeks called it the Golden Age.
Buddhists called it the Original Face.
Jews called it Paradise.

2,

Once this primal splendour is lost, a polarization occurs.

Two diametrically opposed religious responses are provoked.

The path to God divides.

The Right Arm of God is Eros, the Left Arm of God is the Daemonic.

Each Arm assumes a different, and converse, task.

Eros is mainly focused on the constancy of space, the Daemonic is mainly focused on the movement of time.

Eros 'remembers' how we were. The impulse of Eros religion is to recognise, and reconnect with, the place where we began, the place of connection.

The Daemonic accepts where we are now, in all its limitations, but fights through time for the redemption at the End.

3,

Eros= the Ontological.
Daemonic= the Existential.

Eros= the Goodness of love.
Daemonic= the Risk of love.

A waterfall plunging from unseen heights.
A spring welling up from the cave in the earth;
such is the 'ontological.'
The vehicle of the ontological is the soul.
Eros--soul is the wedding we are all journeying toward.

Lightning zigzagging to hard ground.
Fire kindled from the chasm beneath the earth;
such is the 'existential.'
The vehicle of the existential is the heart.
Daemonic--heart is the fight in the depth we are all struggling in, where we do
not yet know if love will win or will forsake us.

Eros= Everything is ontologically derived from the Pleroma 'above.'
Daemonic= Everything is existentially haunted from the Abyss 'below.'

EROS AND THE DAEMONIC= Static and Dynamic

PRELUDE

Robert Pirsig -- who wrote the justly celebrated 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance' [1974] -- also wrote a follow up, generally not regarded as well as his first effort -- 'Lila, An Inquiry into Morals' [1991]. It contains, in its attempt to declare what Quality is, virtually the same distinction between Eros and the Daemonic, only using different terms. Moreover, Pirsig comes to this differentiation by virtue of studying a conflict on Zuni tribal lands between the traditional Zuni priests and a disturbing Zuni shaman; the priests were upholding Eros and what Pirsig names 'Static Quality', whilst the shaman was upholding the Daemonic and what Pirsig names 'Dynamic Quality.' Thus by contrasting priest and shaman, or priest and prophet [who evolved from the shaman: 1 Samuel, 9, 9], there arises another way to revisit the distinction between the 'Stable' Eros, and the 'Disruptive' Daemonic. Pirsig's primal differentiation of Quality into 'Static Patterns' and 'Dynamic [patternless] Change' will be examined, to see if it helps in the description of Eros and the Daemonic.

In short, Eros is similar, yet not identical, to: 'Static Quality generating Stable Patterns'; whilst the Daemonic is similar, yet not identical, to: 'Dynamic Quality generating [patternless] Change.'

1,

Pirsig's quest for the true character of Quality, and its primal position in human experience, leads him to the differentiation of Quality into two manifestations, Static and Dynamic. He is wondering about people who get labelled as misfit, outcast, outsider, beyond the normal order, and similar. He starts off by looking at what happened among the Zuni as illustration of how the insider/outsider division arises. The story, told by an anthropologist, goes like this.

At Zuni, in New Mexico, there was a striking person who stood out. In a society that distrusts authority, he had too much personal magnetism; in a society that exalts moderation and easygoingness, he was too turbulent and even violent sometimes; in a society that praises an accessible person who talks readily, he was too scornful and aloof. Zuni's reaction to such people is to brand them witches. The deviant person was said to have been peering in through a window, a sure sign of a witch, or brujo in the local parlance. One day he got drunk, boasting that no one could kill him. At this, he was hauled before the priests, who promptly hung him up by his thumbs to the rafters, until he should confess to his witchcraft. However, he was able to get a messenger to the government troops, who saved him, though his shoulders were already crippled for life, and the authorities had no choice but to imprison the priests. One of these priests was described by the anthropologist as "probably the most respected and important in recent Zuni history and

when he returned after imprisonment.. he never resumed his priestly offices. He regarded his power as broken" [pp 133-134].

The rest of the brujo's life is a surprise. Did he go off in a huff, refusing to be a member of a society run by such domineering religious figures? On the contrary, he stayed at Zuni, becoming a master of cultic songs and stories, and eventually took over as governor. The outsider ended up as the leader!

The anthropologist recounting this happening concludes that had this troubled man lived among the northern plains tribes, his personal authority, turbulence, aloofness, would have taken him far. His personal unhappiness was simply because he was out of place in Zuni.

Pirsig thinks this analysis of a 'fish out of water' facile. It is too simple to say the man's tormentors were evil and he was good. Nor was the man simply a misfit, whatever that means. How then did he take over the reins of tribal leadership? His path to the leading of his people was certainly dramatic, but what this drama portrays, Pirsig argues, is a cultural battle for the direction in which the tribe would go. The man was a brujo, and that means he was a shaman.

"This was not a case of priests persecuting an innocent person. This was a much deeper conflict between a priesthood and a shaman" [p 136]. Pirsig quotes from E.A. Hoebel:

"Although in many.. cultures there is a recognised division of function between priests and shamans, in the.. cultures in which cults have become strongly organized churches, the priesthood fights an unrelenting war against shamans.. Priests work in a rigorously structured hierarchy fixed in a firm set of traditions. Their power comes from and is vested in the organization itself. They constitute a religious bureaucracy. Shamans, on the other hand, are arrant individualists. Each is on his own, undisciplined by a bureaucratic control; hence a shaman is always a threat to the order of an established church.." [pp 136-137].

In the religion of the ancient Jews, the prophets evolved from Asian shamans, and lived in the same tension with the temple priesthood. Among Christians, it is a standing joke that no bishop would want to invite a living saint, especially if he were a desert wild man, part prophet, part shaman, to the parish council meeting. In the novel 'The Brothers Karamazov', Dostoyevsky tells the story of the Grand Inquisitor: a pope-like church boss is confronted by Jesus Christ returned to earth, and far from welcoming his ostensible spiritual master, warns him that he will have to be executed again, to prevent him doing immense harm to the Christian people in the church. After all, the church gives them stability and order, which is what they need and all they can cope with. By contrast, Jesus Christ offers them freedom, and all the upsetting realities, such as conflict, doubt, personal responsibility, that arise off the back of freedom. Christ trusts people too much, and so must not be allowed to come back..

But the case of Zuni reverses the common trend in the West in regard to the balance of power between priest and shaman. Pirsig concludes [p 137] that "a huge battle had taken place for the entire mind and soul of Zuni. The priests had proclaimed themselves good and the brujo evil. The brujo had proclaimed himself good and the priests evil. A showdown had occurred and the brujo had won!"

Pirsig goes on to argue that the political clout wielded by this Zuni shaman was because he knew how to relate to the biggest and most challenging change confronting the tribe-- the white man. A new spirit had come, and as a person able to relate directly to spirits, he was better equipped than the priesthood to read their psyche and psychology, and make some accommodation with them that would preserve the ancient Zuni culture yet allow it to adapt to an altered situation.

Pirsig ponders this, and comes to a new, and interesting insight: "it became apparent there were two *kinds* of good and evil involved [p 138]." He elaborates this key realisation:

"The tribal frame of values that condemned the brujo and led to his punishment was one kind of good, ..which [can be termed] 'static good.' Each culture has its pattern of static good derived from fixed laws and the traditions and values that underlie them. ..In the static sense the brujo was very clearly evil to oppose the appointed authorities of his tribe. Suppose everyone did that? The whole Zuni culture, after thousands of years of continuous survival, would collapse into chaos.

But in addition there is a 'dynamic good' that is outside of any culture, that cannot be contained by any system of precepts, but has to be continually rediscovered as a culture evolves. Good and evil are not entirely a matter of tribal custom. If they were, no tribal change would be possible, since custom cannot change custom. There has to be another source of good and evil outside the tribal customs that produces the tribal change.

If you had asked the brujo what ethical principles he was following he probably wouldn't have been able to tell you.. He was just following some vague sense of 'betterness' that he couldn't have defined if he had wanted to" [p 138].

Pirsig points out that the kind of leadership exerted by the brujo was not a matter of him telling anyone to do this, or do that, but of just being himself. Yet because the culture was in a phase of significant transition forced upon it by fate, the brujo's way of being and acting seemed of greater relevance, or, as Pirsig puts it, of 'higher Quality' to his brothers and sisters than the rather blind conservatism of the priests.

"In this Dynamic sense the brujo was good because he saw the new source of good and evil before the other members of his tribe did.. [Thus] whatever the personality traits that made him such a rebel from the tribe around him, this man was no 'misfit.' ..The whole tribe was in a state of evolution.. Now it

was entering a state of cooperation with the whites.. He was an active catalytic agent to the tribe's social evolution, and his personal conflicts were a part of the tribe's cultural growth" [p 139].

Pirsig reaches his first broad conclusion: "Not subject and object, but Static and Dynamic is the basic division of reality. When A.N. Whitehead [the physicist who revisioned material things in terms of 'process'] wrote that 'mankind is driven forward by dim apprehensions of things too obscure for its existing language', he was writing about Dynamic Quality. Dynamic Quality is the pre-intellectual cutting edge of reality.. and always new. It was the moral force that had motivated the brujo in Zuni. It contains no pattern of [pre-established changes], ..and its only ..evil is ..any pattern of one-sided, fixed values that tries to contain and kill the ongoing and free force of life" [p 140].

In short, Static Quality tends to see the Dynamic as evil, because the latter interferes with, and overturns, the former's unchanging consistency. Those in Eros tend to perceive those in the Daemonic as demonic. But equally, Dynamic Quality tends to see the Static as evil, because the latter blocks and prevents the former's changing inconsistency. Those in the Daemonic tend to perceive those in Eros as in denial.

As Pirsig suggests, what is 'good and evil' differs depending on whether you identify with Static Quality or Dynamic Quality. For the static realm, disruption is evil; for the dynamic realm, disruption is good. For the static realm, stability is good; for the dynamic realm, stability is evil.

"Static Quality, the moral force of the priests, ..is old and complex. ..Good is conformity to an established pattern of fixed values and value objects.. Its values don't change by themselves. Unless they are altered by Dynamic Quality they say the same thing year after year. Sometimes they say it more loudly, sometimes more softly, but the message is always the same" [p 140].

Thus we have Static Good versus Dynamic Good, or the 'bright' spiritual point of Eros versus the 'dark' spiritual point of the Daemonic. For Eros, the wound inflicted by the Daemonic is a curse without any rationale. For the Daemonic, this wounding is a curse that contains a hidden blessing; it is a fate that renders existence absurd, yet accomplishes a vast and necessary spiritual change by ending the demand in all of us that life 'add up.' When it doesn't, those who cling to Eros fall into despair, but those who let go of Eros to answer the call of the Daemonic find a different ground where they undergo a different journey and a different battle.

Static patterns become 'the universe of distinguishable things.' By contrast, Dynamic leaps beyond the usual and predictable run of things are called in indigenous cultures 'wakan', or 'manito', which means, 'holy, mysterious, strange, out of the usual run of things, exceptionally skilled, blessing, luck, any wondrous occurrence.' It is important to realise that wakan, or manito, can point to the Supreme Being, or Mysterious and Holy Spirit, as well as manifestations of divinity in nature and among human beings.

The Static is easier to make known, and people stick with the known because it cannot throw them. Its signposts offer us safe and secure paths through familiar terrain. But the Dynamic is a pathless trek into the unknown. Pirsig notes: "When you take steps forward into the unknown you always risk being smashed by that unknown" [p 355].

2,

Yet at this point, Pirsig tries to correct his own radical bias in favour of the Dynamic, for he admits that in the past he had been likely "to think of Dynamic Quality alone and neglect static patterns of quality. Until now he had always felt that these static patterns were dead. They have no love. They offer no promise.. To succumb to them is to succumb to death, since that which does not change cannot live. But.. life cannot exist on Dynamic Quality alone. It has no staying power. To [reject] static patterns is to cling to chaos" [p 146].

This allows Pirsig to nuance his earlier conclusion about good and evil.

"Static quality patterns are dead when they are exclusive, when they demand blind obedience and suppress Dynamic change. But static patterns, nevertheless, provide a necessary stabilising force to protect Dynamic [forward movement] from degeneration. Although Dynamic Quality, the quality of freedom, creates [and re-creates] this world in which we live, these patterns of static quality, the quality of order, preserve our world.." [p 146].

The Dynamic is wild, the static is orderly. "..Although the Dynamic brujo and the static priests who tortured him appeared to be mortal enemies, they were actually necessary to each other.." [p 146].

Yet there is the wildness of the spirit and there is human destructiveness for its own sake. Similarly, there is the order that opens up a vast vista of interconnections, and the order that suffocates all complexity of meaning out of reality and therefore suffocates all complexity of meaning in us.

Hence, there is good and evil in each realm, Static and Dynamic.

There is a bigger and a smaller Static, a broader and more narrow Static, a Static identical to 'the cosmic order of all things', the implicit deep structure undergirding everything, and a static where logic has replaced logos, where an expansive reasonableness has been reduced to the mean ratio. There is holistic Pattern, the Whole, and there is analytical pattern, the parts without link up [Humpty Dumpty cannot be reassembled, once in fragments]. The bigger pattern obeys laws of formation, of gestalt interdependence, whereas the smaller pattern obeys laws of mechanism, of additive increment. Science, currently, is incapable of addressing the former, and only focuses on the latter. This means that science neglects the implicate dimensions of order, and only can deal with that which ticks over regularly and reliably. There is a more mystical Eros, the Light of Love, and an Eros truncated to the formulaic, the conservative, the rigid, the explicit, the explicable, where there

is neither love nor life, but a need to predict and control, to master and possess. There is the intricate web of interconnections and there is system, organization, hierarchy, reeking of top dog and bottom dog, unilateral influence, and the loneliness of disconnection. This also means there are greater and smaller priests, those who 'see the light' and those that defend a party line whose bigger dimensions they have rejected. The former serve what they respect, the latter kill what they admire. There is stability and stasis. There is conserving a 'Tradition' of handed on and proved veracity, and there is a bankrupt 'traditionalism' in which you sanctify the past, ignore its struggles and mistakes, and regard the present as just a repetition of what was already established in that over-idealised past. That we must go through our own struggles, and make our own mistakes, now, to keep going toward the future, is denied.

Equally, there is a true and false Dynamic, a Dynamic that conveys the Daemonic intervention of God and a Dynamic identical with chaos, degenerateness, and capable of conveying the deceptive interference of the demonic. This also means there are true and false shamans, true and false prophets; not everything that glitters is gold. The Dynamic is unstructured yet not chaotic, when trustworthy. The Dynamic is disintegrative, and unravels with glee anything ravelled with patience, care, and concern, when untrustworthy.

There is Good Static, and Evil Static. There is Good Dynamic, and Evil Dynamic.

There are decent people upholding the Static, and resisting the Dynamic; there are indecent people tearing down the Static, in the name of the Dynamic.

Discernment is needed.

The Daemonic God who, again and again, lays waste to the Jews, smashing them to reforge them, is not to be confused with the Panzer divisions of Hitler, nor with the Puritan armies of Cromwell, nor with the bullying and murderous fundamentalists and evangelicals of our day.

Socrates: "Our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness provided the madness is given us by divine gift."

STATIC QUALITY= The 'Cosmic Wheel'

1,

Pirsig, possibly due to his earlier bias towards Dynamic Quality, mounts a sustained investigation into what he reckons to be the root spiritual meaning of Static Quality in the Indo-European languages of the two cousins, Greece and India. Both Greek and Sanskrit evolved from a much earlier, common, Proto-Indo-European language. This earliest mother tongue has influenced English, which is why Sanskrit and English say 'yoga' or 'yoke', 'raja' or 'regent', and the host of other parallel terms. But the parallel between Greek and Sanskrit is even closer.

The Greek term 'Arête' is explored by Pirsig as a central, and vital, way of referring to Static Quality all the way back to Homer. It is often translated merely as 'moral virtue', but means much more than that. It situates virtue in a profound panoply of meanings, which start with 'excellence' of any kind, including manly qualities such as 'prowess and valour', but also including excellence in any art, skill, or walk of life.

Even more primal, arête meant 'goodness', again not confined to the moral dimension, but pointing to an ontological reality that is generous, outpouring, expansive: the goodness of life, the goodness of things, the goodness of being. Plato's description of Ultimate Reality at its most primal is 'the Good.' For Greeks there is also a tacit link between goodness and beauty, thus the Good is invariably the Beautiful.

Also included is a 'character' capable of 'merit, rank, nobility'. The latter makes Arête very similar to what Chinese spiritual culture terms 'the Superior Man', where superiority is not down to money, social position, ego achievement, but the ability to indwell, and be indwelt by, the noble characteristics of Static Quality. The Inferior Man, by this reckoning, has abandoned Quality as such, and measures himself and others in a calculus of unreality. When you only point to external and obvious things to enumerate, and believe that 'more' of these are 'better', you are as far from Static Quality at its spiritual origin as you can get, for you miss its latent presence in all things, and in those persons who accept it and therefore are illumined by its light, breathe its spirit, are alive in its life, and adhere to a patterning of things not mechanical, but organic and subtle, a patterning within things that puts them together in a single yet complex 'togetherness.' Quality inheres in Quantity, for the noble in spirit; there is no Quality, and only Quantity, for the ignoble in spirit.

Hence, Static Pattern has for the ancient Greeks a Quality of 'Rightness' which they describe as Excellence, Goodness, Beauty, Virtue, and possessed of a Character that has inherent Merit, exalted Rank, and superior Nobility. This kind of Quality never gives way, or ceases, it does not falter. Its staying power defies time. Moreover, spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, dimensions are all different aspects of one multifaceted reality.

2,

Pirsig reminds himself that the Greeks often added the prefix 'a' to a significant word; hence subtract that and the morpheme becomes 'RT.' At this point Pirsig finds a treasure trove of RT words in the Proto-Indo-European language. These include, 'ritual, right as in correct, right as in right-handed, arithmetic, aristocratic, rhetoric [language that becomes like a deed], art as creation and beauty, and so on. Even more stupendous, RT means 'first', the primal beginning, the start and foundation for all that follows. 'Ritual' is a main usage of RT, meaning repeating order, but therefore also implying something with reliability, something having consistency, something that is dependable. If the sun says it will rise tomorrow, and that is life and death for the plants awaiting the sun's warmth, then such 'regularity' is not pinched and small natured, but great and big natured. It is like the mother whose regular presence in the life of her baby is make or break for that baby's subsequent growth, identity, fullness.

RT describes the Good Static at its dawning in human experience. The Light is first seen in the East, and so the Orient is where Static Quality is at its most spiritual, as well as most primal.

Pirsig assembles all the meanings of RT and hazards a short summary. According to him, RT referred to 'the first, created, beautiful, repeatedly reliable, order of moral and aesthetic correctness, or what is right.' But this rightness refers to an ontological reality, it is really speaking of 'what is', or the original being of all things; RT is the primal harmonic pattern that holds all things together, in a union that neither extinguishes diversity, nor breaks into splinters the over-riding connectedness. The originating unity is neither pure oneness nor is it duality, division, fragmentation. It is a harmonious unity-in-diversity. Harmony not only connects things, but connects them 'amicably', without contention or fighting, without rivalry or dissension. They come together symphonically, like instruments in the orchestra, and happily. Happiness and joy inhere in 'being a part of' this primal pattern. It brings peace, tranquillity, serenity. It banishes fear. It is like being part of a vast dance circle, moving in unison, to wonderful music.

Pirsig wants us to observe that we salute with the right hand, and shake on an oath with the right hand. The rightness of what is -- its excellent and good quality -- extends symbolically to right-handedness. The left hand is sinister, in this realm, because it might seem to disrespect, and lightly throw away, the cosmic pattern upon which everything is built and on which everything leans, in the way that a thug tears apart an intricate web that he does not understand and cannot appreciate. The rightness of RT is not 'conformity to social protocol', nor 'obedience to normal procedures', but something mystical, ontological, universal. This is not some limited formulaic rightness, but the rightness of 'what is what.' If you depart from what is what, you fall into delusion by entering 'what is not what'; what is what holds together and continues, defying entropy, what is not what disintegrates and degrades, following entropy.

This Rightness is like being in tune in music. If you are spot on, everything flows. If you are off, nothing works.

In some contexts, RT is God, underlying all things; in other contexts, RT is God's most primal created manifestation, underlying all things. Humans, through egoic and selfish motives, fall out of this unity that inter-relates all levels, physical, mental, spiritual. Once humans re-join it, they find themselves in concert with all fellow humans, all of nature, all the spirits. Indeed, its patterning cryptically contains the seeds of a new 'spiritual politics', for it is from this patterning that we derive 'sobornost' in Russian, or 'conciliarity' and 'collegiality' in English. This is neither individualism nor collectivism, but a reality recently called 'communitarian.' In the past, only the Superior people could see and live it, and thus these aristocratic persons were its guardians, tasked with upholding it; but there is, within this cosmic and naturally occurring pattern, a pre-existent Nobility that can teach everyone to become noble simply by 'learning to dance to its tune.' Everyone can join the dance, for it is designed to include all and exclude none; thus it will make everyone noble, like itself. In a spiritual democracy, all persons become aristocratic in spirit; thus all are equal, and power politics of one lording it over others disappears.

Even the Noble, no different to the Ignoble, have to learn to dance to Static Quality's tune, and this is where a yoke of ancient practices, from meditation to attending ceremonies, and a host of others, prove necessary to everyone. We may be born ready to dance, but we lose it, and to a greater or lesser extent, everyone has lost it and everyone is still in touch with it and can regain it. Superior and Inferior are two sides of each person, and must be reconciled in learning to 'get in tune.' This is why people go to the sacred temple, fast, pray, read holy scriptures, chant, tell stories and sing songs, commune with God and each other. Curbing the ego is crucial to all such practices. Self-knowledge of the extent to which, and the way in which, each of us is out of tune, and needs retuning, is necessary to this way. People who try to retune, without dealing with their habitual, and fixed, 'out of tune-ness', will not be able to keep going on the path.

Pirsig tracks down the actual word in Sanskrit that sums up the Quality of Static Pattern; not surprisingly, this turns out to be 'Rta', and means, 'the cosmic order of things.' Only a foolish person, or someone wicked, disregards this, or wants to bend it into a different shape for their egoic and selfish ends. We should fit in with it, allowing it to be the immense, overarching and undergirding 'house' that looks after us, rather than seeking to belittle this marvellous reality by forcing it to fit in with our much more limited wishes and ideas.

Equally unsurprisingly, in the 'Rig Veda', the oldest known writing of the Indo-Aryan language, 'the sun god began his chariot ride across the heavens from the abode of Rta.' Varuna was omniscient, ever witnessing the truth or falsehood of humans. His task was to be a guardian of all that is Worthy and Good: to exemplify unswerving adherence to high principles.

Pirsig quotes an Indian commentary by M. Hiriyanna: "Rta, which etymologically stands for 'course', originally meant 'cosmic order', the maintenance of which was the purpose of the gods; and later it also came to mean 'right', so that the gods were conceived as preserving the world not merely from physical disorder but also from moral chaos. ...there is order in the universe because its control is in [good] hands.." [p 444].

Rta is a spiritual, moral, beautiful, ordering of the universe, on all levels, mental, psychological, biological, chemical, physical. It shows that nature is not amoral, and that nature's beauty is not accidental, because the 'higher' ethical and aesthetic ordering is the same as the 'lower' physical ordering. The same Meta Shape, forming and reforming the entire cosmos, is in both spiritual and material manifestations of its activity. Stephen Muse puts it like this: "we are part of a much larger spiritual commonwealth [*oikoumene*] living in a divinely ordered ecological and metaphysical harmony which has intrinsic, rather than merely utilitarian, value."

M. Hiriyanna points out that over time, Hinduism calcified and reduced its Good Static Quality into a very 'evil' over-elaborate and over-rigid kind of fixed structure. This is the danger with Static Quality. At its origin, its interconnected levels are like a waterfall pouring down different plateaus, all refreshed from above to below, but with time, the water freezes at the lower end, and the higher end is cut off-- in the very name of defensively preserving it. Primally, Form is Void and Void is Form, but latterly, Form closes to Void, and then Form becomes trapped in a System, a Bureaucracy, a Formula. The round dance is gone. However, Hinduism recovered in the time of the Upanishads, when Rta disappeared from Sanskrit and was replaced by 'Dharma.' The commentary continues: "It is sometimes used as a purely moral concept, and stands for right or virtuous conduct which leads to some form of good as a result. [Yet] Dharma, like Rta, means 'what holds together.' It is the basis of all order. ...It is the stable condition which gives man perfect satisfaction" [p 446]. Pirsig adds that Dharma generates 'duty', but not external duty as imposed by others through 'artificial conventions', nor internal duty 'which is arbitrarily decided by one's own conscience.' Rather, "Dharma is beyond all questions of what is external and what is internal. Dharma is Quality itself, the principle of 'rightness', which gives structure and purpose to the evolution of all life and to the evolving understanding of the universe which life has created" [p 446].

What holds together..

The unwritten Dharma, incarnated in the written Dharma, is what holds together everything in its embrace. Buddhism, in reforming Hinduism, does not abandon Static Quality for Dynamic Quality, but renews Static Quality so that the unwritten Dharma is not lost to the written Dharma.

3,

This makes Rta, and Dharma, similar to the mystical Logos of St John, at the start of the Fourth Gospel. For in Greek, 'Logos' implies Light, Word, Pattern; the Logos 'gathers in' everything, and thus is the creative generator of the Cosmos as a Whole. Heraclitus= "Listening to the Logos, it is wise to acknowledge all things are One." St John= "When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word, then, was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him. All that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men." An older English translation refers to the Logos as the 'Light which enlightens every human being who enters the world.'

Light is given to all humans, inherently, tacitly, informally. It surrounds us, and brings to life all the flowering and rich realities we encounter on the earth and in the universe. The temple arises, in Hinduism, in Judaism, in Eastern Christianity, because we fall out of the Light. The temple exists to help us return to the Light. We bathe in it, we are washed free of all the clutter of mind, emotion, body, that blocks it, and returned to that spiritual simplicity, our original condition, wherein we put no barrier between it and us. It infiltrates our being, on all levels. Reuniting with it, we are reunited within ourselves, and reunited with that which is outside ourselves. The circle dance encompasses God, nature, people, culture, and flows through each and all.

This is why the temple, in its fullness of Static Quality, is mystical, sacramental, ritual [liturgical ceremony], symbolic, ethical, aesthetic, ascetic, philosophically practical [in teachings], and ontological in its meta orientation, or emphasis. It is, 'what is.' Through its yoga, or yoke, we break free from 'what is not what' and return to 'what is what.' This is not only a great illumination, or Enlightenment, it is at the same time a great Liberation, or getting out of the self-constructed prisons in which we normally waste our life. William Blake's 'mind forged manacles' must be broken.

God is shared by the creation through, and the creation is united by, Rta, Dharma, the stupendous Quality of Static Pattern. The united creation is united in God.

The gift of Eros enlightens, enlivens, cares for and helps, and is shared by, all that it touches-- and it touches each and every one of us, as it does everything else.

By its gift, we are. By its gift, we walk in beauty.

God is, before we 'become what we are.'

DRAMA= The Instigator of Dynamic Quality

1,

Dynamic Quality -- with its sudden, unexpected reversals and abrupt discontinuities of events that create radically new landscapes in human affairs -- works mostly through 'drama.' This dramatic energisation of Dynamic Quality is needed, or Static Pattern prevails over and excludes Dynamic Change.

Thus, further help in drawing nearer the Daemonic can be obtained by an account of drama. What, then, is drama? What makes a human situation dramatic?

2,

The Greek words for 'action' are instructive..

The more common word for action is 'praxis', which is used to talk about everyday practical activity; 'practice makes perfect', 'the doctor asked me to call in at his practice', 'that is an odd practice they have in that country', are all examples of this. Aristotle distinguished such concrete, pragmatic action -- generated by 'phronesis' [practical wisdom] and 'poesis' [artful doing] -- from 'theoria', or abstract, theoretical thinking; he also distinguished praxis from the more formulaic and predictable 'techne' where we use a mechanical process to reliably produce a product.

By contrast, the Greek word 'drama' is not used in the everyday for action; it refers to action under special and limited circumstances: a deed, an office or duty one fulfils; an action represented on the stage [a performance], a drama, especially a tragic drama. The root 'dra' in the Greek 'dranos' has the sense of 'a doing, a deed.'

Thus, putting all this together, it can be concluded that in Greek there is a kind of action which signifies a 'deed' that is 'dramatic'-- a deed that is arresting, a deed with significant consequences for all involved, a deed that shifts the world, a deed in the public eye that will move those who witness it. This kind of action is realised directly in, and has powerful consequences for, the world.

Neither the flexible and improvisational praxis, nor the fixed and mapped out techne, are dramatic in the way dra, or dranos, is. Both might occasionally have 'dramatic' ascribed to them as an adjective, as when a healing praxis makes a new and surprising breakthrough in helping people, or a novel engineering technique allows a bridge to be built over a larger expanse of water, but drama is not an adjective qualifying something, it is a noun, a different something in its own right. It is actually a verb. A drama is a 'doing' that does something to the world that nothing else can do.

3,

Why are lengthy analyses of 'drama' so undramatic, and sometimes downright boring?

It is because they are too structured. They try to present drama, initially and descriptively, as if it were a structured reality, when the whole point about the feeling and visceral effect of drama upon us is that we are suddenly forced to confront something from the non-structured part of reality. Analyses of drama as a lawful entity obeying [meta] rules depict the 'dramatic' as if it were part of Static Quality with its Stable Pattern. But drama is precisely not part of that realm at all.

Drama is part of Dynamic Quality with its Unstable and Patternless Change. This must be conveyed in any opening summation, any initial overview, of drama as a phenomenon.

What makes a human situation, or a story about a human situation, 'dramatic' is that the Static Pattern in which most people live, day in and day out, is suddenly upset, interfered with, undermined by, the unexpected intrusion of Dynamic Quality.

The Stable Patterns of Static Quality can move, but they move in a circular dance. The Spiral is a perfect shape expressing Static Quality at its most profound. It repeats, but there is movement, because each circle sweeps further out from the centre, yet each sweep refers back to and is kept in balance by that centre. Such is organic, or natural, growth. Or look at the intricacy of a spider's web. Stable Patterning has both a higher holistic form, and a lower mechanical form; but it always uses structure to create coherence in orderliness, and movements that are more or less predictable. A whole aspect of Nature is like this.

But another aspect of Nature is not.

Stable Patterning produces mechanical and holistic structures, the former simplistic, the latter complex, but structure is always inherently 'static.' The other side of Nature is not static, but is inherently 'dynamic.' Hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes, are all 'dramatic' because they overturn the regularity, and dependability, of the Static, and introduce, often suddenly with little warning, the violence and power to shift things, of the Dynamic.

The 'dramatic' is like a fist in your face, wham! It is not a structure dancing into view, because that is static, but is a sudden event that is forceful and discordant, and this sets in train a succession of further events.. Drama puts the Dynamic into powerful motion in our lives, like a surging river whose forward rush is irresistible. It happens, like it or not, ready or not, and the way it pushes things into further motion happens, like it or not, ready or not.

Drama can be summarised by comparing it to a thunderstorm.

Drama is an Event, and this event is Dynamic. It starts to build terrible tension, then complicates and increases that tension, until finally the tension is released, for good or ill. This is how a thunderstorm happens.

Tension fills the air as it gets darker, winds start to blow, distant thunder rolls in and comes closer.

Then there are fearful rumblings very near, and dark clouds spit lightning forks that split the dark like sword strikes and hit the ground sparking fire. The winds are now roaring, and the rains start to pound down.

A climax of ferocity is finally reached, and then it is over.

It can end as suddenly as it came, but afterward, things are dripping in the purifying and renewing rain, or the landscape is ravaged by hailstones, bush fires, floods, or trees pushed over by the fierce winds.

To put this poetic analogy in its bare bones:

--Different, and conflicting, forces start to gather together, creating a conflict, bang!

--These opposing forces start actually clashing, bang!

--There is a climax to the clashing, a resolution, a result, bang!

The climax is an after effect, and this changes everything, for better or for worse, but nothing is unaffected by the raging storm. It can end in healing rain, or it can flood, burn, utterly destroy. One way or another, nothing will ever be the same again.

This is a threefold movement, as in Aristotle's analysis of Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3, but that threefoldness should not be interpreted statically as a structure of three parts. This is to misunderstand drama fundamentally. There are three 'phases', three dynamic moments in the happening, but this is simply because of the way in which the dynamically powerful forces that are opposing, and combining, play out their dramatic encounter. Pressure builds as they get involved, and a sense of their coming clash affects the whole scene. Then pressure is upped as the clashes start occurring, and drive inevitably toward a climax. Finally, the climax is reached, there is a 'big bang' like a cosmic explosion, and then this produces change which affects everything. This whole sequence is a progressive and escalating development in time leading to a cataclysm, not a harmonious gestalt laid out in space.

No summary in mere words can do justice to the 'drama' in this way of affecting things deeply enough to shift them fundamentally, but a brief way of putting it might be to say, 'the dramatic event of conflict changes things forever'; but the forces needed for this, then, go through three phases in their fraught and battling encounter.

Aristotle called these 3 phases, 'Decision, Action, Consequences.' In many ways this is an astute qualitative description of the 3 phases of the storm-- how it enters the world [Act 1], what it does to those caught up in and enacting its forces: protagonist against antagonist [Act 2], and the climax of the struggle, and its outcome for all, 'a change of fortune from good to bad or bad to good' [Act 3]. But this is all too beguiling for those who love structure and only dance to its gentler movement; for those who dwell in the Static will use Aristotle's observation of a three-phase severely intense process to 'construct' a secure scaffolding of different elements linked together lawfully and rationally. In short, drama ceases to be part of Dynamic Quality, and becomes re-absorbed back into Static Quality.

But that is why theoretical constructions of drama miss the 'dramatic' shock, surprise, wallop. They are both over complicating drama, in its simple fist in the face, and missing the peculiar and distinctive qualitative power of that fist. This qualitative power, though not a static structure, not a coherent and predictable pattern moving in its circle dance, is full of meaning. Drama reveals meanings otherwise lost, hidden, resisted, in everyday 'normal' life, and also not touched on at any level of Static Quality. Apart from direct personal meeting with the Daemonic God, the only way these 'dynamic meanings', or 'meanings pertaining to conflict and change in human affairs', get conveyed is through drama. Most of the stories of the Old Testament are dramatic because Yahweh so often intervenes in human conflicts on the stage of history that force changes of fortune on everyone involved. There are many deep spiritual meanings latent in drama, as we unpeel its layers, and wrestle with its forces. But this must be done existentially, not archetypically.

If you start with drama as complex structure, you lose its disturbing and revelatory power as simple event; if you think through drama in a way that is static, you miss the dynamic punch, the forcefulness, of that reality which stirs up conflict in the world in order to change the world.

Drama is about action, not words; it accords with the old adage, 'ignore what people say, notice what they do.' Only action exposes where we stand, or if we stand, and so only action relates us deeply to the world as a 'work in progress' whose direction we can influence. When we relate deeply to the world, we are thrown into conflict, because the world process is conflictual, advancing by clashes, but it is also 'contested' by different 'stands' with different 'interests', and so the real truth is we are thrown into an arena where the world's destiny is already being fought over. We are asked 'personally' where we stand in that conflict. By taking a stand for the common good, we come into collision with all those forces operating either selfishly or wickedly, and therefore a fight is on, and it is for real. The way the fight turns out will change us, and our adversaries, forever, for good or ill, but even more significant, it has consequences for whether the world is changing in a redemptive direction, where its possibility comes through, or going to hell.

Heraclitus= "Everything changes: war is the father of all things."

Drama is about the action needed to enter the ongoing conflict for the world, and by engaging it fully, change the world's destiny.

Heraclitus= "All things come into existence and pass away through strife."

Static Quality, despite its circle movement, is ultimately more given to Contemplating than active engagement through doing. Action is the heart of Dynamic Quality, in the way it 'moves' things. Contemplation will always seek the 'rationale' of whatever level of Cosmic Order it looks at, or looks into. Action will always take chances with, and make leaps into, the unknown, the messy, the imbalanced, and as such, has to accept the irrational, and act on faith.

Drama is the story of the deed most resisted and most needed by the world, and this action is always a matter of faith-- not reason, not imagination, not vision, not enlightenment. In drama, you don't know what you are getting into, and you don't know how it will turn out, but for some irrational reason only the heart knows, you answer the call to get involved, and give it your all. Somehow you know that your willingness to 'have a go', and indeed 'give everything you have' to make it 'your best shot', matters to the entire world process from start to end.

Aristotle pointed out that drama can end tragically, or hopefully with some sort of victory, but either way, there is a 'catharsis'; we are uplifted to witness a drama. He was also hitting the nail on the head about this, yet why?

Drama tests and proves something 'for real' in the hard school of existential knocks that constitutes the reality of this world. Thus catharsis shows us what is real, shows people engaging with it even at cost to themselves, and whether they fail, like Hamlet, or win out and then fail, like King Arthur, drama tells the heart the struggle for the world is not lost. It may be the eleventh hour, something can still be 'done'-- if you are willing to pay the price.

There's the rub. Those who only watch, but never commit to the living through of, drama let others pay the price of entering, and going all the way with, the conflict that is necessary to change. They won't pay.

Drama is the story of the existential action that has to pay much to enter the conflict where change for good or ill is decided.

That is why there is a punch to your face, boom! So much is at stake, you can do something about it or funk it, and either way change will happen, for good or ill.

We love drama, despite fearing its real cutting edge, because without its highly 'charged' event, something is missing.. Though there are very decent people, even saintly people, who live their whole lives in Static Pattern, the world's journey and battle from Beginning through Middle to End is poised on a knife edge, and needs heroes to tip the balance of forces one way, not let it

slide into the other way by default because no one will 'step up.' Someone has to step up. Someone has to be the hero.

This is a matter of Dynamic Quality, a Daemonic truth hard to bear yet creative in its doing, wherever that takes the hero.. The hero can never know if they made a difference.

The world, deeper down, knows. The world knows it needs drama, because quite simply, it is in a drama.

TWO FRIENDS IN ARLES

Van Gogh saw the passionate hand
Creating the universe
The tormented skies, the singing stars
Sunburst of the sunflowers
Intensity of corn fields
Perpetual motion
The fire burnt him up

But you Gauguin
Sought the serenity of Eden
The timeless brown women you favoured
Mysterious, immovable, at ease
An Egyptian frieze of static postures
Waiting in vivid colours
Iconic eyes that saw the long ago
That we will never see
They allowed you
Yet remained secret

Myfanwy Moran

THE ORDINARY LIVING OF EROS= 'Nothing Special'

Highlands of Scotland= "You have to go up with the water and down with the water."

1,

Eros is a primal, and Oriental, kind of religion, thousands upon thousands of years old. It is often called 'the Light from the East.' Some scholars claim that Mother India is probably its origin, but if so, this Eastern Light shines both near and far, from India through China to Japan in its eastward diffusion, and from India to the Middle East through the Near East to Greece in its westward diffusion. In fact, the Eastern Light goes on spreading through much of Eastern Europe but more or less stops at the Danube, not crossing into Western Europe. In the West, only mystics and other metaphysically inclined outsiders are touched by the Light that rises in the East, whereas in these other locales that are all 'Eastern' in some important spiritual sense, the Light of God is honoured in the culture as a whole, and thus the culture is built from its radiating energies and radiant luminosity. The whole culture is mystical, and cosmic.

This Light emanates from God's Love, and manifests that Love as a primordial Gift of Goodness, Life, Joy, in which all persons, creatures, things, inherently share.

Neither old philosophical reason, nor modern scientific intellect, are able to behold this Light; both are blind to it. Both are like the person whose eyes are glued shut, telling those whose eyes are open that 'there is no light in anything, in everything is only dark shadows.' For those whose eyes are illumined in the Light, and warmed in its gentle glowing, there are only two reactions to such 'darkness.' One, to laugh. Two, to take pity, and thus to take on the task, however onerous, of helping the blind to see, helping the asleep to awake, helping those living in self-imposed prison to be liberated.. The teacher who enlightens others, who truly shares what he sees by facilitating others still blind to see it for themselves, is invariably the central figure of Eros religion. This figure is the sage, the guru, the master, the elder-- the Buddha, the Enlightened One. This radiant being has a wisdom in regard to everything 'lit up' by, and brought to fruition in, the Light, yet this very wisdom also makes him compassionate towards all other persons, creatures, things, who have exiled themselves from the Light. He does not look down on them as hopelessly lost, but on the contrary, his attitude is that they too can come into the Light, and it concerns him that they put themselves outside it. He desires to pass on to everyone else the happiness he has obtained by virtue of receiving, really of 'realising', the free and gracious Give Away of the Light. The Light -- itself so basically generous -- does not make the person in whom it comes alive a hoarder of its felicity. On the contrary, enlightenment generates the same 'philanthropy' of the Light in the Light-Bringer.

This 'illuminated being' is not the Light itself, but the Light dwells in him, and passes through him to others, and in this sense, he has acquired the qualities of the Light itself= he is generous, giving without counting cost, and kindly, never judging harshly but seeking to help the person out of the 'error of their ways' which causes them to be lost, famished, hemmed in.. "Like a fish surrounded by water, piteously crying from thirst."

2,

RTa came to mean 'Order', but not as this term is usually meant in the West, but the Cosmic Pattern, the Way it All 'Holds Together.' Order= Holding Together. The Cosmic Pattern that Flows through everything, connecting everything. This is an Inherent Order, Sacred Order, Implicate Order, order-as-created-by-the-divine-- not the artificial and external order created by human beings. Natural Law-- not invented human customs called 'law.'

So, also, how what Holds Together 'Flows'..

From this you get all the Taoist [Hindu/Buddhist] teachings on Harmony, Interconnectedness and Interdependence of All Things, Balance of Opposites.. The Great Whole, the Round Dance. Everything is 'a part of it.' Everything has its necessary place in the Cosmic Pattern flowing through things. A tiny mollusc upstream in a mighty river is needed if there are going to be microscopic planktons for the huge whales to eat out at sea.. The Web of Life.. If termites did not fart as they build mounds, all life on earth would collapse. There are so many linkages, long and elaborate chains of link-ups, that some inherent, implicit 'design' is moving 'through' things.. This is not top-down imposition of an idea on things.. It is an organic -- working from unconscious to conscious -- emergent 'holding together' of all things..

Such order gives life, and so it is human 'Illusion' which breaks away and separates itself from 'what is', and then the human ego gets bloated, too big for its shoes, and in this falsely expanded condition it gets out of step, out of tune, with the Dance of the Whole. Hence, the ego also develops unreal desires and expectations and demands, from its position outside the Circle Dance, and these desires/expectations/demands which we put upon life [people, nature, the world] cause us to suffer, because 'life is not like that', and so our unreal hopes and fantasy wishes are always being rebuffed, disappointed, and made to sorrow for 'what we cannot have'.. Within the realm of Eros, human suffering is largely self-inflicted, and as such, is not a fate. On the contrary, it is the consequence of us becoming 'ignorant' of Real Being, cut off from the Light of Love and Goodness that is the Origin of each and all, and consequently far removed from the place of our being vis a vis this Origin and other beings..

In Eros, all beings are ontologically wired in to the Source, and thus wired up to other beings, and even wired to their own core, or foundation, of being, often called the Self in Hinduism, but equally called the No-Self in Buddhism, and the Ecstatic Self that transcends itself in Sufi and Eastern Orthodox Christian mysticism. Our real being is not in-static, but ex-static. We are

moving away from any clinging to self, moving out from the self, moving beyond the self, to be in Union with other kinds and levels of Reality. Everything is connected in some kind of basic meta-physical kinship. We too are related to the mollusk, the planktons, the whales-- and the farts of the termites. They are all honoured relations, with whom we have loving and life-sharing relationships. To each and all, we can say the Lakota prayer, 'all my relations.' If we confine this universal welcome towards everything only to 'all my relatives', we fall out of the Big Circle Dance of the Whole. Even that enemy tribe with whom you go to war, to steal horses, are your relations; you and they equally 'are a part of it.'

3,

In the West, we have dualistic 'right and wrong', but the mystical, and cosmic, meanings of Rightness in Greek and Sanskrit are nothing like that.. What is Right is 'what is', as God made it, in the beginning, from its core.. Rightness is what a being has just by being! The closest we get to this in the West, when we drop our usually dualistic ideas of trying to get right and avoid wrong, is when we say in slang about someone seeing, experiencing, doing, something, that they are 'right on.' You are right on target. You are right on the money.. This is a mystical state of being. Rightness means the being is, just by being, spot on; thus it needs no tinkering with, to improve it, or right it from wrong, because its inherent being is perfectly right as it is; it is, in its 'original face', linked with what is. The primal What Is rolls like a wave through all beings, thus at the underlying level -- hard for us to see and harder to trust -- all is well. All is well just as it is.

This mystical knowledge brings peace, happiness in the ordinary, spiritual joy, and maybe most valuable of all, simple contentment.. The usual discontent with one's lot, the restless looking always to improve it, vanishes.. Washing the dishes is Right. Sitting on the creaking old porch watching the sun go down is Right. Chores, jobs, callings, are all perfectly all Right, and none is more important than any other. Every moment, anything that comes in the moment, is totally Right. Everything in its own season.. Contentment of this far-reaching kind brings gratitude to be alive. We thank the Light-- by living it fully.

Thus Eros= The 'Right Hand' of God. It comes first, because it has to.

4,

Hinduism is arguably the most complete Eros religion in all the globe. It gives birth to infinite variations on its central theme; in some forms, impersonal in divinity, in other forms, personal in divinity, it hardly matters, because the key theme is always present, and always the same.. Return to the Light.. Buddhism reforms this Way of Return to the Light in various interesting, and necessary, respects, yet it is also guiding us back to what is 'Right', mystically and cosmically.

Everything is Right, just by existing, just as it is; we forget this Rightness, turn away from it, fatuously and sadly seek something else basically opposed to it, yet we do not ever lose it. We need a raft of 'practices' to un-forget, and remember, what we always knew from the beginning of our being. We need practices to rewire ourselves, to 'plug in' again.. This is what the temple, and the monastery, offer us in Eros religion.

These practices, both sacramental and ascetic, help us turn away from the false way that leads us away from the Light into the dark of shadows [ascetical aspect= for example, fasting], and help us turn toward the true way that leads us back toward the Light [sacramental aspect= for example, ritual]. One of the more subtle challenges on this Way of Rightness is when people seem to accept the yogas, the yokes, of practice, but are secretly doing this in a manner that subtly allows the ego and its 'delusive cravings' to creep in and poison the practice. Acute discernment is needed on this path.

And because RTa means a river Course, you get that entire emphasis in Taoism on how things in our life, as well as in Nature and the Cosmos, have to be allowed their Mysterious Flow-- provided we don't interfere. Happy is he or she that allows things in life their inherent ebb and flow, rise and fall, coming and going, and gets in step with the Dance, or gets in tune with the Music. The Dance and the Music are always there.. By opposing it, we create our suffering from 'attachment' to the unreal.. Our false way tries to stop the river's 'course' through life, through human events.. We choose the 'better', and avoid the 'worse.' This makes us permanently crippled by fear, since life will not go in the way we want it to go-- we want it to go in a way that will entirely protect us, greedily fill us, narcissistically aggrandize us.. We go against What Is, by picking and choosing what we say Yes to as different to what we say No to.. This is a cramp on us.. This is the 'mind-forged manacles' we impose on our lives..

Yet, getting in tune, getting in step, walking in balance, dwelling in harmony, is harder than it might first seem, especially for 'civilised' people, because we must give up a lot of treasured Illusion.. This is why RTa religions are always Ascetic – the monk/nun exemplifying the process of loss to the Ego and its Desires/Expectations/Demands -- yet there is also the Temple aspect – the priest to facilitate people joining the Dance, to orchestrate people's joining in with the Music. The priest has the task of uniting people round the Light— Water [the Illumination and its Flow through all things], and to minister to them, a pastoral and 'staying together' role; the priest is trying to build up community, which is really a Communing in the Gift.

Thus, RTa religion always has monk and priest, with greater or lesser emphasis on one or the other of these two roles/figures, because it is necessarily Ascetic and Sacramental.. Disillusionment in what we thought marvellous, but is really toxic trash, so we can seek what is genuinely Good, is another way to describe the Ascetic aspect. We fast to overcome humanity's usual ploy of using 'polite eating' on the surface to mask 'devouring' underneath; we fast to find the real feast. Similarly, another way to describe the priestly aspect is to point out that it is the celebrating of the Gift

with everyone, all included, none excluded, and thanking the Giver for the Gift. This is a marvellous feast, and the Dancing aint bad either, and the Music will bring you ecstasy-- and at last, acceptance.

It is what it is.

I accept what is.

This is the gateless gate to things wonderful beyond compare.

5,

Let no one denigrate Eros religion. Its Rightness has to start the ball rolling..

The Sinister Left Hand of God comes later..

When the Gift comes under a new and unexpected duress, the Daemonic stirs in a new and unexpected way. The Daemonic exists in Nature, and indigenous peoples know it in that context, but it is in what the Jews call the 'World' that the Gift is attacked, and the Daemonic has to chivalrously step up, to protect the Sacred Origins, and face the 'existential arena of spiritual test', called 'Nisayon' in Hebrew, where the Daemonic Dragon will fight a new adversary more evil than anything faced by Eros, and go down a new, and hard road.. That is a different story for a different day.

THE SACRED CIRCLE

1,

“A wheel was shown to me, wonderful to behold. Divinity.. is like a wheel, a circle, a whole, that can neither be understood, nor divided, nor begun nor ended. ..no one has the power to divide this circle, to surpass it, or to limit it.”

Hildegard of Bingen

2,

“You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The East gave peace and light, the South gave warmth, the West gave rain, and the North with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tipis were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation’s hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.”

Black Elk

3,

May it be beautiful before me
May it be beautiful behind me
May it be beautiful above me
May it be beautiful below me
May I walk in beauty

Traditional Navajo Prayer

ANCIENT VIEWS OF NATURE= Bushido

1,

A good example of 'balance' in Nature is this. Since reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone park, the wolves have stalked and killed elk. Hard on the elk... But it has led to more willow trees, more beavers, and new bird habitat-- birds driven out by elk over feeding have now returned..

Balance means the interconnectedness and interdependence of things, but it also means that to coexist in this whole with other beings and things, every being and thing has limits placed on its own expansion. Spiders stop flies expanding too much, like wolves stop elk expanding too much; any being or thing has its own niche, and if it expands beyond its 'natural boundaries', the Whole itself is harmed, and then that very being or thing will in the long run be harmed!

Acknowledging 'limits on your expansion', because it threatens other beings and things, and eventually threatens the Whole Fabric in which everything dwells, is not something human beings seem very good at, especially in the West. Unlimited expansion, to a point of sick fantasy, is at the heart of the recent financial collapse. The selfishness of the very few has jeopardized the continued survival of the vast many.

2,

Bushido -- the ancient Samurai Way of Japan -- rests in a number of formative elements, including Buddhism, and older still, Japan's native Shamanism called 'Shinto.' Reading up about Bushido recently, by a famous Japanese author, I came across some interesting and very explicit statements about Nature.

Two claims stood out as worth always saying explicitly in any debate about Indigenous Shamanism versus [or vis a vis] Western science.

Both humanity and Nature [including the entire universe] are moral, and spiritual.

1---Bushido would reject the claim of T. Huxley -- a great propagandist for Darwin in the 19th Century -- 'that the cosmic process is un-moral.' This idea has become ingrained, taken for granted as merely obvious, in modern Western culture. But is it true? It is rooted in abstracting out of Natural phenomena only the one mechanical aspect, the aspect which is analyzable into discrete variables in cause-effect interactions. But that leaves much of the actual phenomena of Nature not noticed. What did the ancient samurai 'see' and 'experience' in Nature, and indeed 'do' with Nature, that led them to conclude that there is an inherent ethical dimension to the natural process in which living and non-living things inhere? We should not debate this issue on the level of 'explanation.' When you debate the sorts of explanation you need

to make sense of things that is already much too abstract; start instead with the phenomena-- all the phenomena, not just the parts which are reductionistic, but the holistic factors that are not 'explained away' by mechanistic theories, but simply overlooked. Look at the phenomena thoroughly, and contemplatively. Different dimensions, and different questions, crystallize if you really bother to immerse in the phenomena.. This acute noticing of new phenomena previously ignored is what leads to Kuhn's 'paradigm shifts.' If we really plunge into Nature, and look and listen without the usual preconceptions, if we really just observe, experience, interact, will we notice 'beauty', 'meaning', even 'ethical purpose', that current Western science just filters out initially at the level of phenomena? If you only focus upon one limited set of phenomena easy to explain according to the mechanical model, then it is no great surprise when the theoretician comes up with a mechanistic explanation of these phenomena. This does not prove only these phenomena exist! But that is how modern Western science operates; it says, 'only the phenomena we can fit our paradigm to are worth noting.' Here, method legislates what exists.. If you can measure it, then it is real. But this puts cart and horse backwards. Aristotle got it right 2500 years ago, when he argued that science must be phenomenon driven, not methods driven.

Thus, what are the phenomena that can be seen, experienced, interacted with, 'empirically', which demand a non-mechanical paradigm to understand them, because they support the interpretation, contra T. Huxley, that on the contrary to his famous assertion, 'Nature is moral'? This ethical dimension in Nature may challenge certain sorts of morality that we take for granted [those rationalizing 'individualism', for example], whilst supporting other sorts of morality we neglect or dismiss [those pointing toward communalism, interdependence, and opposite tendencies like yin and yang needing to be in balance].

2—Bushido would embrace the claim that not only is Nature moral, but even more important, Nature is spiritual. Spiritual forces, spiritual presences, spiritual dynamics, inhere the rhythms and textures of natural processes. This claim is not unique to Bushido, nor world-wide Shamanism. The Buddhists and the Greeks saw three levels in Nature, and indeed in all existing entities= [a] the gross or the sensible, [b] the subtle or the intelligible, [c] the pure or the mysterious. The Greek Christians saw the Logos as the meta pattern or 'implicate order' bringing all things together, not only in balance, but also in a togetherness of sharing. Thus this Logos in Nature has [a] flesh or material embodiment [b] blood circulating through-out all the cells of the body, and [c] bones binding everything together; these 3 levels correspond to 'Body, Soul, Spirit.' Hence St Maximos said that the Logos had 3 equally important incarnations= in Jesus, in Scripture, and in Nature. Logos is the Divine Light in Nature that undergirds its diverse designs and its oneness [unity in diversity], as the Spirit is the Divine Energies that move, dynamise, change, Nature.

But again, it is necessary to start with phenomena, before jumping to any interpretations. The key point is, on what phenomena do these interpretations

rest? If you put the phenomenon first, as phenomenology requires you to do, then from studying the phenomenon without a priori theories, operational definitions, quantitative measurements, you empirically get immersed in qualitative, subtle/intelligible levels of gross/sensory things, and you even encounter the indwelling of what is pure and mysterious. In phenomenology, the emphasis is not on testing any hypothesis already formed, but on discovery which operates inductively-- the conclusions, ideas, interpretations regarding the phenomenon's qualitative meaningfulness 'emerge' out of the direct study of it. This method of phenomenology is empirical-- indeed in some senses more empirical than the a priori logic to which much of science is glued.

God is not an explanation of anything; the divine is a reality that is seen, an experience, an encounter. The same is true of Nature— we see the divine active in Nature, we experience the divine active in Nature, we encounter the divine active in Nature. This is 'phenomena', right alongside the phenomena you can measure, analyze, reduce, explain. With these phenomena, you cannot predict and control them— the human is not in the driving seat. But that fact is part and parcel of their empirical nature as phenomena. You can be in I—Thou 'with' them, but you cannot be in I—It 'towards' them. Moreover, interpreting them authentically turns out to be a very different cognitive exercise to the usual sort of explaining; but that too tells you about the nature of what you behold, empirically.

In sum, all the primal peoples, many Shamanic, but some Buddhist and some Christian, who bore witness to the empirical 'fact' that Nature is [1] moral, and that Nature is [2] spiritual, were using, as their methodology, an early, non-formulated, but none the less perfectly cogent form of phenomenology.

Hoka hey!

EXPERIENCES OF EROS

Paul Ricour= “the spiritual joy ..and ..beatitude designates, under different names, the only affective mood worthy of being called *ontological*” [p 161, ‘Fallible Man’, 1965].

1,

“Everything was melting together and I was melting into everything just as a piece of ice melts into water. I was no longer afraid for there was nothing to fear. There was no difference between life and death. I was happy for the first time in my life and so very grateful.

..There was no such thing as loneliness.

I know that I had always judged things in relation to myself, because I was a separate entity” [p 26, ‘A Taste of Water’, CJ Lee and TG Hand, 1990].

2,

“And as my ‘self’ was melting away into something infinitely larger than myself, there was just one huge wave of warmth, Love and Delight. At last, there was only One, not two. There is nothing but the Dharma. Nothing else. I am myself: just this.

Later the question of my identity arose and I realized with great clarity and joy that as a person ‘I am Dharma as it manifests itself in the way of Laura. This is my true nature.’ It does not belong to me. It is the ever-changing ‘right-here-now.’

Later.. Everything shone forth with incredible simplicity of Being, of which I was an integral part. ..actually there was no ‘I’ who was experiencing or thinking this..” [pp 27-28, *ibid*].

THE PHILOSOPHER'S EROS

1,

“..the recognition of the ontological mystery.. is.. only possible through a sort of radiation.. which is perfectly well able to affect souls who are strangers to all ..religion of whatever kind; ..this recognition, which takes place through certain higher modes of human experience, in no way involves the adherence to any given religion but it enables those who have attained to it to perceive.. in a way which is not open to those who haven't ventured beyond the frontiers of the realm of the problematical and who have therefore never reached the point from which the mystery of being can be seen and recognised. Thus, a philosophy of this sort is carried by an irresistible movement towards the light which it perceives from afar and of which it suffers the secret attraction” [Gabriel Marcel, 'The Philosophy of Existentialism', p 46, 1956].

An irresistible movement towards the light which is perceived even from afar, and is attractive even if secretly, creating a yearning to be joined with the light, bathed in its luminance, recreated in its radiance— all this is Eros working on the soul.

2,

Like Husserl and Heidegger, Sartre distinguished ontology from metaphysics. For him, ontology is primarily descriptive and classificatory, whereas metaphysics purports to be offering accounts about the ultimate origins and ends of humanity and of the universe as a totality.

Sartre does not try to combat metaphysics as a deleterious undertaking. He simply notes that it raises questions we cannot answer.

Marcel differs on exactly this point. His perspective echoes ancient Greek, and even Hindu, metaphysical ontology. It is a mistake to claim the approach that is 'metaphysically ontological' is non-phenomenological, seeking instead to give a 'causal explanation' of ultimate things. These ultimates are also open to observation and experience, provided the eyes are open, and the mind is awake to what it sees. Modern people, especially in the West, refuse to take in all the levels of reality that presents as a given. We select a small sample of the 'bigger picture', and ignore the rest, in our description of 'what is' [ontology] for the sake of further thinking about how we know it [epistemology].

It is necessary to take in all, not just the gross and sensory, but also the subtle and intelligible, as well as the mysterious and pure. All this is empirical in the real sense of the Greek word. To experience and to observe leads us from the blatant to other realities beyond its limited boundary.

Heraclitus= “Most people do not take heed of the things they encounter, nor do they grasp them even when they have learned about them, although they think they do.”

THE SCIENTIST'S EROS

'Supercooperators, Altruism, and Human Behaviour.
Or Why We Need Each Other To Succeed'
Martin Novak, Canongate Publishers

This jaunty and upbeat book was written by a former Professor of Mathematical Biology at Oxford University, now based at Harvard University in Boston, USA. It has been reviewed in the magazine 'Oxford Today' [www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk/].

"He challenges Darwin's notion that evolution is based solely on principles of mutation and selection, and points out that cooperation and collaboration, 'the snuggle for existence', have had a much more far-reaching influence on the development of life on earth than individual self-interest.

In a wide-ranging.. introduction to his theories, he declares that 'cooperation is the architect of creativity throughout evolution', and demonstrates how it is essential to everyday life at every level-- from cells cooperating in order not to mutate into cancer tumours to buyers trusting sellers on eBay. Many animals and insects are superb co-operators and.. he reminds us that ants have lived in harmony with nature for 100 million years while humans are endangering it after only 200,000 years. However, what makes humans different and gives them the potential to be supercooperators is language.

Other chapters deal with how reward, not punishment, encourages creativity, ..and how being 'hopeful, generous and forgiving' as prescribed by most religions can actually be proven mathematically to be a winning formula for life on earth."

The 'social' practices [virtues, beliefs] of solidarity, sharing, cooperation, collaboration-- such is the spiritual ethos by which indigenous peoples originally lived. This is Eros. Kinship with humans, kinship with nature, even a feel for inanimate matter like a sculptor has in order to free the possibilities already latent in the stone, the wood, the clay-- this is the driving force that 'saves' life, repeatedly, and allows it to expand, to prosper, to reach fruition.

THE MYSTIC'S EROS

1,

Rumi=

“..What am I to do with this ravine
that has opened within me,
where once I lived,
you live
yet you are nothing, no one
so within me now lives
nothing that I know!

..God touches me
at the sweet core
and changes
that which I was,
the rock of earth,
into the body of communion,
to be taken or given
as you choose..”

2,

Heraclitus=

“We should let ourselves be guided by what is common to all. Yet, although the Logos is common to all, most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence of his own.”

“The waking have one world in common, whereas each sleeper turns away to a private world of his own.”

“Although the Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it.. That is to say, though all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be.. without any experience of it.. Men are as neglectful of what they do when awake as they are when asleep.”

THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S EROS

Ernest Becker [p x, 'The Denial of Death', 1973] describes Eros thus= "the urge to the unification of experience ..towards greater meaningfulness"; and= "the world needs more Eros and less strife. [Eros is] the harmony that unites many different positions."

Rollo May has traced such Eros in the growing up of the child; Freud's 'infantile sexuality' is a diminished take on it.

Kierkegaard has found Eros in First Love, the timeless moment of falling in love that feels like it cannot end but never lasts, yet bestows a permanent blessing life long..

C.S. Lewis hits on a pervasive theme of Eros, East and West, when he points out that the desire for the Divine Love -- really stronger than 'desire', more like the German term 'sehensuch', implying aching yearning or terrible longing -- is so overwhelming that even if unsatisfied, it remains preferred to any other desire which can be satisfied.

Everyone and everything we adore as the Beloved mysteriously partakes in, and symbolically reflects, the God of Eros, whether we realize this or not.

THE INTELLIGENCE OF LOVE

Heraclitus= "Nature loves to hide."

The secret side of things shrinks away from the objectified scrutiny that Martin Buber calls I -- It, nor does it open up to the self-expression of unfettered subjectivity. The interiority in everyone and everything only opens to the genuinely inter-subjective dialogue which is I --Thou. This dialogical connection between person and world, and between person and person, reveals both to each other, as no other stance – objective or subjective -- ever can.

Marcus Aurelius [121--180 AD], the Roman emperor-philosopher=

"The soul attains her perfectly rounded form when she is neither straining out after something nor shrinking back into herself; neither disseminating herself piecemeal nor yet sinking down in collapse; but is bathed in a radiance which reveals to her the world and herself in their true colours."
[p 144, 'Meditations', book 11, 2004].

Rumi [1207-1273 AD], the Turkish Sufi poet=

"There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorises facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world.
You get ranked ahead or behind others
in regard to your competence in retaining
information. You stroll with this intelligence
in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one
already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the centre of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out."
[from 'The Essential Rumi', trans C. Barks, 1995]

When people do not love, their intelligence about life departs.

The nous and the soul are conjoined in Eros.

NOTES ON SOUL AS FEELING

Paul Ricour= “..feeling is ontological. It shows us something about the nature of being. It reveals that we are a *part of being*, and that being is therefore *..the medium or primal space in which we continue to exist*” [p 118, ‘Fallible Man’, 1965].

In ancient Greek and in ancient Hebrew, ‘feeling’ belongs to soul-- not to heart. The ancient traditions, in both everyday language and in religious theology, would have said, not= ‘I feel in my heart’, but= ‘my soul feels.’

Feeling is to be distinguished from emotion -- which belongs to the shallow side of heart -- and feeling is to be distinguished from passion -- which belongs to the deep side of heart. Passion is not ‘intense feeling’, for feeling has its own rhythms and variations, its own gentleness and strength.

Moreover, feeling is richer and broader in its ‘reading’ of reality than thought. Feelings do not follow from, but precede, cognition. Nietzsche= “Thoughts are the shadows of our feelings-- always darker, emptier, simpler.”

Basically feeling is part of soul because feeling is a unifying kind of communication that connects the person and other persons, or even the person and things. A person who cannot feel is separated from persons and things, and being thus at a distance, has to use the mind to speculate on what is out there. Feeling establishes an immediate bridge, such that there is no longer the gap of separation, but a contact, even a ‘touch.’ When we say, ‘that touched me’, or ‘that was touching’, we are referring to being reached in our feeling. When we ‘feel our way’, it is as if our rational eyes are closed, but our arms are outstretched and we are literally sensing our way ahead; thus do we refer to the need to ‘feel our way into situations.’ Feeling is, as Anita Harmon told me once, “a trust sense.” We must trust to feel, because if we have no trust at all, we pull our feelers in. Where emotion is stupid, crude, and explosive [like the genie in the bottle who cannot be contained but must break out], feeling is intelligent, subtle, and can ‘hold’ many things in tension without having to be relieved of them. With emotion, we have an outburst and forget it, but feelings are long lasting, holding things over time. Emotions are threatened in basic ways, but feelings can be hurt, and hurt in very sophisticated ways. Emotion ‘has to do something about it, right now’, but feeling can savour it, ponder it, sift it, digest it, over long stretches of time. There are only a few crude emotions, but feelings are as complex and varied as an artist’s palette, full of not only many colours but even more shades of colours. Emotions tend to go in one direction, so there is only room for one emotional tone at a time, but multiple feelings can co-exist, nuancing something, even holding it in ambivalence. Feeling is the two-way dialogue of spoken and unspoken, and totally embodied, relationship [if the words do not convey the feeling, then look at the body postures and movements]. As Jung argued, feeling is not only intelligent about the two-way relationship always going on between the feeler and the felt, but feeling is inherently ‘evaluative.’ This makes the feelings in the bonding process between mother and child a

major source of true morality, not super-ego social control, for it is in feelings that the child is first empathised with and as a result learns to empathise. To be able to feel what you are feeling tells me you are a sentient, vulnerable, being as I am= and this caring about the feelings of others starts to be learnt early in childhood. But in feeling it is even more immediate and direct= I feel you, you feel me, this is our relationship happening in the here and now, it brings us closer together, and is thus a process of 'befriending.' There is in feeling a 'welcoming of the other' [welcoming many things is a soul function] that creates friendship. People who cannot feel do not real friends make.

All this means that it is through feeling we draw close and unite with Otherness, be it person, thing, creature, even idea. When we feel an idea, we do not just think it objectively, but it invades our subjective being, and therefore inter-subjectively we can dialogue with it on a different, more holistic level. We feel ideas that are dead and deadening, just as we feel ideas that are alive and enlivening. Heidegger called 'contemplation' a state of soul where we are 'ravished by the being of the other.' This immersion is a type of baptism in the very life of that which we contemplate. This happens through a kind of soul 'vision' saturated in and grounded in feeling. Again, there is an openness in this amounting to a trust and befriending. Through feeling, we are immersed in life, not spectating it at a distance 'intellectually.' In feeling, we 'participate' in what we encounter. We do not spectate and speculate, we immerse and participate. The metaphor is water= we swim in water, and the water is itself a medium of connectivity. Water flows between us, and we bathe in this same water, not merging but losing separation; in the same water we are at one, and thus share life.

Feeling is 'situated'; it tells us about the complexity of the situation we are in. Through feeling we 'pick up what is going on', on all levels, and whether this is harmonious or discordant. To convey what feeling really is, Heidegger had to invent a new word for it in German, which reads something like 'how I find myself in this situation.' This implies we do not know what we will feel until we are in a situation, in a relationship with someone; we can hypothesize what it will be like, but the reality can be, and often is, very different. We imagine we would like to be in love, but when you are there with the person, your feeling tells you what it is really like. Through your feeling you find what it is like for you with someone, or what it is like for you in a certain setting; feeling discovers how it is for us, as well as how the other is. Feeling is an inter-subjective bridge, connecting objective and subjective in an active two-way relationship. When we ask, another or ourself, 'what was it like for you, with so and so, or in such and such a situation?', we ask= what did your feelings discover there, in the actuality, never mind any ideas or imaginings about it from outside, not 'in', it. Feeling reveals what is like to be there and undergo it, be there and go through it. This is why in everyday parlance, as in psychotherapy, the term 'feeling' is often used interchangeably with the term 'experience.' It is often feeling that first tells us what we are experiencing with people or with situations.

This, then, is more accurate to the ancient Greek and Hebrew traditions= 'the feeling of my soul tells me..'

Feeling knows by participation. That desire dynamizes soul with thirst, longing, yearning, for 'knowing' -- the knowing of God, the knowing in sex which is likened to mystical congress with God, knowing nature, knowing the world of culture, knowing life -- means that feeling's intelligence, evaluation, fullness, is constellated round the meta theme of participation= whether we participate or not, and the richness of content of our participation. Feeling pushes us, via desire, towards a fuller participation. This makes feeling 'full', 'rich', 'fulfilled to overflowing.' For feeling, harmful damage separates, and thus the urge in the healing of feeling is to reunite that which has been cut asunder. Because feeling can 'feel' anything and everything, so the breaches to be healed in the damaged feeling life include not only the family, or society, but different and mysterious ontological levels and kinds of being, such as that referred to by St Maximos as paradise and the world, male and female, sky and earth, invisible and visible, God and creation. We speak in too facile a manner of the 'bonds' of affection uniting us; we should realise these bonds are real threads of fate linking us and linking many things around and above and below us. Feeling is a 'fabric' of woven connective threads. The soul can use multiple gifts, like imagination, to un-weave and re-weave these threads of personalness, of society, of the cosmos. The soul is rooted in the ontological, and feeling is part of the connective threading that makes the single fabric. People, nature, invisible spirit, God, are bonded in complex fabrics of togetherness. Feeling knows this is so and contributes to making it more so. Damage to feeling is damage to the fabric of being. When our feeling is hurt, stunted, twisted, or as in Shamanism, 'lost' [spirited away= soul loss], then all we can do is lose all sense of this fabric we are really part of, and due to that, we will probably inadvertently rip it to shreds wherever we go, and whatever we do. Our very un-feelingness rips the fabric that bonds together people, nature, cosmos, invisible spirit, God.

A psychologically and spiritually acute account of feeling comes from a book by John Heron called 'Feeling and Personhood.' Heron is critical of Buddhist metaphysics, and thinks they have confused the duality or separation created by ego with the necessary personal distinctness or otherness of relationship= the 'inter personal' I—Thou. The only genuine non-duality is not oneness as fusion, but the twoness that makes possible genuine 'dialogue' of person with person ala Martin Buber. Thus Heron speaks of feeling as unitary but not merging= his favoured terms for feeling include 'attunement and resonance', 'indwelling and participation.'

L. Hyde takes up the same theme. He says it is feeling through which we "place ourselves in communion with what we find outside ourselves." Thus the Christian theme of 'communion', even the Trinitarian and mystical 'being as communion', can only be incarnated in and realised through feeling. 'Beingness' is articulated through feeling. When our being is in communion with other beings -- indeed when in that more radical condition our very being is, and lives by, communion with all being -- then this will be manifested and even dynamised by feeling. Feeling will be, and already is, the waves in a vaster ocean.

Heraclitus= “You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you travelled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its meaning.”

A DISCUSSION ON EROS

'Eros' arouses 'Desire', as the Daemonic sparks Passion

1,

A Greek friend says many scholars translate the Greek 'Eros' as 'passion.' This is lazy, and a huge mistake.

Eros engenders desire for the Erotic Object, Erotic Being, Erotic Reality. 'Eros' is the Mysterious Source of all eroticized reality; the mother in the eyes of the baby, the beloved in the eyes of the lover, God in the eyes of the mystic. Eros evokes 'desire, yearning, longing', for the plenitude of its being. Whatever we love 'erotically' is seen by us as a source of the goodness, beauty, life, which we desire: thus we are 'drawn' toward it. This desirous state and being attracted to and drawn toward its source, is the precise nature of the energetics involved. Desire is born in the soul, not in the mind nor in the heart [though they may give assent and augment it].

2,

The dictionary is never very subtle in discerning, but under 'erotic' [Greek= erotikos] it says, 'pertaining or prompted by sexual love', or 'increasing sexual desire', or 'moved by sexual desire.' Not all desire, or desirous love, is sexual, of course, and that very terminology reflects the Western bias of centuries, when 'erotic' degenerated into 'sexual.' Eros is a Presence, an Energy, a Power, an Overflowing Gift.

Eros is not just modernity's absurd 'sex-object', but is always seen by the Greek Christians as a Source or Well-spring of Love, Light, Life, that is given freely, that is given 'gratuitously' and 'graciously' [the sun shines on just and unjust alike, and so does the rain fall on good and bad no different]. Eros loves those who respond to its 'draw' and equally loves those who block it off, to try to be a separate ego. Eros is All-Embracing and All-Inclusive. Eros can indwell a human person, nature, and cultural creations, all of which exert a pull of desire upon us. God is the ultimate Source of all Eros= everything we desire, including sexuality, reflects God, shares God, manifests God, in some degree and in some way. Thus St Maximos will say [a] that many different spiritual and physical realities can be Eros-ic ['erotic'] to us, [b] but wherever we love erotically or desire erotically, we are 'really' [without realising it] loving God. Even a drug addict desirous of sweet oblivion from the fix is really seeking God, Maximos would say. Even false erotic desire, and its deceiving phantasies, are a distortion of the Goodness of God revealed in the genuine Eros.

"He or she who loves is loved." Aristotle added to this, "we only learn from those who love us, and whom we love in return." Eros is a Divine Love so generous, so alive, so full of light and beauty, so 'naturally' [inherently] giving of itself, all creatures who behold and feel it are desirous of being Joined to it. Union is the goal of that in us 'moved' by Eros. Sharing, participation,

communing, are all by the gift of Eros. Sexual orgasm, if truly erotic and ecstatic, is not so different from other forms of mystical ecstasy. When sex is loveless and mechanical, it has nothing erotic and nothing ecstatic about it; that is why so many people are sad after they make love.

By Eros all beings have being.

By Eros all beings grow from ill being -- depletion or loss of being -- to well-being, and from well-being to eternal being.

When Buddha said attachment is the cause of our suffering, he was speaking of desire. Desire has to grow up, and be schooled by, loss, acceptance, letting go. We cannot possess Eros, or own it or 'have' it; we can only 'be' it. Learning its true nature, finding the love in it that is not egoic, is very hard. From Japan to the Danube, people have always known 'pruning the plant' is needed to 'free' our relation to Eros. We 'fast' from deadly poison so as to eventually come to be able to 'feast' on living goodness.. What dies in us to reach the real Eros is our ego, our sense of separation, with all its plotting and planning, conniving and scheming, against others, and ultimately against the Ultimate Reality of Eros.

We do not have to grab at Eros; the very grabbing at it is what prevents it giving itself freely to us. When we stop the grabbing, we discover it was always available, filling us and by moving through us, linking our being to all other beings who are, like us, benefited and fulfilled by its giving.

When we try to 'cling' on, or cling to, Eros, we lose it. Our clinging insists that the world and people be such and such.. We re-arrange reality in our 'phantasy-wishing' to be what it must be so we can cling to it.. But reality is not like that. Thus we suffer because we resist the way reality is. Such suffering can cease when we accept that we cannot cling to all the people, things, activities, that embody Eros for us.

Consequently, the kind of 'in-static identity' we fall into blocks off Eros. We no longer can open to and dance in the energy of Eros, because we are self-enclosed, our permeable body becoming 'armoured' [as the body therapist Wilhelm Reich puts it].

Blocking off Eros makes us Ignorant [what I want is unreal], Grasping [I must have that], Hateful [I must oppose you because you grab away from me what I must have].

The description of the three-fold human personality imprisoned in 'delusive craving' is the same in Buddhism and in St Maximos. Both are wrestling with Eros, discerning the difference between the genuine vs. the fantasy or bogus..

It can be concluded that instead of using the phrase 'sexual passion' or 'erotic passion', it is necessary to stay with 'Erotic desire' and distinguish it from 'Daemonic passion.'

MARTIN BUBER ON EROS

[‘Between Man and Man’, 1965/1975]

1,

Buber’s ‘I—Thou’ is the apogee of personal Eros. This permits union of the two ‘as one’, but it does not allow merging, or fusion, in which the otherness between the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ entirely disappears, in the name of mysticism.

Buber explicitly denies the claim by mystics that their soul disappears into God, or what amounts to the same, that the soul and God, or the soul and all of existence, becomes a ‘Oneness’ in which all distinctness of being is ‘erased.’ Buber argues that ostensible mystical experiences of Oneness are not really between the soul and God, the soul and all of existence, rather they occur within the soul; they are experiences of the undifferentiated ‘un-grund’, or featurelessness, within the soul [‘The Wordless Depths’, pp 24-28]. Before entering I—Thou, there is a basic undifferentiated unity to the life of the soul. This is not dissimilar to the ‘uncarved block’ of Taoism.

2,

Buber points out that the “powerful, world-begetting Eros” of the Greeks is the same as the “light ..whose sphere was the soul.. For the primal God Desire from whom the world is derived, is the very one who ..in the form of a.. ‘spirit’ enters into the sphere of souls and.. carries out here, as mediator of the pollination of being, his cosmogenic work: he is the great pollen-bearing butterfly of psychogenesis” [p 28].

This pollination by Eros reaches down from the plenitude of the Uncreated into the ontological foundation of the created, the very soul of its body. For Eros does not simply draw the created, like a magnet, ‘back’ to its origin, as in the Far East, reconnecting what had become disconnected; rather, as it comes West, Eros grants the creation more space of its own in which to breathe and grow, and crowning this, the creation is given its own seed of goodness, beauty, aliveness, and Eros fertilises that seed, like the butterfly with the flower, causing it to blossom in its own magnificence as something not copying the divine but developing divine themes in a way that is ‘new.’

Therefore, not to draw everything back to God, but to bring everything forward to its own completeness, becomes the creative power exercised by Eros. We are pregnantly carrying something given by God yet because we are different to God we come to a fulfilment of this gift in our own way. God does not just draw our poverty back to the riches of divinity; God really gives away these riches, planting them like jewels far underground in the soul, so that as the soul ripens, these riches develop in our nature, becoming ours to care for and harvest.

Eros is not just the beauty toward which the entire creation yearns; Eros also beautifies the creation in its own right, and in doing this, urges the creation to accept it is valued for itself, by being the target of divine love.

Both aspects of Eros – the impersonal magnet, the personal pollination – have a certain point in a certain context.

Sexuality illustrates the difference in emphasis. One kind of sexuality, as Freud showed, harks back to the maternal breast. He called this regressive. Another kind of sexuality, which Freud did not understand, is progressive and goes forward in the mutuality of husband and wife -- Uncreated and created working together -- to create new life, the 'child' of husbanding erotic energy and the wifely fertile field of nature wherein a seed potentially of great glory is latent.

3,

Buber distinguishes not between a pure heavenly and profane earthy Eros, a distinction he rejects, but a genuine and a fake Eros, an Eros of dialogue and mutuality which truly has wings, and an Eros of monologue and self-enclosure pretending to the real, but in actuality broken-winged. Buber speaks [pp 28-29] of the “paltry gestures of love.. [which are] lame-winged under the rule of the lame-winged one..” and he refers to lovers who “cower where they are, each in his den, instead of soaring out each to the beloved partner and there, in the beyond which has come near, ‘knowing’.” In the ancient Hebrew of the Jewish Bible, according to Buber’s translator [R.G. Smith, p 207], “lovers ‘knowing’ each other is not limited to the physical, but means a connection comprehending the whole being of the beloved.”

Thus persons who are “loyal to the strong-winged Eros of dialogue know the beloved being.. The two who are loyal to the Eros of dialogue, who love one another, receive the common event from the other’s side as well, that is, they receive it from the two sides, and thus for the first time understand in a bodily way what an event is” [p 29]. An ‘event’ is when the two come together, and a third arises between them.. This is inadequately described as neither subjectivity, nor objectivity, but ‘inter-subjectivity.’

“The kingdom of the lame-winged Eros is a world of mirrors.. But where the winged one holds sway there is no mirroring. ..I do not assimilate into my own soul that which lives and faces me, I vow them faithfully to myself and myself to them, I vow, I have faith” [p 29].

Buber says that the winged Eros has “the simplicity of fullness”, but the pseudo version is manifold. He describes a whole variety of phony versions where there is no ‘soaring’, no ‘ex-stasis.’ There is the person only in love with his desire itself. Another wears his Eros-inspired rich feelings on his sleeve, like medals. Yet another is “enjoying the adventures of his own fascinating effect” [p 29]; he glories in his power to dazzle those he chases after. Still another is “gazing enraptured at the spectacle of his own supposed surrender” [p 28].

And another is “collecting excitement” [p 28]. “There one is displaying his ‘power.’ There one is preening himself with borrowed vitality. There one is delighting to exist simultaneously as himself and as an idol very unlike himself. ..There one is experimenting. And so on and on—all the manifold monologists with their mirrors, in the apartment of the most intimate dialogue” [pp 29-30].

This ‘simulated’ Eros is both narcissistic, self-obsessed, and devouring of its love-object: the other becomes an ‘object of use’, to be exploited, and then discarded. Self-love invariably consumes what it desires. Such consuming by one of the other is the counterfeit of union between the two.

Buber sees much the same dynamic of false Eros in the charismatic leaders who relish the power of their ‘influence’ over gullible followers, justifying this by deceiving themselves and the group that they are “molders of youthful souls” [p 30]. Such people call on Eros as the “tutelary god of this work” [p 30], but that is delusional. By mesmerising the profane and vulgar herd, leaders such as Napoleon and Hitler could draw people into mindless submission to any evil deeds.. Does not the same broken-winged Eros preside at modern day pop concerts?

“They are all beating the air” concludes Buber [p 30]. Only when two say to one another, ‘It is Thou’, does the Shekinah -- the ecstatic, feminine, ontological bridge of uniting -- dwell between them.

‘God dwells there’, as in the Temple; and so in the winged Eros, the knowing of lovers is a Temple where God dwells, manifest in their joining, physical, psychological, spiritual.

DROWNING IN THE SEA OF LOVE

By accident, listening to old Fleetwood Mac. The song I most react to is 'Sara', a trance-like song that draws you into a place of melodic beauty and an unexpected heartbreak that you cannot defend against. The beauty of the soul brings with it, unforeseen and unwanted, the breaking of the heart..

It is a strange song, whose parts are more than they seem, and the ultimate coherence more than the sum of parts.

It is about a failed relationship, but then a bitter twist of fate that befalls the new relationship in which so much hope is placed. We all do this: when the long-standing relationship drowns in troubles, we yearn, as the song says, to solace that wound by 'drowning in the sea of love.' The woman has left her long lasting relationship, battered and stifled, frustrated and blocked, to start again with a man she loves, a man with whom she can surrender to the sea of love. But there is a more savage blow awaiting her. For the new lover, so welcome after the pain of the old failed love, betrays her, choosing to go off with her best friend. She loses both her male lover and her closest female friend. The first wound is followed by a second, more ultimate. The first cut is not the deepest. The second cut goes deepest of all..

You can read these events as the literal backdrop of the song, but they do not get close to explaining its power. Something more fundamental, and primal, is at work underneath.

The lines that open the song, as its haunting melody begins to unfold, state the deeper truth poetically, and for us all.

"..Wait a minute baby, stay with me a while, said you'd give me life, but you never told me about the fire."

This is it-- you said you'd give me life, the soul, but you never told me this life would bring with it the fire. Life is the soul, in its unitary fullness, its melting fullness, and when its abundant water flows and wells up, we can drown in it, and call that 'love.' But the fire comes and ends the life of the soul. We do not want to call that love, but sense maybe it is..

This opening contrast between love as the promise of life, but unexpectedly bringing fire, is like a prophecy, a foreboding, that sets the scene for the rest of the song.

'Drowning in the sea of love where we all love to drown' is true as a description of soul to soul union, and it encompasses all the quasi mystical meshings and onenesses of babyhood and childhood and through to early youth. The mother and baby drown in the sea of love, primordially, but many other enmeshings follow, with certain people, with nature, with imaginal figures, with moments out of time, all bringing the well-springs of the soul to life. Falling in love in early twenties, or late teens, is the climax of all these

soul mergings, summing them up, yet going farther with the God Eros who is visiting the soul. Psychologists have all but ignored the falling in love of early adulthood, when we are still children, even babes in arms, yet in our youthfulness are moving out into a deeper sea in which to drown.

And we are like the singer in this song= we say to the God of Eros who has come and gone, you promised you'd give me life, but you never told me about the fire. Eros goes, and the Daemonic comes. The heart cannot drown in the sea of love; it wants to, because this is its first poem, but the fire ends that innocent soul life, and by doing this, also breaks the heart. The heart is scorched by fire.

There is another more mature love, but as the poems of youth are a gift, this poem of fire has to be searched, worked for, died for, if it is to come again. It seems impossible. The fire is dangerous, ruthless, implacable; it will give us a different sea of love, a sea of fire, but we will not drown impersonally in it, rather we will have to stand in it, as a person.

And as I write this, I see an old Gaelic warrior, standing on the strand by the sea, as the massed killers move in, and he is motionless, but his sword is drawn.

In maturity, in the sea of fire, we stand as a person, and give the heart.

But it is hard to let youth go. It hurts. Its tears are strange, full of sorrow, yet comforting as well.

The fire burns everything away.

Still, it is hard to let go. The promise was real. He did say he would give our soul life, and he did; what he didn't promise was the fire that would inevitably accompany it, the fire that consumes even the second, most romantic chance of love.

As my oldest friend's most moving song puts it, 'it is the fire next time.'

For wounded lovers, this is hard to bear, but the only solace.

THE DAEMONIC AS 'DUENDE'

As far back as Goethe, it has been realised that the Daemonic is cognate with the 'duende' of Gypsy Flamenco music.

Duende is 'deep song', or 'canto profundo.' It is forged in 'black inexplicable pain', as Lorca calls it, or 'existence pain', as Yalom describes it. Kierkegaard calls existence 'absurd', not only because it does not 'add up' in any sensible, or rational, manner, but also because it does not come to us as already meaningful; on the contrary, meaning is at depth unsecured, non-guaranteed, uncertain.. Everything we thought solid is revealed as poised over nothingness, in existence we are 'out over' an Abyss..

The Daemonic is *discrepant* with any natural and cosmic 'given' pattern, not just with the rational order of science and other intellectualist schemes. The Daemonic cannot be fitted into the Circle Dance of the Whole, the metaphysical and universal Order that 'holds things together' in [amicable] harmony, and [flowingly] balances all opposites. It does not fit within this fluid integration, it is not the discord that resolves in harmony, it cannot be harmonised, it cannot be balanced with any opposite, it is not the converse, the twin, or any kin, of anything in the Great Round. The Daemonic rises where pattern, metaphysical or rational, comes to an irrevocable and wounding end. The Daemonic is not a part of any Sacred Geometry. It does not compute, arithmetically or holistically.

Henceforth, ultimate meaning will only be made in a depth that can, and more often does, kill all meaning.

Manuel Torre: "All that has black sounds has duende."

Federico Lorca: "The duende, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought."

The dagger
goes into the heart
the blade of a plough
into barren land.

No.
Don't run it through me.
No.

The dagger,
like a ray of the sun,
sets fire
to terrible depths.

No.
Don't run it through me.
No.

Dry land
quiet land
of immense
nights

Old
land
of oil lamps
and sorrow.
Land
of deep cisterns.
Land
of death without eyes
and of arrows.

And Lorca added: "The duende only comes if death is a real possibility."

The Daemonic is a mystery and a presence that calls the heart into the existential arena, to test the ultimate by subjecting it to the passing.

This is the mystery of the heart, its terrible grief, and the terrible power that comes of standing on groundless ground.

Before the wound of the Daemonic, the heart is not called. It dances with the mind and the soul and the body in the great circle, but it is not called. When the Daemonic wounds the heart, it wakes. It is called. Its terrible and beautiful name is spoken, because it is summoned to the fate only the heart can bear, only the heart can endure, and only from the struggle with black inexplicable pain will come the strange destiny worthy of the heart.

THE DAEMONIC WOUND

1,

God relates to the world both through Eros, his right hand [the 'correct'] and by the Daemonic, his left hand [the 'sinister']; both are ways God loves all that he has made.

2,

However, when God Daemonically stretches toward us, it is a different matter. Even if it is true that the 'essence' of God -- God qua God -- is immune to all risk, or trouble, nevertheless in relation to human beings, God takes on something very different: God takes a risk with us, and the world, which requires personalness, heart, passionateness, to sustain it; and this becomes what God burns into our poor human clay, to make it God-bearing, despite its earthiness. The Spirit finds material it can seize, violently, and upon which it can burn, explosively. When we see only the spiritual light, it is often because the spiritual fire that is radiating it outwards has not yet emerged on our horizon, and crossed our path. It will. The light only heralds the fire that is coming.

Martin Buber describes it=

"The world is not divine play, it is divine fate. That there are world, humanity, the divine person, you and I, has divine meaning. Creation happens to us, burns into us, changes us, we tremble and swoon, we submit. Creation-- we participate in it, we encounter the Creator, offer ourselves to him, helpers and companions. Revelation does not flow from the unconscious, it is master of the unconscious.. It takes possession of the existent human element and recasts it.."

Such is the Daemonic.

Without the Daemonic, divinity would have no dynamic outreach toward, and relationship with, the human heart, hurting and moving it in equal measure, in order to rouse our personal willingness and kindle our heart's passionateness. The Daemonic God is the God of the heartbreak, which means, the God of the deeper heart, the heart that is an unfathomable abyss, the heart with a God-shaped hole.

The Daemonic God forces us out of our head, and anchors us in the difficulty and hardship of the heart.

Without this wound of the Daemonic, which is also the existential blow of fate, we would stay in the head; and with a head lacking the heart to root its feet in the hard ground of existence, the heartless head would proceed to concoct metaphysical abstractions of deity-- expansive but vague airy spaces into which we can float free from the earth, attributing to them any metaphysical

qualities we like, such as 'eternity' and 'infinity', and others, including the Greek 'impassibility' -- which implies an 'above it all' plenitude, impregnable and unchanging. This metaphysically invented 'god' can be fullness or emptiness, a cosmic pudding or a cosmic void, it makes no difference, because such metaphysically 'neutralised' [and neutered] deity loses all capacity to affect us, or be affected by us. Instead of the 'passibility' arising due to God affecting humanity's heart, and humanity affecting God's heart, which creates a story of naked black and white as well as of vivid colour, we get the faded pastels, and bland white outs, of a deity that has withdrawn from the arena of this world into a bloodless abstraction-- and the whole point of that abstraction is that it is safe from us, and we are safe from it. No story will ever be told about such a divinity and us that would have anyone on the edge of their seat. The abstraction floating somewhere at a distance from the terrors and pathos of life is not only bloodless, but depersonalised, so it is safe and calm, nothing to get anxious over or to be concerned for. This ultimate 'something or other' was mocked by William Blake as the 'Nobodaddy'-- nobody's daddy. The 'theism' of his day [1820] had turned in this direction, but the pseudo mystery of god-as-abstraction can be theistic or non-theistic; indeed, it works better non-theistically than theistically, in many respects. The Great Vapid that fills the mind with lift off, but has no ontological gift for the soul, nor any existential burden for the heart, is a vacuous god, a god of vacuity. This is the only flimsy 'divinity' many people today can tolerate, given the deadness in their soul, and the aching absence in their heart.

To be abstracted out of the existential danger, and cutting edge, of this world is 'salvation by existential de-situation.' A deity that is some sort of ill-defined abstract entity is preferable to the God of the heartbreak.

THE DAEMONIC TEST

It is only in what most threatens, undermines, and injures meaning that we will find the most profound meaning.

THE DAEMONIC FIRE

Seneca= "Gold is tried by fire, brave men by adversity."

Exodus, 20, 20= "God has come to prove you."

1,

Truth is fire. It never just illumines, invariably it burns. It burns up the false, which is hard, but far harder, it burns up much we reckoned true. The fire is also death, it ends things we hoped would last forever. It is glib, and facile, to refer to this annihilation as simply 'lying fallow like the winter until the return of spring.' New beginnings are not guaranteed, nor are they even the point. The fire brings change, radical and fundamental; it is not the 'transition' from the worn out to the renewed. It is a real ending, and if a 'different' way follows it, that is hard won, and 'depends'.. It is not assured. If you think you can see light at the end of the long dark tunnel, then you are simply not in it. What changes us can also destroy us, if we do not let it burn the truth into our heart. We are thrown in at the deep end, and the struggle this initiates is grievous.

The 'dark night of the soul' followed by a guaranteed bright dawn, the desert of the heart followed by a guaranteed garden-- this is disrespectful of what the Daemonic does to us, what is at stake, the stabbing wound and the testing it inaugurates.

The fire ends all 'hope in life', and makes the heart carry a burden it cannot comprehend; all we know now is, its weight is too heavy. We protest against what the heart must carry.

No one seeks the truth. It is the dagger whose utter precision knows how to pierce and penetrate, and set ablaze.

We are glad for the dagger's acute and troubling accuracy only if we are willing to seek the new land of heart beyond the point where all hope died.

2,

Old and New are, like yin and yang, part of the same universe, the same paradigm; there is a shift within the paradigm, like the shifting of summer fruition into winter deadening, but winter degeneration will reliably shift into spring regeneration. Thus dark still balances with light, loss still balances with fulfilment, death still balances with life. Luther Standing Bear= "We learned to do what only the student of nature ever learns, and that was to feel beauty. We never railed at the storms, the furious winds, and the biting frosts and snows. To do so intensified human frailty, so whatever came, we adjusted

ourselves.. without complaint. This appreciation enriched.. existence. Life was vivid and pulsating, nothing was casual or commonplace” [quoted in Kent Nerburn and Louise Mengelkoch, ed.s, ‘Native American Wisdom’, 1991, pp 19-20]. But, ‘the storms and blessings of existence’, alternate and flow into each other. The Daemonic is held in check in nature.

The indigenous peoples, like all of us, could ‘adapt’ to storms coming and going in concert with blessings. The Daemonic electricity enlivens even as it threatens. Yet the loss of their way of life as a whole, the loss of their land and their culture, the fatal blow to their tradition, is a firestorm to which they have not been able to adapt. The same is true of the Jews sent to the Nazi concentration camps. What kind of God allows this extremity of dying?

What adversity is this? What proving is this?

The Daemonic, when it really comes in full, shorn of natural symbols and pure in the Spirit, raises the question which pains the heart beyond bearing.

The point is, the Daemonic is outside the cosmic harmony entirely. It destroys that harmony, to reveal a more naked, brutal, ‘place’ in existence, where something stupendous is risked, that something unbelievable might be attained. In this disruptive dispensation of the Daemonic, humanity is both more vulnerable – ‘frail’ in Luther Standing Bear’s terms – yet also more standing alone, more bold and active, having only one thing to rely on= the truth of fire, like a dagger thrust with exquisite accuracy into the heart.

Fire is not the transition from Old to New within the checks and balances of Eros as the Web of Life, an exemplar of yet another ‘necessary contrary.’ Fire destroys to create something radically and fundamentally ‘different’, which no people, tribal or civilized, has yet realised, nor manifested in anything like fullness. In the new land of heart, the freedom that allows hideous evils to arise is also the prod for the heart to awake and take on its inexplicable calling, sounded direct from the heart of God.

Heraclitus=

“Fire is the point of departure for unceasing change.”

“Fire in its advance will catch all things by surprise and judge them.”

The Wisdom of Solomon, 3, 5-6=

“God has put them to the test and found them worthy of himself;
in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.”

TIME= The Vehicle of the Daemonic in Human Existence

Heraclitus= “Everything flows and nothing abides. You cannot step twice into the same river.”

Time as experienced on the ground by the human person -- not ‘subjective time’ but ‘inter-subjective time’ and its whole reference frame – was ignored by Einstein as the starting point for his scientific theorizing. This is what falsifies it, according to a new critique by Stephen Robbins [Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research, July 2010, Vol 1, Issue 5].

Robbins has written a revolutionary paper, supporting Bergson’s [qualitative and phenomenological] account of time against Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity. Though its detail is a strain on the little grey cells, never the less the excitement of Bergson’s criticism of Einstein comes through [see parts 1.0, 2.0, 2.1, 2.2, 3.0 especially].. Bergson’s account of time is more descriptively accurate to the actual qualitative phenomenon, which is ‘time as experienced by human consciousness.’

Basically, Bergson is saying that Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity is *too abstract and too static*. It is a concept abstracted away from experienced reality.. This is the phenomenological critique of science in a nutshell= science is not sufficiently empirical, because science is too abstract.

In this paper, we meet an essentially Buddhistic account of reality as flux, flows within a holistic field, waves of changing states.. All is moving. Not nouns, but verbs, are reality. “Form is only a snap-shot of a transition” [p 328, Bergson, 1907/1944]. When we abstract away from the ever flowing and in-change reality, we do so to freeze it, to make it static, for only in that manoeuvre can we measure it, dissect it, pin down its cause-effect variables.. Even Einstein, in his account of time, fell victim to that tendency of science to be anti-empirical, because the framework it builds denies our experiential encounter with reality via consciousness. As Alex used to say to me, it is not psychology that should learn from physics, it is physics that should learn from psychology. A phenomenologically grounded psychology.

As Existentialism teaches, time is primal in human existence, and its quality is constant motion. Everything is ‘passing’.. Everything passing through time is passing away in time. Nothing in the world is ultimately fixed, constant, stable. Reality is basically Dynamic, and only secondarily Static.

But the claim that reality *is* motion, as well as obviously Buddhistic, is also Daemonic.

The Daemonic is the power of change that, by intervening in the flux, shifts the flux and changes the direction of what s always changing. The Daemonic

answers the question= how do you change what is changing? You cannot stop it from changing, for flowing is its inherent reality. You have to re-direct it, re-energize it, alter its whole dynamic basis.

In other language, this is called 'changing the heart.'

DAEMONIC IN ANCIENT GREEK

The source consulted here= 'A Greek--English Lexicon', compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 8th edition, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, London, 1897 [see p 322]. This huge dictionary looks at how Greek terms are used in literature, philosophy, religion, politics, everyday life, from the early epic period of the Iliad and Odyssey, and Hesiod, through the age of Tragedy and the Historians, and the Peloponnesian War, right down to late Roman times.

The ancient Greek word 'daemonic' has many meanings.

[I] DAEMONAS

- to be under the power of a daemon;
- to suffer by a divine visitation [Aeschylus].

[II] DAEMONIZOMAI

A Greek speaker said this term 'daemonizomai' has the sense of= "something happens to me."

- each one hath his own fate appointed;
- to have griefs decreed one;
- to be deified [Sophocles];
- to be possessed by a demon, as in epilepsy;
- an inferior divine being, a demon, an evil spirit.

[III] DAIMONION

- the Divine Power, the Deity, the Divinity;
- the name by which Socrates called his genius, or the helping spirit that dwelt within him.

[IV] DAIMONIOS

A Greek speaker struggled a little with the translation of 'daimonios' and said= "clever, no, not exactly clever, inspired and capable of doing extraordinary things."

--the person addressed is in some astonishing or strange condition

[a] mostly used as a way of reproach= "thou wretch",

[b] but more rarely by way of admiration= "noble sir! excellent man!",

[c] also by way of pity= "poor wretch";

--anything proceeding from the Deity, heaven-sent, divine, miraculous, marvellous;

--a divine intervention [in human affairs, in historical happenings];

--visitations of heaven;

--by divine power;

--ill fortune;

--marvellously, strangely, extraordinarily;

--most clearly by the hands of the gods;

--like a demon, devilish.

[V] DAEMONO

--heaven-sent visitation.

[VI] DAEMON

--Homer's use of theoi [gods] and daimones suggest that, while distinct, they are similar in kind= only later are they distinguished;

--in Homer, daemon is mostly used of the deity's 'Power', while theos is used of the deity's 'Person' [e.g. 'a god in person'];

--most commonly used of 'The Divine Power';

--with the Divine Power, by its favour;

--joined with the Divine Power;

--one's lot or fortune;

--in tragedy, of good and ill fortune; sometimes good fortune, more often ill fortune;

--'daemones'= souls of men in the golden age, acting as tutelary deities-- "the ancestors"; these formed the connecting link between gods and men. Hence 'daemones' were sometimes spirits of lesser rank, and when so, THEOS is never used for DAEMON, but DAEMON can be used for THEOS [daemonic becomes the descent from God, not the ascent to God= the descending God]. In later times, 'daemones' is used of any departed souls= "The Dead."

[VII] ROOT OF THE OLD WORD 'DAEMON'

[1] One possible root of the word 'daemon' links it with 'knowing', and 'skill in fighting'; the knowledge a warrior needs to fight well. Hence a famous phrase, 'daimoni dosos'= "I will kill thee." This suggests that the Daemonic is the strife, and tumult, necessary to spark change.

[2] The more likely root of daemon is 'daio' = "to distribute destinies." The Daemonic allots the fate that befalls each and every person; their human destiny depends on how they react to such a divinely decreed fate. This rules out both passive fatalism [I can do nothing in the grip of fate], and arrogant conquest of fate [I am not defined by the situation into which I am thrown, rather I define that situation]. How the human heart chooses to meet the fate inflicted upon it, with bigness or smallness, will create its destiny.

[VIII] SUMMARY OF MAIN THEMES

1= divine visitation;

2= divine visitation as a suffering which one undergoes;

3= divine power;

4= divine power that visits and seizes hold of one; to be in the power of God; to be indwelt by God, by God's Spirit; to be in communion with ancestors in the Land of the Dead;

5= to be deified by this divine power; to be joined with this divine power, and to be favoured or blessed by this divine power;

6= to be put into a marvellous, strange, miraculous, extraordinary, inspired condition by divine power, a state of creative excellence or of spiritual potency in the doing of certain hard things;

7= the fate God puts upon humanity as a whole, and upon each of us personally, especially our share of human suffering; our lot= in tragedy, sometimes good fortune, more commonly ill fortune;

8= that which, in the grip of, exposes our worst, our lowest, our most abysmal in the negative sense, our most ignoble and mean and small hearted; and that which, seized and possessed by, brings out our genuine nobility, bravery, good heartedness, moral integrity, and luck; and that which, in the power of, makes us poor, wretched, reduced to nothing, pathetic, grieving and sorrowing and pained.

9= that which is heaven-sent, but in a downward, descending motion;

10= that which clearly comes from the divine, because it is beyond the capacity of the human= the human when dynamized or energized or empowered by the divine; divine empowerment to do something God wants done;

11= divine intervention in human situations, in human history;

12= the Dead can serve the living, because by virtue of passing through death, they have accepted the ultimate fate and the ultimate wound of the Daemonic; they are on the other side of this existence's Mystery, and its Inexplicable Pain, and its Koan that cannot be solved, and its Cross that cannot be escaped, and hence can help all those of us who are on this side of that Irrationality;

13= the power of God to affect and shake up and reverse and fundamentally change everything, which works as a Mystery beyond all human comprehension, including theological comprehension no less than scientific comprehension or philosophical comprehension; God as Ultimate Darkness, God as Great Mysteriousness, God as the Holiness which operates Irrationally;

14= the daemonic is confused with the demonic, with the evil spirit or devilish spirit, because it is ambiguous= it is the 'bad' God does us, for our good, and this differs from the bad that comes from evil, which intends only our destruction.

[IX] HISTORICAL TRENDS

[1] The archaic distinction between the Daemonic as helping inspiration, and power, however harsh its ethos ['noble spirit', from 'agathos'], and the demonic as malignant influence, and force, however enticing its ethos ['malicious spirit', from 'kakos'], was gradually lost over centuries among the Greeks until it entirely lapsed in Christianity. I once asked a native of Crete, not educated, if he recognized the term 'Daemonic.' He looked stumped, then furtive. "A fiery spirit, a red fire" he answered. "But the church has interpreted this as a demon" he added. So, Daemonic became demonic, and God therefore is deemed all Good, all light, whilst the devil is all Evil, all dark. This childish duality, this psychological mechanism of primitive 'splitting',

misunderstands the paradox, ambiguity, ambivalence, contradiction, and reversal, of the Divine Fire of Holiness.

In reality, as one commentator points out, it was Plato who developed 'characterizations of the daemon as a dangerous, if not evil, lesser spirit.' Unfortunately, the Greek text of the Septuagint maintains the same Platonic tradition of demoting the Daemonic, since 'angelos', or messenger, is used to refer to the good daemon, whilst 'daimonion' is used to speak of nature spirits less than God, idols, foreign gods, and in the New Testament, 'evil spirits.'

[2] The Greeks had more or less turned away from the Daemonic once Hellenism became dominant. Heraclitus can speak of both Eros and the Daemonic with equal authoritativeness, but though Socrates has a spirit guide, Plato is on a very different path from his teacher, despite his interest in Socrates' account of 'divine madness.' Interestingly, it was the priestess Diotima who taught Socrates that the Daemonic, and Eros, were both ways in which the divine goes out of itself [ex-stasis] in relating to the mortal, "transporting divine things" to the human, and "transporting human things" to the divine. This goes beyond mere influence, and hints at the capacity of the Daemonic, and Eros, to divinize the human. Thus, neither the Daemonic, nor Eros, were clear-cut in unequivocally belonging to the divine or to the mortal. Their push and pull operated 'between' divine and mortal, bridging that seemingly uncrossable gap. Thus one commentator says that Daemons are spirits 'of the same nature as both mortals and gods.'

[3] This mixing together of divine and mortal applies in a very potent way to the Daemonic, because in it the divine descends 'down' to the human, rather than the human being raised 'up' to the divine. If 'theos' is used to indicate the 'turning up' of divinity 'in person', then the Daemonic is understood not as the 'appearing' of the divine, but as the impetus or energy of divine power; there is a person behind such power, but not visible to visionary experience, or any kind of imagination. This person is present in a peculiar mode of their activity, an energy with a powerful effect on those whom it 'possesses.'

John Zizoulas argues that the gods and goddess do not really disclose themselves as any sort of genuine personhood, but only as personas, masks, richly gifted 'personalities'; this is nothing akin to the person in Buber's I—Thou. However, the gods and goddesses do appear 'in person' in the different sense of 'showing up', and 'showing forth', their particular and varied charismas. The same does not occur with the Daemonic. As Hesiod puts it in his 'Theogony', the Daemonic always remains unseen, and is only known by its actions which impact upon people. This is why the Daemonic hardly figures in Greek mythology or in Greek art.

Tacitly, the Ancient Greeks distinguish 'gods and goddesses' from 'spirits'; the gods and goddesses are confined to Mount Olympos, looking at the human condition from above and outside it, from the vantage point of their

superior abilities and marvellous talents, but Spirit and spirits penetrate everything and go everywhere, searching out the meaning that cannot be conceived, imagined, envisioned. This is Daemonic.

The Daemonic is God as Spirit – not God as theos, deos, deity.

[4] Nietzsche claimed that Hellenism used the gods and goddesses as a means of denying, virtually a defense against, Daemonic Reality. In his early work, 'The Birth of Tragedy', he says this=

“The Greeks were keenly aware of the terrors and horrors of existence; in order to be able to live at all they had to place before them the shining fantasy of the Olympians.. Their tremendous distrust of the titanic forces of nature: mercilessly enthroned beyond the knowable world; the vulture which fed on the philanthropist Prometheus; the terrible lot drawn by wise Oedipus; the curse on the house of Atreus which brought Orestes to the murder of his mother: that whole Panic philosophy.. the Greeks conquered -- or at least hid from view -- by means of this artificial Olympos.

..the tragic hero shoulders the whole Dionysic world and removes the burden from us. ...the hero readies himself, not through his victories but through his undoing.”

Nietzsche implies that the only hint of the Daemonic that survives in Hellenism is the cult of Dionysus.

[5] The simplistic duality of 'angelic versus demonic' entirely banishes the Daemonic.. The good is static, only evil is dynamic. The good angels are boring and staid, the evil devils are having a ball and riotous. Hence= “Good is the passive that obeys Reason and Evil is the active springing from Energy” [William Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'].

[6] This, in turn, had a hand in introducing the bias in Western culture that favours light and 'due proportion of form' over dark and 'excess of forces.' Both Eros and the Daemonic were lost as this opposition took hold, with Eros becoming reduced to the Apollonian and the Daemonic becoming reduced to the Dionysic, or in a later and somewhat different version, the opposition becomes Classical versus Romantic.. Eros is more than, though it includes, Apollo; and the Daemonic is more than, though it includes, Dionysus.

In modern times, the clash of Apollo and Dionysus seems little more than a personification of contrasting psychological factors in humanity, rather than having any extra-human significance. Thus, Apollo is merely= conscious and rational and restrained, whilst Dionysus is merely= unconscious and gargantuan and explosive. A false order, established consciously, invites a false energy, brewing unconsciously, to break out from its suppression. This is just a psychological dialectic, born of psychological bias. One extreme

swing of the pendulum has to be corrected by the converse extreme swing of the pendulum.

On the relatively few occasions when the Daemonic is remembered in modern Western culture, there is a strong tendency to simply equate it with 'Dionysic eruptions of the unconscious.' It becomes easy to confuse mere emotional bursting out, and various neurotic ways in which we rip apart the over-organized fabric of our life, as 'Daemonic.' The Daemonic gets demoted to obsession, mania, hysteria, orgies of sex, paroxysms of violence, drugged fantasies.

Goethe does capture something of the atmosphere of the Daemonic, but is himself so identified with the Olympian ideal of the German culture of his day, his statement is partial, and prejudiced=

"..the daemonic element appears in its most terrifying aspect when it manifests itself predominantly in a human being. During the course of my life I have been able to observe several such men, sometimes closely, sometimes from afar. They are not always the most admirable persons, not necessarily the most intelligent nor the most gifted, and rarely are they remarkable for their goodness of heart; but an extraordinary force goes out from them, and they have an incredible power over all creatures, yes, even over the elements; and who can say how far such an effect may not extend? All the moral forces banded together are powerless against them; in vain do the more enlightened among mankind strive to render them suspect as deceivers or deceived; they pull in the masses, and they can only be vanquished by the universe itself with which they are in conflict. It is from observations of this nature that the strange and terrifying saying probably arose. Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse-- No one contrary to God, unless God himself" [from Goethe's autobiography, 'Dichtung und Wahrheit'--'Poetry and Truth'].

Is Goethe really speaking of the Daemonic person in this quote, or is he pointing to the Dionysic person in whom there is insufficient Daemonic Spirit? Zorba the Greek, full of Dionysic élan, had a good heart. It is arguable that someone like Hitler, exposed by the Daemonic as having no heart, never the less retained sufficient potency of life energy to magnetically draw many people to him, like moths to a flame.

The other misunderstanding of the Daemonic arises when it is confused with Eros.

Berdyayev, usually reliable in such matters, descends into bathos trying to show that 'unfettered' sexuality can stir people to madness, and that this power to burn people up in madness is what is meant by the Daemonic. Thus, an increasingly "frenzied atmosphere" builds up, producing "over tension" in the air, and this generates, in turn, "a hubbub of hell." Such sexuality is also described as Dionysic, consuming and annihilating the

individual; it is “volcanic”, an “explosion of all the forces of passion pent up in humanity. It knows neither law nor form, and its pressure drives the deepest parts of human nature to the surface.” The sexual hysteria is a “leaping flame”, a “devouring fire”, but a fire that becomes “ice”; such fire ends up by reducing us to “extinct volcanoes.”

It is clear that such sexual fever happens, in real life as well as in the soaps on TV. It is nothing to do with the Daemonic. It exemplifies the problems people have with the ‘yielding’ that is necessary to experience the ecstatic ‘going out of self’ in Eros. This is the true release. All human beings have serious resistances against yielding, thus they cannot enter the genuine ecstasy which not only releases the self from its bondage, its in-static stasis, but unites love with sexuality. They run around like chickens without heads, creating a big theatrical performance, but at root they do this crazy ‘venting’ because in truth they cannot surrender to the Energy that would free them from enslavement to the self, and would unite them with the beloved, and as an overflow from this, with all else.. We want to leave the prison cell, but cannot trust the ecstatic love that alone can open the cell door; so we tear the cell apart, hoping to get free. It doesn’t work. Lessons must be learned before we can love ‘erotically.’ We must curb the ego, and its corrupting influence which makes desire ‘grasping’ rather than open handed.

Thus, certain difficult vicissitudes of Eros are mistaken for the Daemonic.

Arguably the worst example of the loss of the Daemonic Spirit in the modern era is Stefan Zweig’s book [1925], ‘The Struggle With The Daemon.’ Though Zweig’s impressionistic language might occasionally be read as acknowledging the Daemonic as a spiritual power outside of, and other to, the human, which descends to and enters the human heart to destroy and recreate it on a blacksmith’s anvil, more usually he mistakenly identifies the Daemonic with supposedly irrational forces of nature which are inherently without any direction, or purpose. At other points, where Zweig tries to give a cosmic dimension to the Daemonic, he conflates it with Eros. Hence, Zweig veers between error and confusion..

When Peter knelt before Christ, and implored Christ to leave him because he was a sinful man, his plea recognized Christ as Daemonic. Heyoka, or Reversal Clowns, and certain Shamanic Holy Persons, as well as certain Warriors, were often feared in Indigenous societies. You do not identify with these people. You tread warily round them, because they do not keep to the social boundaries, but always point straight to the deeper heart in whatever they say or do. When persons strong in heart are wanted, such Daemonic humans are sought out, and asked for help; much of the time they are not wanted, because ordinary people do not want to be reminded of their loss of any heart. They just want to get on with mundane living. They just want to be happy. They just want all the things their particular cultural script tells them they should seek, to fit in, and indeed to rise up towards prominence. So, the

true heart, in its agonized ecstasy, is an embarrassment in polite society, which is 'getting on with' the job, raising the kids, making money, and the rest.

In such varied ways, the Daemonic has disappeared from the cultural, social, political, parlance.

But the Daemonic continues to operate, named or not named, pictured or not pictured. The Daemonic was always, and still is, 'shown' by its results.. Do not look to names, do not look to pictures. Look to actions, energies, powers, that have unexpectedly powerful outcomes..

HEADS AND TAILS OF THE DAEMONIC

The Daemonic is Tragedy and Humour.

The Coyote is the wisdom more on the humour side, though laughter and tears remain close, and where one occurs, the other soon appears, because they address the same thing= the paradox of the human condition. Looked at in one way, this makes us laugh; looked at in another way, this makes us cry. Redemption involves both the tears of heartbreak, and the deep belly laugh.. In a weird way, both accept the human predicament, saying amen to it.

In Romanian folk tales, there are characters in whom 'one eye laughs and the other eye cries'..

Black Elk= "When a vision comes from the Thunder Beings of the West, it comes with terror like a thunder storm; but when the storm of vision has passed, the world is greener and happier; for wherever the truth of vision comes upon the world, it is like a rain. The world.. is happier after the terror of the storm. ..you have noticed that truth comes in to this world with two faces. One is sad with suffering, and the other laughs; but it is the same face, laughing or weeping. ..it is the power of lightning that heyokas have.."

WARRIOR HONOUR

The 'Warrior Code' for the Strong Hearts Warrior Society draws a distinction between 'warrior', 'soldier' and 'thug.' It is necessary to train for warriorhood, so as not to become a soldier and especially not to end up a thug. In the Cante Tenze Way, a warrior serves the people, and walks the road of sacrifice.

His mission is justice for the people in their togetherness; however, in Iroquois [cousins to the Cherokee], the word for warrior also translates more mysteriously as 'protecting the sacred origins', which implies a spiritual meaning of evil as destroyer of the sacred origins of humanity, and a spiritual role of the warrior in fighting against, and preventing, that destruction. If given free reign, spiritual evil would wholly destroy our sacred origins, and this would be a calamity of unimaginable proportions. The task of drawing a line in the sand, not necessarily defeating evil in any final sense but stopping its unchallenged advance, and especially protecting the sacred origins -- a secret wellspring from which we all unconsciously drink without knowing it -- is the noble and sacrificial calling of the true warrior.

The warrior is a respected figure in most North American Indian cultures, especially the nomadic hunting cultures of the plains. Interestingly, among the Lakota the warriors also provided virtually all the 'social welfare.' In the Cante Tenze warrior society, the youth's induction was to spend a year helping out a poor family, doing everything for them, hunting, cleaning, carrying firewood. At the end of that year, there was a celebration of the youth's worthiness, discerned on the basis of his 'service' to the people most 'in need.'

Thus, we do not hold with the ancient Greeks, for example, whose best warriors -- Alexander in reality, Achilles in myth -- sought the glory of immortality. Glory seeking is not right as a warrior's motive of heart. Rather, a warrior seeks honour, and honour means keeping a vow. It is true of everyone in Indigenous Native culture that "we make vows" -- the first thing a Lakota elder said to me, part as explanation, part as warning not to mess about but be sincere. But a warrior is more vowed than anyone else. He is vowed to make give away, to make sacrifice, for the people. Like the Haka of the Maori, it can be 'for life', it can be 'for death.' Either way, the vow is kept, and honour resides in being a person who can promise, and keep their promise, to do something hard, for the good of all. The warrior's strength serves contributing to the people, rather than just becoming the existential tough guy who stands alone, sneering at those who are less tough..

If you go down, I go down with you. I don't let you go down alone.

That is the warrior's vow, at its deepest.

Ultimately all vows are made to the Great Mystery, and it is our honour to keep our vows because the Great Mystery has also made a vow to humanity and all created, and he will honour it.

Ultimately, a warrior defends the honour of God.

HEKATE= The Dark Queen

If I were to write a poem for Hekate
I would have to say she is stark and cruel
But perhaps it would be fairer to say
She is uncompromising
As death is.
For there is no equivocating death
No 'just a moment' or 'wait' –
Until the post arrives'
Death is implacable
Unlike life -- which all too easily
Falls into the sleep of making do.
So -- paradoxically – Hekate
Is also the uncompromised life
And so is -- therefore -- the true mother of Soul
And perhaps that is why she stands at the crossroads
For choice
And why she is the keeper of souls after death—
Doorway to the underworld
Through which we all must pass
Awake or not.

Anita Harmon

THE ZOMBIES ARE AMONG US

Daemonic= fated suffering, the suffering we cannot escape because it is willed and sent by God.

People with milder, or less severe, afflictions -- psychological [early child damage] or existential [later adult experience of harsh realities] -- are not 'moved' to wrestle with what hurts them. They can get away with denying the hurt, defending themselves from the suffering. Nevertheless, they pay a heavy price for such escape. They remain in the shallows, and there they go ever more insensible and insensitive, blanded out, flat. Maslow calls them 'the walking dead.' He refers to the spouse not damaged enough to stop them from getting married, but in their denial of the damage they carry within them, incapable of making a real marriage. He speaks of the parent not so sick they can't mother or father their child, but their parenting remains hollow, more a gesture than a real caring. He also speaks of the person not so damaged they cannot go out to work, but at work they find no satisfaction nor can they contribute anything. No need to worry over the Hollywood driven coming apocalypse of zombies. The state of 'zombie-fiction' is already well advanced among many people today.. Maslow's 'walking dead' are everywhere.

The unchosen and unwanted affliction we suffer is often, in a bizarre and spiritual way, necessary for great and profound spiritual qualities to be attained by us over a longer haul of our entire life.

Severe problems, psychological and existential, are a blessing because they are harder to deny, harder to flee from, harder to contain under repression, harder to throw away into the unconscious. We cannot escape huge problems that overwhelm our personal existence. When hit by problems of this enormity, you have to face them, you have to wrestle with them, you have to let them test and try you like gold in fire, or, you destroy yourself.. You go under. Or to keep the flight going, you make various deals with various devils.

CONCLUSION

1,

Heraclitus= “War is the Father of all. Reconciliation, concord, is the Mother of all.” The Father Strife is symbolized by the bow, and the Mother Harmony is symbolized by the lyre.

Yet, there is a paradox. ‘Bios’ is the Greek for both the ‘bow’ and for ‘life’= that which kills and that which brings to life.

The exploding stars come before the Web of Life.

2,

Static Quality ‘saves’ those who fall out of the Great Wheel, or Circle Dance, through thinking themselves as separate from it, by bringing them back into it, making them a part of it. This Hindu statement is emblematic: “Everything is but a manifestation of the Impersonal, the basis of all being, and misery consists in thinking ourselves as different from the Infinite, Impersonal Being, and liberation consists in knowing our unity with this wonderful Impersonality.” Hence, Static Quality is also a balance of opposites, and by balancing, they create not discord and division, but a fuller and more pregnant harmony. Thus light and dark, gain and loss, good and bad, go together in the whole, because even dissonance is resolved by consonance. Thus equally emblematic is another Hindu statement: “The world in its essence is the reconciliation of opposite forces. These forces act in perfect harmony and yet [go] in opposite directions.” Similarly expressive of Static Quality is this Hindu question: “How can you regard yourself as subject and other beings as objects, when you know that all are One?” The universe, as one Hindu writer puts it, is “the Infinite written into the language of the finite.”

The Great Wheel of Cosmic Pattern gets more personal and loving as it goes westward; the Impersonal becomes a Lover, and the finite creation becomes the Beloved. This happens markedly in Eastern Christianity and in Sufi-ism, though it is already so in certain streams of Hinduism, such as ‘devotional yoga.’ Unofficially, India throbs with Eros—Soul marriage, however abstract its metaphysics. The metaphysics go to one extreme of abstract oneness [monism] to balance the way the people really are at the other extreme of erotic relationship between souls. Indian classical dancing, for example, is certainly not just the soul meditating on a wonderful Impersonality by expanding consciousness, but is the soul in an ecstatic yearning of love. Lover and Beloved, in their Joining, replaces the merging, melding, of part back into whole, to become unified with it. Unity becomes a union made by ecstatic love.

Because nothing other than belonging, or not belonging, is at stake in Static Quality, you can also have all the metaphysics that speak of God having a brother, the devil, who as a pair created the world. Some Shamanic peoples,

albeit usually the more mother-oriented settled southern crop-growers rather than the more father-oriented nomadic northern hunter-gatherers, have these sorts of philosophical belief. Everything must join in, there cannot be any fundamental discord. Nothing can be ultimately rejected, everything has its place and plays its part. The Round Dance must go on and on. This is why R. Tagore rightly says: "To find God, you must welcome everything." No picking and choosing, no preferring of this over that, no one thing better and the other thing worse..

Albert Einstein, who rejected the Daemonic God in asserting 'God does not play dice with the universe', gives a modern yet very ancient and traditional rendering of Static Quality:

"The most beautiful feeling we can experience is the mystical. It is the sower of all true art and science. He to whom this feeling is a stranger.. is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom, and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms -- this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness."

Dynamic Quality 'redeems' what can be lost to peril, through going into the peril, and by letting it exact a cost the heart does not believe it can pay, comes through.

Oriental Metaphysics come into direct and irreconcilable clash with the Daemonic God over two basic qualitative matters.

---Oriental Metaphysics confuse ego with personhood, the unique 'hypostasis', which in fact is both the 'Original Face' of Zen Buddhism, as well as Buddhism's traditional 'No-Self.' In Jewish terms, this is the 'Image of God', the unalterable personal God-akinness given to each human being. When you look at a human face, something of God looks out at you; when you hear a human voice, something of God speaks to you. In Jewish terms, this is the Name which God gives each of us, written on a white stone that cannot be found, but can be lived, and acted upon, through the love, truth, faith. Though Buddhism is less obviously monistic in metaphysics than Hinduism, in grasping that the Hypostasis is not absorbed back into God nor is separated from God, it is still true that even Zen does not step into the heart. In Shamanism and Judaism, the Daemonic renders you personal in order to use your heart. Thus getting rid of the ego will not, in any sense, necessarily evoke the heart. In my time as a Buddhist, I only once met a Buddhist monk I would recognise as a man of heart. The tremendous revisions and subtleties of Buddhism easily reside, and remain within, the soul and mind, not touching the heart.

Indeed, Buddhism no less than Hinduism regards the 'fundamental error' as the human being asserting an identity separate from, and in spirit against, the Primal Isness. Buddhism misses the existential sense of a necessary standing 'other' to everything: the personhood must be free of God, and free of the world, in order to act from the heart in passion. This is not the benign

and universalistic kindness of the enlightened for the ignorant, a kind of tolerance and inclusiveness that can also veer back to Oriental impersonality.

---Fear is the other crucial factor that is different in Static Quality and in Dynamic Quality. In the former, fear is preventing the coming of the Divine Light; in the latter, fear is the facilitator of the Divine Dark. This Hindu declaration sums up fear in the former sense: "Fear comes from the selfish idea of cutting oneself off from the universe." This leads to a whole rejection not only of desire that arises from this selfishness, but the anger, conflict, and fighting spirit that are also regarded as only forms of selfishness. The desire of soul, the anger of heart, when selfish, 'fabricate' all our troubles, all the blockage that keeps us in the illusion of separate identity. This Hindu statement sums up 'selfish desire' and 'selfish anger', a monastic contrast common to Hindu, Buddhist, and Eastern Orthodox Christian asceticism: "A mind that is caught in fear lives in confusion, in conflict, and therefore must be violent, distorted, and hostile.. Free yourself from anger and desire, which are the causes of sin and conflict, and thereby make yourself whole. This is the essence of yoga.. This is the means by which you.. attain the highest spiritual consciousness. Learn to meditate. Then you will master the senses, the emotions, and the intellect."

In fact, 'body, emotions, mind' constitute the ego, not the personhood. Even more vitally, the fear that drives the ego, and renders it selfish, and deluded, is not the Biblical 'fear and trembling' that announces the Daemonic to the heart. The angst of Existentialism is neither selfish nor deluded; its unease, apprehension and anguish, dread, dizziness and shakiness, is true to and revealing of the heart's situation in the world, and the heart—world situation vis a vis the Daemonic God. The fear in the heart is the 'fear of God' we need, or we go astray in the Daemonic. It is fine to say that perfection in love will eventually cast out this fear, but more significant, this fear is 'the beginning of wisdom', the anchor in the depth that allows us to be respectful, bold and humble yet gravely realistic, without becoming crippled and paralysed by terror, on the one hand, nor becoming over confident, glib and arrogant like Lucifer, on the other hand. Fear anchors us in depths, and also becomes the spur to action, for only action addresses the profound questions in our fear, and can answer them. The energy of passion is roused by angst, like drawing a bowstring taught, and then action lets that energy go where it is aimed.

Searching the heart takes us deeper into the heart. Action takes us deepest.

Fear starts all this, and love ends it, by being what truthfully emerges from the 'going.' Thus, no fear: no love.

Getting rid of fear is getting rid of the heart, throwing away the love the heart can reach in its searching of and acting from deeps.

Fear tells you there is depth, and you must do something about it, or stand forever on the edge of a cliff, nailed to the spot, unable ever to look down or to leap. In that way the heart is defeated before it even gives its best shot.

3,

For now, let Eros and the Daemonic -- Static Quality with its Stable Pattern of Duration, and Dynamic Quality with its Violence of Patternless Change -- contrast. They are not the opposites of Static Quality; if they are partners, then some other way to describe their partnership has to be found. Perhaps this works as metaphor= the Celtic king both 'married to the land' and 'a sacrifice for the people.'

One Hindu writer, who might have been R. Tagore, can have the last word, because to an extent, his way of articulating it can hold for both Eros and the Daemonic.

His 'word' was something like, 'man ceases to be a slave to himself, man ceases to be a slave to the world, only when he is a lover.'

It is in the understanding of Eros and the Daemonic as the Right and Left sides of love that we can begin to grasp their partnership.

Eros= Good and Bad in polarity.
Daemonic= Love and Evil in contention.

Eros= Sublime and Sacred.
Daemonic= Terrible and Holy.

Eros= Light and Water, and the Heaven Above.

Daemonic= Fire and Earth, and the Abyss Below.

Eros mothers us. This is the constant backdrop.

The Daemonic fathers us. This is the moving edge.

The mother 'contains' us, always guaranteeing to provide a meaning for whatever we get ourselves into.

The father does not contain us, but leaves us 'free', sharing with us as mentor and then ally the unknown into which we venture.

Eros= Love is generous.
Daemonic= Love is sacrificial.

Eros= Love as bounteous [over-flowing].
Daemonic= Love as radical [unrelenting].

III: THE EXISTENTIAL

Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget
falls drop by drop upon the heart,
until, in our own despair,
against our will,
comes wisdom
through the awful grace of God.

Aeschylus

INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON GREEK AND JEW

Reinhold Niebuhr= “The [Greek] classical culture, elaborated by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, is a Western and [more] intellectual version of a universal type of ahistorical spirituality” [p 16, ‘Faith and History’, 1949].

Oswald Spengler= “The static, geometric, visual, and unhistorical thinking of the Greeks” [p 207, in Boman, ‘Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek’, 1960].

John Macquarrie= “The [Jewish] prophets called upon men to face the radically temporal and historical character of human existence and come out from the timeless womb of mythology” [p 40, ‘Existentialism’, 1972].

And= “History has a.. destiny, if we do not merely drift, but ‘seize the day’.”

1,

The Greeks describe reality as Divine Being.
The Jews describe reality as Divine Action.

Greeks= Knowledge of Divine Being.
Jews= Action in accord with the Divine Will.

Greeks= Knowing and Being are inherently linked.
Jews= By faith, the heart of humanity, in action, relies upon the heart of God, in action.

2,

Typical of the Greeks, Plato starts with the concrete and physical, and works toward the abstract and spiritual. Begin with the derivative, and work back to its Origin, is his method.

It is necessary to follow that sequence in describing the ‘metaphysical ontology’ of the Greeks.

In sharp contrast, the Jews do not start with the creation and work towards the Creator. They do not begin as an account of the created vis a vis the Uncreated. Rather, they are confronted by a mysterious, yet personal, divine presence ‘other’ to the entire sweep of all the realms, material and spiritual. The Jews are not permitted to see, nor speculate on, ‘what’ God is; it is revealed to them ‘who’ God is, and what this God calls them to ‘do’ as his chosen people in time, the world, history. They are called ‘out’ of the cosmic and natural pattern of the Great Round, in order to take up a different, and difficult, task.

It is necessary to follow that reversed sequence in describing the ‘existential situation’ of the Jews.

The Greeks look back to a pristine cosmos that is suffused with divinity. The Jews accept as a burden a world that is broken, and look forward to a time when it will be repaired, its Fallenness overcome, and not only its 'original nature' restored, but also a new human heart achieved from the terrible struggle.

Greeks= space; static; pictorial.
Jews= time; dynamic; narrative.

That the Greeks dwell in a spirituality of 'space', and the Jews abide in a spirituality of 'time', is a fundamental difference, of huge significance.

TWO HORNS OF A DILEMMA= And The Neglected Third Way

The Orient has never fully taken the chance with personalness and the heart.

The West has pursued the personal and the heart, but has totally twisted and perverted it. The personal is lost to the egoic, and the heart is lost to the childish liberty to do whatever it likes.

The Orient= under heated.

The West= over heated.

The Orient= no drama.

The West= soap opera.

DIFFERENT VOICES OF ANGST

Blaise Pascal [1623-1662] rejected the rigorous rationalism of his contemporary Rene Descartes, asserting in his 'Pensées' [1670] that a systematic philosophy that presumes to explain God and humanity is a form of pride. Like later existentialists, he saw human life in terms of paradoxes.

"When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of space of which I am ignorant, and knows me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there, why now rather than then."

Soren Kierkegaard [1813-1855] is arguably the founder of modern existentialism.

"My life has been brought to an impasse, I loathe existence.. One sticks one's finger into the soil to tell by the smell in what land one is: I stick my finger into existence-- it smells of nothing. Where am I? What is this thing called the world? Who is it who has lured me into the thing, and now leaves me here? How did I come into the world? Why was I not consulted? How did I obtain an interest in it? Is it not a voluntary concern? And if I am to be compelled to take part in it, where is the director? Whither shall I turn with my complaint?"

Kierkegaard= "It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards."

Lev Shestov distinguishes between people who advocate that 'man should live in the categories by which he thinks', which can be called rationalism, and people who advocate that 'man should think by the categories in which he lives', which can be called existential excavation. The rationalist path is abstract, up in the air, and feigns a mental overview and instrumental control of the ground which is only plausible in theory, for when put into practice, it crumbles. The existentialist path is concrete, wrestling with deeps which only loom up when we are on the ground. Therefore something is existentially true only if it can be lived.

Kierkegaard= "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced."

Proust= "We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey through the wilderness which no one can make for us, which no one else can spare us."

Kierkegaard= "I must find a truth that is true for me.. the idea for which I can live or die."

Laurens Van Der Post= “It is one of the laws of life that new meaning must be lived before it can be known, and in some mysterious way modern man knows so much that he is the prisoner of his knowledge. The old dynamic conception of the human spirit as something living always on the frontiers of human knowledge has gone. We hide behind what we know. And there is an extraordinarily angry and aggressive quality in the knowledge of modern man; he is angry with what he does not know; he hates and rejects it. He has lost the sense of wonder about the unknown and he treats it as an enemy. The experience which is before knowing, which would enflame his life with new meaning, is cut off from him. Curiously enough, it has never been studied more closely. People have measured the mechanics of it, and the rhythm, but somehow they do not experience it.”

Kao-Feng= “The whole world is a fire pit. With what attitude of mind can you avoid being burnt?”

Camus= “I don’t want to believe death is a door to some other life. For me it is the final dirty adventure.”

Kierkegaard= “Deep within every human being there still lives the anxiety over the possibility of being alone in the world, forgotten by God, overlooked among the millions and millions in this enormous household. A person keeps this anxiety at a distance by looking at the many round about who are related to him as kin and friends, but the anxiety is still there, nevertheless, and he hardly dares think of how he would feel if all this were taken away.”

Nietzsche= “Our age is an agitated one, and precisely for that reason not an age of passion; it heats itself up constantly because it feels that it is not warm-- basically it is freezing.. In our times it is merely by means of an echo that events acquire their ‘greatness’-- the echo of a newspaper.”

John Macquarrie= “In our everyday being with others, we are able to tranquilize ourselves and escape the radicalness of the human condition. Angst jerks us out of these pseudo securities. We are made to feel ‘not at home’ in the world, and ‘uncanny.’ Anxiety awakens us from our illusions, and false certainties.”

Kierkegaard= “The nothing that is the object of anxiety becomes more and more a something.”

Heidegger= “Death opens up the question of being..”

Kierkegaard= “terror, perdition, annihilation, dwell next to every man.”

Kierkegaard= “this is an adventure which every human being must go through-- to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate.”

TIME IS EXISTENTIAL

Time: nothing stationary or static, but everything on the move, everything going, everything passing.

Time: not only constant motion, with everything unable to stay put as it is, but also the mortality of everything, everything dying, everything having an end, nothing permanent.

Life as relentless change, life as unpreventable impermanence.

Life as always passing, life as passing away.

Life as the passing away of everything we cherish, no less than the passing away of what does not matter to us.

“Everything goes.”

Time is forward moving, every present has a past and a future. Only now is real, yet now is fleeting, unstable, coming from the past and going into the future, soon lost. If you lose now, you lose your time, the time to do anything..

Time: the passing away of everything that matters to us, and the passing away of our very self, whether it matters to us or not.

The question: are we just, in the end, worm food with consciousness?

Death is the only certainty, and it throws everything into doubt.

Death tells us our time is short, we have to seize it, or it passes us by, racing past us as we become like a beached whale. Death lends personal significance to this ‘brief span’, giving you ‘your’ life, and giving me ‘my life’, and creates urgency, and intensity. Hence Yalom’s paradox. Death might actually be ‘the end’, yet the awareness we will die saves us from squandering the time we have, by inaction, laziness, sleep-walking. Death is the wake-up call for humanity.

What is thrown into fundamental doubt must be searched out in the living. Is there anything meaningful enough for my life, or for my death?

THE HUMAN WORLD

1,

Who can say what the 'World' is? In its different way, it is as strange, marvellous, and mysterious, as the Nature against which it is often contrasted. There is a profound and unsettling puzzle about the World. It is fearful and wonderful at once; there is something terrible about it, so much so, we might have hoped to live close to Nature forever without venturing into the open-ended and vast empty space of the worldly. Yet it brings a new opportunity for freedom, for creative and loving action, that also renders it intoxicating.. The World both repels us, and invites us into its complication, its ambiguity, its ambivalence, its sense of danger and chances to 'do' something new.. The World is more paradoxical than Nature. The World raises a question for the heart that cannot be answered in any glib, off the top of the head, manner. Living close to Nature consoles and excites the heart; the question is not put..

It would seem that early humanity finally ceased living close to Nature when the so-called 'high civilisations' of antiquity started to be built up. The watershed in moving toward this probably occurred much earlier in time at the point of the transition from the more 'dynamic' life of nomadic wandering, with its hunting and gathering, to the more 'static' life of settled crop growing. From 'settling down', ceasing to be 'on the move', came the grain barns that are the ancestors of the banks.. Paradox surrounds this earlier transition: though the nomads were warrior like, and the settled ostensibly peaceable, rivalry over 'possession' of the grain barns generated far more violence, and far nastier violence, than the skirmishing of fighting bands engaged in contests of bravado, but never resorting to the theft of all the enemy's land and their entire extermination.. It is the peaceable farmers who, increasingly, justified theft from your brother as 'ownership' of 'private property', and created a social law that rationalises, and sanctifies, the 'haves' against the 'have nots.'

God accepted Abel but repudiated Cain: the pastoralist -- harking back to the primordial nomadic life of humanity -- was blessed, while the farmer was refused any blessing. Full of resentment against his brother's freewheeling and inherently more favoured manner of living, the farmer kills the pastoralist, but God spares the 'peaceable' killer, though a mark was put on him by which his primordial rupture with the Beginning of all time, and departure from the First Way humans lived in that Beginning, could never be forgotten. Cain is marked with a primal crime: a crime against the primal. In some peculiar sense, this mythical story marks the beginning of history: the World is built out of a consciousness of that primal crime, a regret, almost a nostalgia, for all the robust virtues and spiritual riches of the dynamic life which it had to forfeit in order to settle down.

For example, the nomads ate less than the settled, but were healthier. Life on the move was harder, but more stimulating. Life on the move demanded

human solidarity and so was inherently more democratic, whilst the settled life -- though more specialised in diverse roles -- also became gradually and relentlessly more hierarchic, with concentrations of power and money at the top, and massive poverty and disenfranchisement at the bottom, like a triangle with a broad base and a steep apex. Finally, when we tamed the natural environment we became tamed, and ever since then we have restlessly wanted to break out of the corral that inhibits our wild life force; but we do not know how to break the chains that bind us, because we will not cease from using these chains to bind life.

2,

The story of Cain signifies both our nostalgia at losing, and guilt over jettisoning, some innate sense of the way to live that we had been gifted with from the dawn of time. That two-fold nostalgia and guilt still dominates our unconscious feeling about Nature, and the Indigenous peoples who somehow manage to hold on to the 'Dream Time' of life on this planet.. In our soul we know we have lost something significant, yet in our ego-driven mind which seeks to scheme and calculate its path to worldly success, we see only externals, and remain in shallows.

That superficiality is key to what the World is, and that is why the preacher complained of worldly life that it was all 'vanity', pointless show, sturm und drang signifying absolutely nothing: "I have seen all things done under the sun, everything is meaningless, and a chasing after the wind" [Ecclesiastes, 1, 14]. The World is what we 'build' as a result of the Fall from dynamic into static, so it represents humanity's self-willed separation from God and Nature.

Yet the World is a possibility, an opportunity, more than that. The Messiah says: 'I came into this world not to judge it, but to save it.' If the World were mere show without substance, why would any Saviour bother over it? The Messiah whom the Jews foretold: 'a man is coming whose heart is deep.' He was needed because, as Nietzsche perceived: "The world is deep."

This is the mystery, the puzzle, the question. This depth that the World brings with its rise is what redeems Abel's slaughter, and the ongoing march of Cain and his descendants. The World is not just the shift from countryside to city; the World is not just the shift from living close to the earth to building upward the high rise of civilisation; the World is more than all that. The World is a break with an ancient and primal splendour; it is a violent disjunction with an old way that was a good way, a way that had valour, and generosity, built-in to its very breathing of life and the very sinew and bone by which life sparked it to move.. Beauty above me, beauty below me, beauty behind me, beauty ahead of me, beauty all around me-- in such words the Navajo remember the First Time.

The First Time feels eternal, timeless, a moment indwelt by eternity. The shock is that the eternal moment ends. What ends it? Not just human greed, not just the ego climbing the greasy pole of worldly ambition, not just the

shallow mind always working a calculus of gain for self at any loss to the other. A new reality comes with depth, a reality both spiritual and in time, of this world, existential in its cutting edge; this reality of depth is both terrifying yet exhilarating.

Depth inaugurates, and works through, time. Mythological time is not really time; it is timeless time. Depth inaugurates and works through history. This signifies a new disclosure of God in which God is tied to time, God is tied to history, God is staked to the ground.

Depth inaugurates, and works through, a risk God is taking, with time, through history, on the ground. This risk is focused upon, 'bound hand and foot' to, 'This World.'

3,

What is this risk?

The risk= existential freedom for anything to happen; then, that means the existential situation risks far more human destruction, but opens the door to a greater and deeper humanity. The risk= to lose all love, or find a more Godlike love. A fundamental Either/Or, two roads, arises, forcing humans to choose.. The Easy Way versus the Hard Way arises.. But this also means that the heart is tested as never before, and in fact, we have to search out, test and prove, what 'heart' is or is not in all we do..

The loss of the old way= the soul. The gain of the new way= the heart. But, a conflicted heart, a torn heart, a heart pulled in different ways, and a heart that must enter this strife, and suffer its enigma, to go deeper.

This is almost impossible to put into words.. It is very hard to describe this 'new situation' of the 'worldly' as differentiated from the 'natural.'

We had to come out from the intricate web of Nature's inter-connectedness and interdependency to uncover depth, and risk the heart to it. The World is disfigured by the clever, the scheming and calculating, the shallow, in mind. Yet the World is marked by a depth that requires depth of heart in humanity to wrestle with it; we are risked to the uncovering and attaining, or losing of, a heart deep enough to be equal to the World.

The World lives by 'strife': contention, clashing of forces, tumult, trouble, striving, searching out in depth what is true or false.

The mystery of depth that characterises the World is the question put to the heart that forces it out of its contentment in Nature, and throws it into a new field of activity, an existential arena.

Thus the World= the contest of love, the contest of hearts, for what kind of heart will rule the world and hence dynamically create its final destiny.

In Old English, the root for 'world' means, 'the era of man', the time of man. The ball is firmly in our court. What heart will humanity pursue?

EXISTENTIAL ACTION

The Daemonic is always dramatic, working by virtue of highly charged [electric] tension, clashes, sufferings, losses, limitations, gaps, crossing of roads, tumults, troubles, and unremitting pressure. The most apt metaphor for drama arising in human affairs is the sudden coming of the Storm.

Drama is shaped by charged 'moments' and dynamic 'movements' in time..

Drama is not dramatic because of its archetypal structure; that is the mistake of the Jungians. They try to provide an over-arching spatial pattern for what belongs to the passing of time, and is concerned with what comes about, what happens, in time. This is real. This is for good and for ill, for life and for death.

Drama is dramatic because of the existential predicament in the real world it portrays.

The existential predicament in the real world comes first, dramatic story telling comes second as a commentary on it. Anything archetypal, or fixed in structure, in the drama is so because the existential predicament has a sort of geometry of forces, a sort of spirituality of edges, clashes, consequences. But in real existence it is the 'powers contending with one another' that makes the story; regularities in depicting these powers are always in danger of conforming to rules of depiction, becoming over neat, and over organized. What we demand from a story we may not get in real life.. In any case, space is far more structured than time.

Hence, it is not that the human psyche was born with a drama archetype, or archetypes, deep down in its innate unconscious, ala Jung. Rather, it is that all humans are thrown into the same existential test, and trial, from which no one escapes, and to which everyone is subject.

The 'story' of this existential 'sufferingship' -- passion in Danish -- inherent to existing in this world is exciting and terrible, full of pity and pathos, because it is not about 'imaginal possibilities coded inherently in the soul'; it is about the existential arena, and the common fate that befalls one and all who are thrown into it, just by virtue of being here, and nowhere else.

This is why it is inaccurate to claim that humanity 'has passions'; it is more accurate to realize, humanity's fated position in existence just 'is' a passion..

THE GAMBLE OF EXISTENCE

God's wisdom is folly to humans, and human wisdom is folly to God. The Daemonic works by Reversal.

Kierkegaard= "What is the absurd? The absurd is-- the eternal truth has come into being in time.." [p 29, 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript', ed. H. Blackham, 1974].

God is gambling with time, that history will either 'move forward' toward a good end, a redemption of the possibility of humanity and the world to which humanity is bound, or the 'nightmare of history' will remain and only become ever more so.. Time is, in the world, existential, make or break for what could go either way.

This gamble confers a radical freedom on all the parties to it, God, humanity, the devil.. We must embrace the 'fearful dangers' of not knowing, of nothing being guaranteed, but it all hinging on how we use freedom, for the outcome depends on the 'crucial decisions' we make.

Yet, because this existential focus is upon 'existence' in its metaphysical precariousness, in its unsecured grounding, so everything in this world does not stem from a Plenitude above, but leans on an Abyss beneath. Everything is poised over nothingness.

Hence= passion moves through time, on the ground, over an Abyss.

WORDS OF THE ABYSS

Abyss= bottomless [*a*=not; *byssos*= bottom]

A bottomless gulf; anything profound and unfathomable; hell, literally or figuratively. Absolute failure.

Abysmal= profound, immeasurable.

Deep= situated far down from the surface; having a dimension downward, inward, or backward; difficult to understand; abstruse; incomprehensible; not superficial; grave or serious; heartfelt [as in deep sorrow]; great in degree [deep study]; intense or extreme; low in pitch; intellectual powers of profound insight; much involved [deep in thought]; the deep part of the sea; depth in space or time [deep of winter]; greatest intensity, greatest absorption; deeply rooted= firmly implanted or established; deep space= beyond the limits of the solar system.

Deep= not contained in 'limits' of mind or matter; the underlying.

NOTHINGNESS= non-existent; no significance or importance; non-entity; emptiness, worthlessness.

THE ABYSS

Angst = uneasiness; malaise; dread; not fear.

Fear= your hair stands on end; angst hits your stomach and entrails and heart.

Angine in Latin= to be squeezed.

Angst= apprehension and anguish; thus not only 'biting' nervousness, but also 'searing' pain.

Angst reveals the human condition; the fundamental clue to human existence.

Kierkegaard= "If a man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread."

There is no reason for this sense of dread.. Nothing is its object.

Everything becomes unreal, or uncanny; we are ejected from our ordinary feeling of being at home with everything. Now, we are no longer at home in the world. We step back from it..

We become aware of the nothing. The nothing -- which is an absence, a lack, a privation of being -- becomes ever more real to us, the only reality our heart can fix upon. "We do not know what makes us anxious and we cannot point to anything. That which arouses anxiety is nothing, and it is nowhere. Yet it is so close, as to be oppressive and stifling. 'Angine': it squeezes the heart" [pp 168-169, Ernest Becker, 'The Denial of Death', 1973].

Kierkegaard= "...things fill me with a sense of anguish.. all is entirely unintelligible to me, and particularly my own person. Great is my sorrow, without limits. None knows of it, except God in Heaven, and he cannot have pity" [p 67, quoted in Becker, *ibid*].

Ernest Becker [p 87, *ibid*]= "Anxiety is the result of the perception of the truth of one's condition."

For Plato, philosophy was the search for Essence, because Essence is immutable. Essence is wired in to the Infinite, the Eternal, the Highest Source of Being. In every ontological system, existence vanishes.

Kierkegaard did not want to create a philosophy. He believed only in an expression of existence.

Death is not just the end of the story, but enters in to the story. An anticipation of death is forced on us by Angst.

Alexandre Koyre= "Existence is subjected to Anxiety; not the multiple anxieties of daily life, but to Anxiety as such. Existence is dominated in its

entirety by the fact of Anxiety. This, for the very simple reason that existence is.. finite.. This finitude means death.. The human being exists as a mortal and is the only being who knows -- who can know -- that he is mortal. It is this inexorable limit -- mortality, finitude, death -- which.. characterises him, plus the fact that he knows it.. ..we must reveal what we truly are, without dissimulating to ourselves by all the artifices and masks of the distraction of life itself. It is this awareness of our mortality that constitutes decision and acceptance. ..Wisdom is always the acceptance of what is. If we have done that.. then we arrive at the authenticity which reveals itself to oneself and.. permits us to reveal what we are. ..If I am authentic, then I am true. If I am unaware of all this, I fall into the inauthentic, [the untrue]. I disguise my reality.. from myself, and therefore become incapable of perceiving and revealing reality as it really is. To say.. 'One must not think of death, one must think of life; as Spinoza said, of hope. But Spinoza's 'life', Spinoza's 'hope', rest on a metaphysics or a theology. [But] man is without metaphysics, without theology.. Man.. finds himself flung into the world. I am there such as I am, and I neither know why nor how; the only thing I know truly, and inexorably, is someday I am going to die. And that is what limits all my possibilities and my future."

"Man is in this world, a world limited by death and experienced in anguish; [man] is burdened by his solitude within the horizon of his [limited time]" [p 31, Wahl, on Heidegger].

Ernest Becker [p 281, *ibid*]= "Men are doomed to live in an overwhelmingly tragic and demonic world."

Heidegger= through Angst we sense the Nothingness, from which erupts everything that has existence, and into which everything threatens at every instant to crumble and collapse.

Nothingness 'naughtens' everything.. It is an active Nothingness which causes the world which erupts from it to tremble to the foundations.

Angst reveals us to ourselves as out in the world forlorn, without refuge or recourse to rescue; why we are flung into the world we do not know. We exist, without our finding any reason for our existing. Thus we exist without any essence. We exist over Nothingness.

"I know that my existence is precarious and short, and that I can lose it. This is the only thing that I have, and I can lose it at any moment; that is why there is a 'substratum' of anxiety.. and anguish.." [pp 40-42, Wahl, *ibid*].

"..the fact of disappearance and end.. remains an agonizing fact. ..Through anguish, we discover the foundation of Nothingness on which we are perched, or from which we are come-- an ocean of Nothingness, from which

we painfully emerge for a time, but which is always there to swallow us, and in which we are always about to sink" [Alexander Koyre, *ibid*].

Jose Ortega Y Gasset= "Life is fired at us point blank."

EXISTENTIAL HEROISM

The Abyss is not the Buddhist Void, which is a metaphysical and ontological reality, not an existential reality. Void= Mystery that cannot be imagined or conceived, yet is benign, because it is the matrix for the ten thousand things, it links them all to itself and to each other.

The Abyss is a mystery of a different kind. An absence. A 'ground' that is missing, an underlying support that is not there, a foundation for existing that does not itself exist. Existence is groundless, it has no deep structure of order and meaning at the root. The root is deep, yet the root is empty. It is not chaos instead of order, a meaningless something instead of meaning. It is abysmally awful in its negation of order, it is abysmally terrible in its nullification of meaning. It hits us with 'fear and trembling', and is like standing at the edge of a precipice, growing 'faint', lest we fall. We know if we fall, we will fall forever, without end.

The withdrawal of anything that could hold us up from beneath our feet makes us feel, not only 'dread', but also 'let down', abandoned, forlorn. Deeply let down= deeply forgotten at the root, cast away into Nothing as if we never counted with anything that might 'spectate' our dilemma, and care about our fate. Abandoned to our fate, cast off, cast adrift, left to the Nothing into which we will go 'in the end' -- because there is Nothing beneath existence. Existence provides only flimsy floorboards and they wear out, and when they do, we fall through the floor, and then just keep on falling.

Nothing undergirds existence means nothing 'secures' existence, nothing 'guarantees' existence, by nature, by definition. Groundless means without foundation, and foundationless means there is not anything that can lay down the 'basis' for existence, and is knowable by us such that 'the basis for existing', 'the point of existing', 'the significance and purpose of existing', is clear-cut, provided ready at hand, to reassure us. In existing, 'insecurity' is 'basic.'

Nothing 'founds' existence structurally and meaningfully. Existence is suspended over an Abyss.

Yet the root is not only abysmal, it is also profound.

To exist at all, requires courage. Like the fox who ventures out over the ice that is the thin crust of waters thousands upon thousands of fathoms deep, so we know in our bone and blood that to risk existence is a courage we respect. To exist authentically requires a true heroism.

Why do we admire, esteem, look up to, the existential heroism that risks the Abyss by venturing 'out over the deep' in a way that is courageous, generous, trustful?

In full awareness of being at risk, the existential hero takes the risk to act in a way that allows meaning to be questioned deeply.

Can meaning -- if it is not ready made, so the world is already meaningful -- be existentially tested and proved? If not given, can it be searched out, can it be found?

It has to be found where it is most under duress, or the existential nihilism is victorious over us, 'making cowards of us all.'

Where does the urge toward heroism in our existential situation come from? What is there in us that takes it on?

We can flee from the Abyss. All the 'existential exactions' are signals, messages, of the non-structured and meaninglessness of existence. To act from Angst, to let it 'school' us rather than defeat us, requires that we take it on.

What in us is willing to do this?

Angst separates us from existence.

Only by passion do we rejoin it.

Passion is what 'takes it on.'

ONTOLOGICAL VOID AND EXISTENTIAL ABYSS

1,

Genesis speaks of the Void as the formless matrix out of which everything is brought forth by the Spirit. This formlessness that is the matrix of all forms is melded into, or overlapping with, the watery deep, engendering a 'sensitive chaos' as the 'primal substance' out of which all things come.

"In the Beginning, ..the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's Spirit hovered over the water."

In Taoism, the Nothingness that is the Origin of all things acts through the water, the valley, the low rather than the high, the darkness rather than the light..

"There is a thing confusedly formed, born before heaven and earth, silent and void. It stands alone and does not change, goes round and does not weary, it is capable of being the mother of the world. I know not its name, so I style it the Way" [25, 56, 'Tao Te Ching', Lao Tzu].

Only after this phase does light arise from darkness, and is differentiated from darkness, so that they form the primal yin and yang, the primal polarity within Duality.

"The spirit of the valley.. is called the mysterious female. ..the mysterious female is called the root of heaven and earth. Dimly visible.. use will never drain it" [6, 7].

Duality arises out of Non-Duality, and remains 'rooted' in it.

"The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something, and Something from Nothing" [40, 89].

Between Duality and Non-Duality there is a polarity -- Void is not Form, Form is not Void; Void is Form, Form is Void -- and within Duality there is a polarity. The secondary polarity echoes, hints at, the primary polarity.

"The Nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth; the Named was the mother of the myriad creatures" [1, 2].

"The myriad creatures carry on their backs the 'yin' [feminine] and embrace in their arms the 'yang' [masculine], and are the blending of the generative forces of the two" [42, 94].

Nothingness overlaps with the psychic and physical 'stuff' that forms the unconscious substrate both of humanity and of Nature. This makes the watery substrate operate as a fecund womb for all the concrete forms given birth to by the mysterious formlessness. Formlessness dies into the forms, and the forms die into the formlessness.

This becomes the basis for viewing the unconscious of humanity, and of Nature, not as a hell, but as a fertile psychic-and-physical 'fluidity' of many open-ended potentialities; the Spirit fructifies this malleable and undifferentiated substance spread under everything, as its father, and the subterranean layer gives birth to the countless children, as a mother.

German Gnosticism and Romanticism, from Jakob Boehme to Carl Jung, tapped into this Taoistic, and Buddhistic, sense of the Nothingness as united with the sensitive chaos of the water. They invariably interpreted this in a Luciferian manner, yet Taoism, especially, presents the conjunction of Nothingness and water shorn of any Luciferian twists.

Here, Nothingness has a feminine meaning. Or, to nuance it= Nothingness works through the feminine, primally.

The feminine is closer to the Way because its lowliness, its 'negative' character, does not fix, trap, limit, the Mysteriousness of the Way's working in human affairs. The feminine is an emptiness that the Way can fill, thus making fullness a manifestation of the Way.

Humanity grasps at fullness, to avoid emptiness; we try to fill up emptiness with ephemeral and meaningless things. "...the high must have the low at base.. Turning back is how the Way moves. Weakness is the means the Way employs" [40, 88]. "The still is the lord of the restless" [26, 59]. "Know the male but keep to the role of the female; know the propriety but keep to the role of the sullied; know honour but keep to the role of the disgraced. Be a valley.. Then you will return to.. the uncarved block" [28, 63]. "...bowed down, then preserved; bent, then straight; hollow, then full; worn, then new; a little, then benefited" [22, 50]. "Vacant like a valley, murky like muddy water, who can be muddy and yet, settling, slowly become limpid? Who can be at rest yet, stirring, slowly come to life? He who holds fast to this Way desires not to be full" [15, 35-36]. It is in virtue of the Way that the valley is made full [39, 85]; thus, "great fullness seems empty, yet use will not drain it" [45, 101].

This is 'what is.' The mystery that Being is rooted in, brought forth from, Non-Being. Some-thing rests in No-thing. Mind rests in No-mind. Self rests in No-Self.

Zhihua Yao [2010] has shown that this feminine meaning of Nothingness is pre-eminent in Taoism; according to his patient research, Buddhism often tends in exactly the same direction, but has two other meanings of Nothingness that do not figure much in Taoism..

2,

The Abyss has a very different connotation. It is not water, nor even air. It is radically empty, an absence, a privation, a lack. It can remain empty in the sense of 'vacated', or become full in the sense of 're-inhabited.' It instigates action-- yet it cripples action, and renders the heart defunct as the engine of action.

This Abyss wounds the heart, with 'fear and trembling', with 'the sickness unto death.'

It is beneath the heart, yet between God and the heart, and either becomes the factor ultimately separating God's heart from the human heart, or it becomes the factor finally reconciling them. As Christ walked on the water and did not sink, so in the end, the human heart will stand upon the Abyss, its groundless ground, and not fall. Or, if this fails, the heart will fall forever.. The Abyss is where God retreats for us to act. Our relationship with God remains free.

Nikolai Berdyaev= "An ontological system recognising the absolute primacy of being is a system of determinism. It derives freedom from being.. Being is thus ideal necessity, with no possibility of outburst; it is complete and absolute unity. But freedom cannot be derived from being.. Freedom is baseless, neither determined by nor born of being."

And= "Freedom proceeds from the abyss which preceded being. ..the act of freedom is primordial and completely irrational."

Freedom can pass over into anarchy. "It gives rise to the tragedy of the world process." Or, it can pass over into 'forced virtue', to a tyrannical organisation of human life, towards "compulsion in good and truth." Yet, there is no humanity without freedom. And, freedom is linked with creativity. Camus= humanity's liberation is not only 'from' something, but 'for' something, and this 'for' is human creativity.

The majority of people do not value freedom, but are content with the routines of life, and so are vulnerable to dictatorship. "Education to freedom is.. still ahead of us, and this will not be achieved in a hurry."

The heart is free to act, to create through action, to love through action.

It is in the Book of Job [Job, 26, 7; 38, 16-17, 19; 26, 14; 38, 36] that God shows the suffering heart the Abyss which its action, or inaction, is poised over. This is a different darkness, a different deep. It generates Angst which is apprehensive and anguished. It squeezes the heart, because there is nothing grounding the heart, or moving the heart, except God.

"He also knows that the earth is suspended in space:

He stretches out the north over the empty place, and hangs the earth upon nothing.

Have you.. walked in the recesses of the deep?

Have the gates of death been opened to you,
or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?

Where is the way to the place of deep darkness?

The thunder of his power, who can understand?

Who has given wisdom to the inward parts, or who has given understanding to the heart?"

Nietzsche= "When you gaze long enough into the abyss, the abyss also gazes into you."

THIS IS THE HEART

Macarios of Egypt= “The human heart is an unfathomable Abyss.”

Augustine of Hippo= “If by ‘abyss’ we understand a great depth, is not man’s heart an abyss? For what is more profound than that abyss? Men may speak, may be seen by the operation of their members.. but whose [mystery] is penetrated, whose heart is seen into? ..there is in man a deep so profound as to be hidden even from him in whom it is” [p 421, ‘An Augustine Synthesis’, ed. E. Przywara, 1958].

The heart is the Abyss. It is the heart where the Abyss lies.

The Abyss is freedom. You can’t make the heart love, nor do what love asks the heart to do..

It awaits for this person to make a move..

If the collective forgets the heart, the world will destroy itself. Heart people carry the weight. Whatever little corner of the world you occupy, you uphold the world there.

What is at stake, to which the heart must be staked?

Abyss= the freedom of the heart-- a freedom radical and fundamental. The heart’s task suffers the wound of existence, the ‘weight of the world.’ The Abyss means the heart can fail or be victorious. If the heart fails, the world is lost.

God is risking the world to the human heart.

This is why the heart’s lack of any given ‘nature’, its root only in absolute and radical freedom, is part and parcel of angst. I look into this freedom, and I grow dizzy. My heart grows faint.

Freedom is a burden, a responsibility hard to bear, for the heart. The heart is hit by fear and trembling, confronting the choice it must make, to lift the weight or put it down.

This is why beneath the world, and beneath the heart, is the Abyss. This is the Nothing where even God cannot force his will.

Heaven= an impregnable space.

Abyss= a fundamental risk in time.

An ‘absence’ that only the human heart can make a ‘presence.’

If we trust the Abyss, God is there.
If we mistrust the Abyss, God is absent.

Trust is shown in how we venture the risk in action, in our living, not in what we purport to believe, doctrinally, philosophically, intellectually.

The Abyss can be empty or full. It depends on the human heart.

Martin Buber= "If you explore the life of things and of conditional being, you come to the unfathomable;
if you deny the life of things and of conditioned being, you stand before nothingness.
If you hallow this life you meet the living God.
He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to God."

Forsakenness, forlornness of heart= the Abyss is empty. We know we are forsaken, and we forsake others. We know we count for nothing, and count others for nothing.

If so, then death is pointless, and we cannot overcome it. Death stops us 'chancing our arm' because we could be losing the little bit of 'some-thing' we have to the final Nothing.

We are 'out over the deep', out over the Abyss, and once we wake up to this in angst, the heart is stabbed with pain, and paralysed with inaction.

What does it mean to overcome the Abyss, to come through it, to the other side?

The root of the Hebrew word for 'enduring through time' means 'victory.'

What is this victory? What is this fight?

What is this fight to be staked to what is at stake?

What is this fight on the edge, in a gap, at the crossing of roads?

Kierkegaard= "To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's [heart]."

FAITH vs. DESPAIR

The existential dilemma -- the heart's predicament -- revealed by Angst is not only threatening, but is also an invitation, virtually a summons, to heroism.

This heroism lives in the paradox and contradiction, must bear and endure it, be hit and bitten by it.

Only passion can sustain such heroism.

Here we have Kierkegaard's discerning of the difference between the Knight of Resignation and the Knight of Faith.

Faith is like the bird who flies in the Abyss without knowing the principle of its flight. Faith is the leap of passion into the Abyss.

We gamble on life with our own life; we risk more, so give more, because we accept the risk.

Ernest Becker claims "man cannot stand the thought of his actual condition." But Kierkegaard is suggesting something more ambivalent.

Despair is when we despair of the self standing up to, and venturing, this condition. Despair= not wanting to have a self. Kierkegaard= "To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself-- this is the formula for all despair" [p 19, 'The Sickness Unto Death'].

But why do we turn against our self so fundamentally? We turn against it, repudiating it, wanting it not just dead but not to exist, and never to have existed, when in our deep heart we believe we have failed the summons to heroism.

Despair is the result of losing faith, existential faith. When faith is gone, we summarily and 'finally' reject the self.

Despair is despair in passion taking it all on, and not foreclosing the uncertainty and the agony prematurely.

RESIGNATION or FAITH?

1,

The dread of death, for all its power to paralyse and sicken us, is necessary.

This doubt cramps our sense of adventure. Yet, like a flint striking stone, it also sparks our venturing forth into the gamble that is existence.

Kierkegaard= "Angst demolishes all finite aims."

2,

God is inexplicable and unfathomable, but the God of the Abyss who confronts the human heart is not arbitrary. If we, for our part, take the ultimate risk with God, venturing our self to the Abyss, then God will, for his part, uphold us in the Abyss. The heart will be upheld in its achingly difficult struggle to stand up, and stand for, God in the world.

The only cure for 'performance anxiety' is performance!

Yet is God with, and in, our depths of heart?

This becomes an issue in the life of faith, the issue.

This is where our heartbreak begins. God doesn't catch us like we do our children when they throw themselves off a ledge.

Faith is born of dread, born of deep doubt, doubt about there existing anything to 'uphold' what is deep.

In Angst, dread and faith, deep doubt about the unknown and deep trust in the unknown, are heads and tails of the same coin. Kierkegaard is saying that faith is born of dread. Faith is not that reassuring certainty that banishes dread. Faith is forged by the 'squeeze' -- the pressure and ache, the terror and horror -- of dread.

Kierkegaard= "...not that faith.. annihilates dread, but.. it is continually developing itself out of the death throes of dread."

If dread disappeared in faith, we would be in cloud cuckoo land.

False religious, false secular, 'escapes' offer an 'inauthentic' way out of dread.

But the atheistic existentialists, like Sartre -- the paradigm of the Knight of Resignation, the arch existential tough guy -- react to only one side of dread= the deathly, the abysmal, 'Nothing.' But they miss that death, and the Abyss, is not only the defeat of all earthly hopes, but the Call, virtually the invitation, to risk something beyond all hope.

I gamble on life with my own life in how far 'out' on a limb I go, in how far 'to the end of the line' I keep going.

This changes the qualitative character of the existential dilemma. No longer is it a matter of *either* there is no meaning whatsoever, full stop, *or* I subjectively create meanings that reflect the resources and resoluteness of my own depths, whether of soul or heart. There is a third way.

Alternatively to this either/or, I test and prove a meaning by risking my whole heart, and my only life, to it.

This testing and proving is in time. It comes between the Mysterious Beginning and the Mysterious End, but does not remain 'stalled' there.. It drives forward. By doing this, it embarks on a long journey and a fierce fight. It enters the existential arena, which is -- as Heraclitus insists -- a battlefield of outer contention and inner struggle.

Heraclitus= "War is the father and king of all, some he has shown forth as gods and others as men, some he has made free and others slaves." For Heraclitus, 'war', or strife, is "the upsetting factor which moves static situations into unwilling change" [William Harris]. And= "Homer was wrong in saying, 'Would that strife might perish amongst gods and men.' For if that were to occur, then all things would cease to exist."

3,

But, the real difference between 'toughing it out' in Resignation, or 'taking the risk of throwing oneself into it' in Faith, is love.

Toughing it out is loveless. Taking the risk is only possible through love.

There is an existentialism of freedom, of the cold will, that stands opposed to a very different existentialism of love, of the warm passion.

The former existential stand, exemplified in Sartre, Heidegger, the early Camus, is without heart. That is why its 'experience' of the Abyss is true as far as it goes, but does not go far enough.

The latter existential stand, exemplified in Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Unamuno, Kafka, late Camus, Buber, is through the heart.

The inexplicable, and unfathomable, summons rising from the Abyss is addressed to the heart, only to the heart, not to the mind and not to the soul; and it is the 'invite' to the heart, to take the risk, to venture and keep travelling, for love.

For love, jump in, and trust your wings will flap. But put the jumping before the flapping.

For love, stand up, and trust you will be upheld. But put the standing before the upholding.

This changes the experiential power of the Abyss, for whilst retaining its ability to cripple, it acquires the capacity to fill the heart with the power that will help it exercise its own personal, free, passionate, risk-taking commitment to love.

This makes the heart's conflict different. For even what hurts the heart becomes not just deep in the sense of the abysmal, but it becomes deep in the sense of the profound.

The heart's trials and tribulations, the awe and the awfulness of what it faces and what it has to pass through, acquires terrible profundity, and becomes 'the greatest story ever told.' The fate of the heart is the only real story in existence.

4,

To come through, there will be sadness and anger. There will be much harming and being harmed. We will have to carry much for each other, to get through.

There will be much 'wheat and tares' mixed together. If you try to 'sort it' prematurely, you only hurt people worse than they are already hurting.

Love is not enough, if by love is meant Christian agape, or Buddhist compassion. The love that gives the heart, and drives passion, is born of deep grief and sparks great fire.

This is the Love Supreme that fills the Abyss when we risk the Abyss is empty.

This is God's heart upholding the human heart. This is finding, in the depth of the Abyss, a final groundless ground on which all hearts stand with each other, and stand with God.

WHICH SUFFERING DO WE CHOOSE?

It is the mystery of the human heart that it is not 'wired in' to its Source of Being, but is grounded upon an absence of ground that can cripple it with foreboding or become the spur to all the venturing, risking, giving, suffering, bearing and enduring, of passion. The Abyss confronts us with the ultimate Kierkegaard "either/or"; either the heart is cast out into existence like a ship adrift, exposed to literal and metaphysical danger that is fathomless, for no point [hence Sartre's conclusion that "Mankind is a useless passion"], or this lack of meta foundation is an extraordinary freedom to do some action which requires we step out over the unknown and non-guaranteed emptiness beneath our feet. The heart will inevitably experience both realities, and consequently will remain 'between a rock and a hard place.'

In a sense, this means there are only two final choices: either, give your heart to existence and suffer, or, withhold your heart from existence and suffer. The challenge to each of us personally is, which kind of suffering do you want?

Angst causes us to fall out of normal life; our sleep walking in conformity to 'playing the game by the rules' collapses, and we take a step back from everything.. Angst takes us out of the life we were living, but only passion can return us to existence to live in a new way. Hence Angst sparks Action-- or if we cannot act, then it causes a kind of infinite 'prevaricating on the edge', paralysed by the profound doubts and the unanswerable questions. Only Action addresses what Angst knows about existence.

This is why passion is our greatness and dereliction at once.

WHY IS PASSION EXISTENTIALLY BASIC?

Kierkegaard= “It is impossible to exist without passion, unless we misunderstand the word ‘exist’.”

Why is passion the most essential and precious thing in being human?

It has to do with our status as existential beings= beings living on an edge, not beings rooted in solid -- safe and secure -- ground.

We are inherently subjected to existential uncertainty, non-guarantee, non-adding up. Hence, no thought, whether visionary/mystical or scientific/rational, can penetrate the mystery, the pained mystery, of our destiny of being ‘thrown’ into this world. Nietzsche rightly said ‘the world is deep’; but what this entails is that it is not thought that gets us through life-- it is action= and what motivates, drives, sustains, action is passion. Passion is the engine of existential action= the action which has to take a risk, accept a wound, carry a weight, and pay a cost, if it is to do something significant in the absurdity, the irrationality, of this world.

Hence, only passion overcomes hardships, takes leaps, makes commitments and submits to the consequences.

No ordinary emotion or even keen desire comes close to being able to do the things that passion does. Only passion steps up, fights, keeps going, where knowledge has ended and cannot guide action. The urge in passion= to live in the truest way. Passion is ‘for the sake of’ truth= to find truth, to stand up for truth, to make sacrifice and die for truth.

Why bear and endure the suffering of existence?

Passion replies not with an explanation, but with its action; and this action is its trust in the irrationality of its situation, because another Spirit summons its spirit. Nothing it does is simply decided or chosen by itself arbitrarily= it comes as a fate placed upon it like a ‘load.’ Passion is that irrational spark that embraces and goes with -- goes all the way with -- the fate that the heart cannot escape.

Passion rises to what is hard, deep, fated.

Passion falls back to what is easy, shallow, take it or leave it.

Courage starts it, strength sustains it, wisdom crowns it.

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE IN PASSION

Kierkegaard= "Existence belongs to the realm of the contingent and changeable."

No one starts with a clean slate. You join a situation already old, already lied about, already betrayed by human weakness and destroyed by spiritual wickedness. It is more than messy. But to get involved, your hands must get dirty. Prince Myshkin, in Dostoyevsky's 'The Idiot', is too innocent, too standing back in a pure but unworldly love, to do anything effective. Indeed, what he tries to do only results in disaster. He is the ever youthful Percival, rushing in enthusiastically, full of the child's passion, but ending up for this very reason with other innocent blood on his hands..

It therefore hugely helps to know your own stink in developing a nose for the stink of the complex clashing of forces fighting over, and fighting for, the destiny of the world.

Passion is the adult we do not become. Without the Daemonic to wound our passion, it is neither deepened nor strengthened, it does not come to its true calling, its real mission.

In the Greek language, it is possible to distinguish the more unchallenged passion, the childlike passion for 'the mysterious and the prodigious', as Kierkegaard called it, the passion to do good for the world, a passion that engages with a part of the world it cares about, from the more sober and serious passion, the passion that will suffer the profound, the mature passion only reached through a wound.

The modern term 'pathiazomai' -- implying intense dedication to a cause, or that someone is highly enthusiastic about something -- refers to the former, the ancient term 'pathos' refers to the latter. It is only the passion that emanates from our Songs of Innocence, and carries over into the world, in our ardent concerns, interests, hobbies, vocations, that is integral and non-injured. But this ardour, which is warm and eager, is not yet burning. To burn, we must be stricken by the Daemonic, forged in its fire.

Plato turns away from this realm, with its active and transitive verb 'to exist', and looks for unchanging and universal Essences of Being.

Existential birth is the turning point, when even the earlier innocent passion does not suffice, and we are thrown into the fundamental risk and pain of existing in the world, 'condemned to the freedom' in which we must decide, in the heart, to flee, tough it out, or give our passion to it, no matter where that takes us and no matter how that turns out.

T. Wahl [‘A Short History of Existentialism’, p 12, 1949]= “the existence of the [person] is.. cast into a supreme gamble.”

AUTHENTICITY IN EXISTENCE

Angst wakes us up to what death means for us personally= the precariousness of our situation in existence. From this, meaning-making becomes [1] very personal -- what matters to each of us -- and it also becomes [2] very existential -- what proves itself as valid in the living of it, and especially what proves itself worthwhile in the face of death.

In short, existence raises the question of whether meaning itself means anything ultimately; maybe it doesn't [atheism] or maybe it does [faith]; either way, I lose the secure ground beneath my feet and uncover the Abyss that is beneath not only me but also everything else. The Abyss, though an absence, becomes the most powerful presence at the base, the foundation, of existence. Existence is 'non-founded.'

Given this, meaning-making becomes, inevitably, a questioning and a testing of the ground= what upholds life, what is real, what is valid, in a lived way? Angst is an experience, and the meaning-making it arouses is rooted in an awe-ful [in both senses] experience, not in thought. Post-Angst meaning-making can no longer just abstract itself away from reality by thought, or just be a construction of thought; it must address and try to make sense of an experience that threatens all sense per se; it is beyond thought, and cannot be explained away by thought that just skates over it. Henceforth our meaning-making must address real existence, and the concerns that arise for us 'on the ground.' For being on the ground is to always see, feel, and experience viscerally in the guts, the groundlessness at the bottom of things. It is therefore when we are fully situated, fully immersed, fully embodied, in time, in the concrete here and now, that we most directly and searingly are undermined by the profound. The tangible and safe is haunted by the intangible and insecure.

Facing this and making something of it is our existential fate. This is a struggle for what existentialism calls 'authenticity'= do I truthfully face and wrestle with the dilemma I find myself in [authentic] or do I flee this dilemma, shed responsibility for MY STAND [personal] relative to WHAT IT IS [the situation= other to me], and cling on to some pseudo answer that avoids the question that Angst puts to me [inauthentic]? I can flee into answers that evade the question, whether religious, political, economic, etc.; I can seek for mastery, power, control, over my situation, under the illusion this makes me invulnerable to existential fate; I can merge with the herd, give 'the They' [Heidegger] all responsibility for my existence; I can break down and become neurotic, fearfully avoiding existential dreadfulness and affliction-- but therefore always pursued by their shadow, which paralyzes and narrows me, making me shut in. In all these cases of inauthenticity, I neither face, nor wrestle with, the fate, the fearful reality, itself. The paradox is, if I run away from it, I lie to myself, I diminish myself, I confine myself. Conversely, if I face it, wrestle with it, accept its mystery, its uncertainty, its danger, then do I grow stronger= something creative as well as personal is 'drawn forth' from inside

me in order to engage what is outside me. Thus, what wounds me frees me, and throws me into the world with commitment. Martin Buber= the world into which we are thrown forces us to become 'more real' as persons. This world's very unsecured condition is what requires us to search out its meaning-- and to care for it, care not only what happens to me in it, but care what happens to it. When concern shifts more outward, then my action in the world, toward the world, takes on a self-forgetting care, concern, love. Here we can speak of "existential heroism." Certain values seem particularly existential; courage, honesty, persistence, long-suffering, generosity, fighting spirit, truthfulness to self and to the situation where the self is placed [existential conscience], seem always invoked in this struggle..

In short, the world's depth poses us a question= we reply with our whole life, with what we 'do' with our life [with what we actually do rather than what we talk about], with the risk we take, or the cost we pay, to engage the risk of existence, to engage the cost of existence. The outer world's 'objective' depth calls forth the inward human being's most intense 'subjective' passion; and passion is an ex-stasis, a passing beyond itself towards the world, the fiercest inter-subjective presence of which we are capable. There is no commitment or engagement, no investment in the world, deeper than passion.

The implication is, a lot of our beliefs and values and purposes ['meanings'] do not prove sturdy enough to support our real existence in this world, due to what we face here, and hence these are lost, given up, let go, along the way.. They burn up in a furnace, because they cannot sustain the heat. Only a golden core of the 'scorched metal' is tested and proved, and remains.

Thus inevitable struggle, unforeseen reversals, painful losses and occasional exultant breakthroughs, happen every step of the way, and disillusionment is a major part of this 'progress' through difficult existential terrain. What emerges the other side of the sifting/loss is to be called 'wisdom.' Wisdom in this case does not refer to what we think, but to what we 'do' in our living= what we undergo, what we choose, what we strive with, on the ground, concretely, through time.

Moreover, this process is also very personal to us, for it is only each of us uniquely who can submit to the test and prove what comes through it in their personal existence ['you gotta go through that lonesome valley by yourself']. Common features of this journey and battle involved in authenticating, or validating, lived truth, or existential truth, might emerge from many people undergoing this, so we might discern some common struggles and common disillusionments on this road. But perhaps the existential isolation/aloneness that Irvin Yalom speaks of as one of the 'existential givens' applies to this wrestling with life to find what is true. No one else can suffer your pain nor carry your burden as you go through this. Truth here means 'what stands up', 'what comes through', in a human life.

This is the real issue, the cutting edge, of Authenticity.

Kierkegaard= sin is the untruth of a person's life.

Kierkegaard voices existentialism's paradox by saying that through passion we know exaltation and perdition, because we lose by passion; but we lose more if we throw away all passion.

So, the final paradox of existentialism is= only the meaning that includes nihilism, only the purpose that includes futility, only the worthwhileness that includes worthlessness, only the light that plunges into a vast dark, can existentially be 'secured.' The negative that underlies every positive could totally undermine it, or could test and prove it such that it emerges in a different way. This is what we cannot know in advance, or know merely abstractly. We have to hazard it, search out its secret deeps and continue to its unpredictable end, to discover what it will become 'in the end.'

But there can be no guarantee. We might get to some other far shore, by sailing over the raging seas, or we might go down on the way, ending in shipwreck. Everyone must navigate the same 'lonesome valley'; this is why some existentialists see the valley as saying there is no ultimate meaning, and each of us must create meaning personally as we will in the short span we have, while other existentialists see the valley as a way of faith. Either way, faith cannot exclude doubt, even as doubt cannot close off faith= each possibility haunts the other, and in reality, to live existentially is to live with both. We don't know for certainty.

Passion starts where knowledge ends.

MODERN PEOPLE'S ATTEMPT TO ARTICULATE PASSION

Student 1= "We all have obsessions and enthusiasms, but 'passion'? Something I could not live without? I am not sure if I have ever been stirred to that."

Student 2= "The word 'passion' to me is deep, personal, meaningful, and powerful."

Student 3= "Inside, passion can make you warm, overwhelmed, excited-- and bring you to the brink of tears."

A new friend -- a fellow lover of duende [deep song] in Flamenco music -- says that in Spanish, it is more accurate to speak not of the noun 'passion', but of the verb 'passioning'; and then he added that it also has the suggestion of an inspiration outside and other to us which seizes hold of us powerfully, rather than something we choose or that just wells up from within, thus 'impassioned.'

In its truest, passion is self-giving for the sake of what is most at stake; thus we are impassioned to forget self and finally to transcend self, to be staked to the world for love.

Our passioning is the process of self-giving for what we love.

First Person= *"The passion session brought me to life.. I learned about myself, but instead of being disheartened, I was inspired. The exercise we did stopped me in my tracks and was a breath taking moment. Once I started talking about what I am passionate about, I shocked myself at just how passionate I was, on a much deeper level than I had at first considered. While I was talking I could feel my passion making me tingle and bringing tears to my eyes. It was amazing that something so simple could affect me this way. Yet in spite of this what impacted on me the most was seeing other people witnessing my passion on the same level as me, and connecting with them on that level when they revealed their passion. I don't know what this connection is, but it comes over as a shared journey through some difficult but gratifying level of existence that mostly we ignore. Without passion, life becomes superficial and meaningless."*

Second Person= *"The fifth week provided a huge learning curve for me. Since a young age I have learned to distance myself from what affects me, by being in control of the affects. At this point I received a huge awakening as to the value of and human need for passion. Through the task, I not only discovered just how deep the passion was that I kept locked up inside me, but I was also shown the benefit of sharing passion; not only how it impacts on you, but can lift a person and initiate a deeper connection with other people, not on a surface level. I witnessed this benefit first hand; as I was*

speaking and the passion that mattered for my life flowed in me, I started to shake slightly and my voice became very affected. Similarly, when I finished talking, one of the group members spoke of how she had been tingling when I was speaking to her. This was strange for us, as I had a similar sensation when she had spoken. I have really struggled with how best to explain what it was like to know someone else had understood and experienced the meaning from my speech. It was reassuring to realise somebody else was on the other end of it and being moved in the same way you were. It sounds over the top, but it really was breath taking.”

Third Person= *“For this session we were required to reveal our passion. It was greatly honouring and touching to have someone expose what was most treasured and precious to them. It spoke of trust, and respect, and something else so deep that I have no name or description for it. I only knew that I was, and still am, touched on another dimension which has given me a new regard for them as persons.”*

ESCAPE TO THEORY

Faced with the anxiety that hits us when we are about to practice something 'for real' -- an angst telling us we are on the ground, and face uncertainty and cost if we are to engage in action which can accomplish anything -- we cry out to be rescued by a theory.

Theories abstracted away from the existential arena in which our action must strive with strife are, according to Nietzsche, 'about as much use as knowledge of the chemical composition of water would be to a sailor in danger of shipwreck.'

A USEFUL DISTINCTION IN KIERKEGAARD

In 'Fear and Trembling', Kierkegaard sets Passion in opposition to Reflection, which was the dominant mood in Kierkegaard's day, and remains the dominant mood of the 19th, 20th, and even 21st centuries..

Whilst reflection is the disinterested intellectualization of matters, by contrast passion throws itself in wholeheartedly. In particular, Kierkegaard stresses the importance of passion to faith. Without passion's 'leap', there is no faith. Faith has been betrayed by demanding it make sense of that in life which simply does not, and will never, 'add up.' Faith, as leap of passion, accepts and enters the realm of the 'Absurd.' This means faith is more courageous, more willing to take a risk and venture something in the living of it, than reflection. Reflection says something must be comprehended before it can be lived; faith says the opposite= that something must be lived before it can be understood.

In fact, one cannot make the Absurd fully or even partially comprehensible; but one can wrestle with it, and come through it experientially. Thought cannot dent the Absurd, but experience enters and passes through its gateless gate. That is the paradox.

The fruits of reflection can be learned from another, but one must experience passion oneself in order to learn from it.

The willingness to go on in experience -- remaining open, under going and going through whatever befalls -- is another description of 'passion.' Where reflection stops= this is where passion goes on, leaping into the unknown, leaping into the pained, leaping into the non guaranteed.

Kierkegaard also usefully pointed out that existential distinctions are not so much difficult to draw as hard to live.

As a commentator has pointed out, 'we humans take hope in the irrational.'

CLOSING THE EYES

A book on the gypsies declares= 'We walk by faith, not by sight.'

This allows us to leave behind the limiting seeing in which we place so much trust, the 'blind' seeing that allows us to cling on for dear life to a few handrails, or signposts, that we glimpse, and treat them as formulae, maps, explications, that offer protection against the dark.

When we shut these confused and clouded eyes, faith allows us to step into the dark. This is the dark we see when our eyes are no longer self-deceiving.

In short, it is only when we jettison the illusion of being able to see, that we can step forth into the pervasive dark in which we really dwell.

It is only these 'steps' made by passion that light up this great dark; the dark is lit up by flame.

PATHOLOGIES OF PASSION

PRELUDE

Kierkegaard's penetrating analyses of the human condition merge psychology and religion; as Ernest Becker puts this, "psychological and religious analyses of the human condition are inextricable, if they get down to basics" [p 70, 'The Denial of Death']. In 'Fear and Trembling', and particularly 'The Sickness Unto Death', Kierkegaard seeks to expose the many ways in which we lose our real personhood and lose real living because of lying to ourselves; the fundamental question is raised= what would a person be like who does not lie to himself? Only this person realises the genuine human opportunity. Crucial to this realisation is existential 'faith.'

1, normal social pathology

Kierkegaard says that too many persons, if not most, live in an "half obscurity" about their own condition [p 181, 'The Sickness Unto Death', 1849; Anchor Edition]; they are in a state of "shut-upness" wherein they block off their own perceptions of reality, and thus deny to themselves any testing of their own powers in relation to the possibility that existence offers to them. For the sake of a bogus security, the human being becomes closed down and closed in. They build extra thick walls of defense against anxiety all around themselves, the Reichean 'character armour', thereby becoming inflexible, and rigid. The open person, by contrast, has an inherent flexibility and fluidity, and a willingness to push the boat out.

Kierkegaard's description, applied to religion, never the less is immediately recognizable from social organizations of any ilk in politics, commerce, education, medicine, and similar=

"A partisan of the most rigid orthodoxy.. knows it all, he bows before the holy, truth is for him an ensemble of ceremonies, he talks about presenting himself before the throne of God, of how many times one must bow, he knows everything the same way as does the pupil who is able to demonstrate a mathematical proposition with the letters ABC, but not when they are changed to DEF. He is therefore in dread whenever he hears something not arranged in the same order."

Kierkegaard is saying that being shut-up entails not being willing to face anxiety, open to possibility and choice, and thus free to discover himself and his world. Being shut-up is called a 'lie', and this "untruth is precisely unfreedom.." Heidegger echoed Kierkegaard when he declared, 'everyone wants to be someone else.' As Kierkegaard puts it, people passively fall in with others, "imitating how they manage to live", yet paying a price for this= "but a self he was not, and a self he did not become..." The authentic personhood was never risked, thus never forged in existential adversity.

Kierkegaard is describing what Heidegger would later call people living 'inauthentically.' These are people who avoid developing their own uniqueness; Ernest Becker says of them, paraphrasing Kierkegaard, that "they follow out the styles of automatic and uncritical living in which they were conditioned as children. They .. do not belong to themselves, are not 'their own' person, do not act from their own center, do not see reality on its terms; they are the one dimensional men totally immersed in the fictional games being played in their society, unable to transcend their social conditioning...." [p 73, *ibid*].

Kierkegaard identifies this kind of non-living with the Biblical Philistines="Devoid of imagination, as the Philistine always is, he lives in a certain trivial province of experience as to how things go, what is possible, what usually occurs... Philistinism tranquilizes itself in the trivial..." [pp 184-187, *ibid*].

For Philistinism, the full horizon of experience is to be diminished, and kept severely restricted; freedom is dangerous. Philistinism keeps the "prodigious elasticity" of possibility prisoner, carrying it round in "the cage of the probable." Predictability, stability, control= these are the goal and shield of the shut-upness that is a character defense and a profound existential lie.

2, psycho-pathology

Kierkegaard sees psycho-pathology, basically, as our defeat by existence= a defeat that happens because we will not face up to the truth of the existential condition in which we are situated. We are freedom, and thus possibility, but we are also necessity, and thus limitation. Our possibility is fated to encounter that which challenges it and puts it under question. If we deny possibility or deny necessity we live a lie. Psychosis happens when the lie we attempt to live is too flaunting of reality= for this is the complete breakdown of what in the 19th century would have been termed our 'character structure', our backbone, our flame, our belly of endurance, our heart of sacrifice.

In real psychosis, Kierkegaard shows, there is always an exaggeration of one half of the human paradox at the expense of the other. So, at one extreme there is the schizoid position, where possibility defeats necessity; at the other end of the equation is the depressive position, where necessity defeats possibility.

[a] Schizoid Possibility [infinite without finitude]

"For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinity's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless" [p 163, *ibid*].

At one end of psychosis, there is no grounding of the self= the self splits from the body, and seeks to find an infinity in which its creative powers know no limitation. This is the schizoid state. "The full-blown schizophrenic is abstract, ethereal, unreal; he billows out of the earthly categories of space and time,

floats out of his body, dwells in an eternal now, is not subject to death and destruction" [p 76, Ernest Becker, *ibid*]. Kierkegaard= "the fantastical is that which so carries a man out into the infinite that it merely carries him away from himself and therewith prevents him from returning to himself.. The self thus leads a fantastic existence in abstract endeavour after infinity, or in abstract isolation, constantly lacking self, from which it gets further and further away."

Kierkegaard continues= "Now if possibility outruns necessity, the self runs away from itself, so that it has no necessity whereto it is bound to return-- then this is the despair [sickness] of possibility. The self becomes an abstract possibility which tires itself out with floundering in the possible, but does not budge from the spot, not get to any spot, for precisely the necessary is the spot; to become oneself is precisely a movement at the spot" [pp 164-169, *ibid*].

Kierkegaard sums it up thus= "What the self now lacks is surely reality.. What really is lacking is the power to.. submit to the necessary in oneself, to what may be called one's limit. ...the misfortune is that the man.. lost himself, owing to the fact that [his] self was seen fantastically reflected in the possible."

[b] Depressive Necessity [finitude without infinitude]

Depressive states are the extreme on the continuum of too much necessity, that is, too much finitude, too much limitation -- and not enough freedom of the inner self. This often takes the form of a 'bogging down' in the demands of others-- family, job, the narrow horizon of everyday duty. The person does not feel that they have alternatives, cannot imagine any choices or differing ways of life, cannot release themselves from a network of obligations even though these no longer give the person any sense of "primary value, of being a heroic contributor to world life" [p 78, Ernest Becker, *ibid*]. The schizoid is not built into this world enough= the depressive is too much built into this world. This is what Kierkegaard calls "finitude's despair"=

"But while one sort of despair plunges wildly into the infinite and loses itself, a second sort permits itself as it were to be defrauded by 'the others.' By seeing the multitude of people about it, by getting engaged in all sorts of worldly affairs, by becoming wise about how things go in this world, such a man forgets himself... does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd" [pp 167-168, *ibid*].

The depressive person is so afraid of being himself, Ernest Becker comments on Kierkegaard's analysis, "that he seems literally stupid. He cannot seem to understand the situation he is in, cannot see beyond his own fears, cannot grasp why he has bogged down" [p 79, *ibid*]. Kierkegaard says of depression= "the lack of possibility is like being dumb.. for without possibility a person cannot, as it were, draw breath."

Ernest Becker sums up Kierkegaard's account of depression thus= "the depressed person avoids the possibility of independence and more life precisely because these are what threaten him with destruction and death. He holds on to the people who have enslaved him in a network of crushing obligations, belittling interaction, precisely because these people *are his shelter*, his strength, his protection against the world. Like most everyone else the depressed person is a coward who will not stand alone on his own center, who cannot draw from within himself the necessary strength to face up to life. So he embeds himself in others; he is sheltered by the necessary and willingly accepts it. But now his tragedy is plain to see= his necessity has become trivial, and so his slavish, dependent, depersonalised life has lost its meaning. It is frightening to be in such a bind. One chooses slavery because it is safe and meaningful; then one loses the meaning of it, but fears to move out of it. One has literally died to life but must remain physically in this world. And thus the torture of depressive psychosis= to remain steeped in one's failure and yet to justify it..." [pp 80-81, *ibid*].

Kierkegaard speaks of a despair so searing and comprehensive that in the end the person tortured by being a self with possibilities turns against having any self at all, and seeks its total obliteration.

3, conclusion

At both extremes the self fails to be existentially born.

Yet pathology demonstrates what our real situation is like, from its underbelly of weakness and failure, and as such is arguably closer to existential realism than the normality of Philistinism, where the person does not succumb in anxiety only by pretending that anxiety does not attack them= they always remain 'on top of it', through power and success. Ernest Becker says of this= "Life sucks us up into standardized activities. The social ..system into which we are born marks out paths for our [phony, purely egoic] heroism, paths to which we conform, to which we shape ourselves so that we can please others, become what they expect us to be. And instead of working out our inner secret we gradually cover it over and forget it, while we become purely external men, playing successfully the standardized hero-game into which we happen to fall by accident.." [pp 82-83, *ibid*].

Pathology= the truth undiscovered.

Normality= the lie established.

Most people avoid the schizoid and depressive extremes of pathology by remaining on the middle ground of Philistinism. Kierkegaard says of this= "philistinism.. celebrates its triumph.. imagines itself to be the master, does not take note that precisely thereby it has taken itself captive to be the slave of spiritlessness and to be the most pitiful of all things" [pp 174-175, *ibid*]. Ernest Becker sums it up= "The Philistine trusts that by keeping himself at a low level of personal intensity he can avoid being pulled off balance by experience.." [p 81, *ibid*].

4, the urge to freedom that falters

Kierkegaard also speaks of two other existential positions which manifest some urge to freedom, but fall short of it.

The first he terms the 'introvert.' This is the person who tries to cultivate his interiority, bases his pride on something within, and creates a distance between himself and what he regards 'the average man', the swallowed up 'immediate man.' The introvert feels he is something different to the world, has something in himself the world in its conventionality cannot appreciate, and so he holds himself somewhat apart from the world. But this person is weak, in a situation of compromise, and thus will not do anything to rock the boat. He is content to live in a kind of incognito, content merely to toy with the idea of who he might really be, content to pride himself on a vaguely felt superiority. He will not push his personal uniqueness to any total confrontation with the world.

The other failure to reach real freedom, despite an urge to it, is the person Kierkegaard describes as trying to be a god to himself, the master of his fate, a 'self-created' man. This person will not be the pawn of others; nor will he just be a "secret dreamer" like the introvert, but will be "a restless spirit." In extremis the defiance involved in the act of self-creation can become a "demonic rage", an attack on all of life for what it has dared to do to one, a revolt against existence itself. Ernest Becker sums up this Promethean spirit as "a rage against our impotence, a defiance of.. our pathetic creature limitations. If we don't have the omnipotence of gods, we at least can destroy like gods" [p 85, *ibid*].

5, true to where we are

Kierkegaard marks out these different ways of being in the world not to sneer at them, but to clear a path toward what they all lack= truthfulness about the human situation. This is made clear in 'Fear and Trembling'= "Face the facts of being what you are, for that is what changes what you are." Ernest Becker comments= "Kierkegaard wanted to show the many ways in which life fails when man closes himself off against the [existential] reality of his condition. Or.. what an undignified and pathetic creature man can be when he imagines that by living unto himself alone he is fulfilling his nature" [pp 86-87, *ibid*]. To throw off the "dead-ends of human impotence, self-centeredness, and self-destruction", we must choose a different way of being in the world with truth. Only the truth sets us free, by calling us out to where we really are.

Kierkegaard's quest is posed by the question= what would be a person who is truthful about where he is? What would be a person who stands in truth, personally, even before he can stand up for truth in the world?

According to Ernest Becker, this would be, basically, a person without all the false evasive manoeuvres, all the false supports, of self-esteem and social

belonging. Angst can, if we allow it, strip away all our false protections, to reveal the unadorned reality of our creaturely condition, out over the deep, subject to fate, moving toward death, and all the other existential givens. If this state becomes in its pathological version a matter of weakness and failure, its truth is not so far off.

The real person -- emergent from Kierkegaard's analyses of all those ways of being in the world that fall short of becoming a real person -- is the one who has transcended himself, and this can only be done by finding one's authentic vocation, and giving its uniqueness, its 'inner secret', form by dedicating it to something beyond oneself.

However, for this to happen, we must break down the prison we have built for ourselves. Ernest Becker=

"In the prison of one's character one can pretend and feel that he is somebody, that the world is manageable, that there is a reason for one's life.." [p 87, *ibid*].

This arises from childhood 'cultural conditioning' difficult to awake to and shed. Every child grounds himself in some power that transcends him, such as parents, social group, symbols of nation, and the like. This unthinking network of support allows the child to believe in himself, though he does not admit that he is living on borrowed powers. He has denied his creaturely helplessness by imagining that the borrowing of powers renders him secure. Unconsciously, he is leaning on the persons and things of his society. But once a person's existential vulnerability is exposed, through the tough school of anxiety, then he is forced to re-examine the whole problem of power linkages. Suddenly he stands naked in the buffets of existence.

This might be thought to rule out any religion, but Ernest Becker claims it is in fact where real religion begins. Kierkegaard signals this when he says= "The self must be broken to become a self" [p 199, *ibid*].

This brokenness, for Ernest Becker, is the full and frank admission that we are a creature.

"Anxiety is the result of the perception of the truth of one's condition. ..This is the terror: to have emerged from nothing, to have a name, consciousness of self, deep inner feelings, an excruciating inner yearning for life.. and with all this yet to die. It seems like a hoax, which is why one type of cultural man rebels openly against the idea of God. What kind of deity would create such complex and fancy worm food? Cynical deities, said the Greeks, who use men's torments for their own amusement" [p 87, *ibid*].

And= "If you admit you are a creature, you accomplish one basic thing: you demolish all your unconscious power linkages or supports" [p 89, *ibid*].

Faith grapples with this question= does one's very creatureliness have meaning to a Creator?

6, faith only arises in the shipwrecked

Kierkegaard contends only truth gives birth to faith, and it does so only through brokenness. Jose Ortega Y Gasset= “These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost is without remission.”

But this implies something surprising= only faith can prevent us from perishing in our human paradox. Our bracing existential condition is the only source of faith, and faith is the only truthful resolution of it.

7, faith answers a call

Once free of all social and cultural props and borrowed power link-ups, once broken, once shipwrecked, once dead to everything, we discover something otherwise obscured= this is where there arises in the heart a connection to the only God who could have put us in this awful and awe-filled predicament. In this there is an irrational sense of being summoned precisely to this human condition, precisely to this human tragedy. That is our significance for the Creator= and we ‘know’ this irrationally in the heart, at the very source of the irrational stirring of its passion, its willingness to go into, and go through, it all.

Kierkegaard= “If anyone on the verge of action should judge himself according to the outcome, he would never begin. Even though the result may gladden the whole world, that cannot help the hero; for he knows the result only when the whole thing is over, and that is not how he became a hero, but by virtue of the fact that he began.”

Faith is the heart’s irrational urge to embrace the ‘suffering position’ into which God has placed it in this existence. Through faith we confirm the veracity of Pascal’s ‘the heart has reasons the reason knows not of.’

THE SOBRIETY OF TRUE PASSION

Even when not degraded, passion gets idealised by the moralistic or romanticised by the artistic. The moralistic do not allow passion its flaw, and failure, its darkness and hurting. The artistic fail to convey just how impossible and rare it is, but 'glamorise' its tumults and trials because the person is not having to live them from the heart-- but is imagining them in the soul, and confusing that with the high cost of real action. Passion is action that springs from the heart's raw encounter with reality. I used to know a philosopher who spoke of 'depth' repeatedly, but always romanticised its terribleness, so that the harshness was filtered out. Romanticism makes 'hard' things attractive, even appealing.. In fact, there is a true beauty in the nakedness and ugliness of passion, but only for those who relate to existence from the heart. This is a very different beauty.. It may break our heart to behold it-- and do we want our heart broken? We absolutely do not, if we are honest. How many of us can unflinchingly behold Christ nailed to the Cross, undone as we are, or Van Gogh in the reversed perspective cornfields of his suicide? When it comes to the heart manifest in genuine 'action', most people cannot see what is right in front of them.

All these distortions of passion equally betray its gravity. Only the heart in us knows what it is to have to be real toward what is real. This is a wound, a weight, a cost, a patient bearing and enduring of the unbearable and unendurable..

Passion is not idealistically perfect and invulnerable, not romantically marvellous and exciting, not narcissistically exaggerated and glorious, not erotic yearning, not achievement motivation, not zealot intolerance.

ABSTRACTIONISM

Phenomenology does not deny the importance of stepping back from the stream of living to 'take thought.' But certain kinds of thought are neither phenomenological nor existential, because their motive is to abstract away from the ground-level participation in the world in order to deny its claim upon us. Salvation by thought= salvation by de-situation. These types of thought are too neatly patterned, too balanced, too comprehensible. They exist to escape the real concrete encounter, on the ground, in time, because this has qualities of mess, flux, ambiguity, paradox, mystery, strangeness, profundity, that don't easily 'add up.' Abstract thought can either theorize into some other world, preferred to this one [Plato]; or it can theorize grand schemes that will iron out all the non-adding-up of this world [Hegel]; or it can formulate mechanical explanations for grounded processes, in the expectation of predicting their regularity and controlling them [science]. All this might be called 'theoretical thinking.' Kierkegaard ridicules all versions of this, because none of it addresses what it is like to be a person in contact, by virtue of consciousness, with the world. He calls such abstraction 'thought without a thinker.' It leaves out what it is like to be a free person relating to other free persons, and to all the existential fates 'flesh is heir to.' Heidegger says we often prefer our abstract representations of reality to reality. These representations get rid of a lot of the richness of existence in favour of a 'thinned down' version, a sort of pale, skeletal reflection; and we like this thinned down version because it is easier to deal with, and seems more efficient to use, when our only motive towards reality is wanting to conquer it for the sake of our comfort and safety. For this same reason we prefer 'calculative' thought that delivers 'accuracy' to 'contemplative' thought that delivers 'truth.'

EXISTENTIAL REALISM

Nowadays passion is neither understood nor lived. This is why so many people are static, frozen, adrift, bored, restless, lost, hollow, disheartened. Fantasy, violence, drugs, consumerism, mechanical sex without human meeting, is the solace for the absence of passion.

Two things always strike at the human heart=

[a] it is situated in hazard, thus its true, personal action is inescapably at risk and subject to pain= this is its suffering passionateness;

[b] it is aware of risk and pain, and struggling with its own authenticity= this is its conscience about its passionateness.

Passion is forged or broken in affliction, tribulation, and travail, which comes from outside, but must be wrestled with on the inside.

The Daemonic fate inherent to existence can=

[1] drive us into pathology [neurotic or psychotic]

[2] cause us to keep to the shallows with others in a herd

[3] tempt us into the short-cut of evil

[4] tempt us to substitute toughing it out for real heroism

[5] eliminate the heart by recourse to various forms of spirituality of transcendence

[6] move us to true heroism

Passion has about it not only nobility but also pathos.

GOD IS NOT AN IDEA

The Daemonic -- among other things -- kills off any 'idea' of God, and leaves one bleeding before the Reality.

Miguel de Unamuno=

“Those who believe that they believe in God,
but without passion in the heart,
without anguish in mind,
without uncertainty, without doubt,
without despair even in their consolation,
believe only in the God idea,
not in God himself.”

THE BLACK NIGHT

“Deep song shoots its arrows of gold right into our heart. In the dark it is a terrifying blue archer whose quiver is never empty.”

F. Lorca

1,

Flamenco began as unaccompanied singing, no instruments, no dancers, just the human voice at its most raw. A possible ‘all time greats’ list of singers=

[1] Manuel Torre; [2] Tomas Pavon; [3] El Terremoto de Jerez [“The Earthquake”] [4] Manolo Caracol; [5] La Nina des los Peines [Pastora Pavon, “The Child of the Combs”]; [6] Antonio Mairena; [7] Don Antonio Chacon; [8] Camaron de la Isla [“The Shrimp”]; [9] El Sordera de Jerez. [10] Fosforito [Antonio Fernandez Diaz].

Guitarists= [11] Perico el del Lunar; [12] Ramon Montoya; [13] Javier Molina.

The 10 singers are not really in any [hierarchal/numerical] order. They all are equally profound!

Certainly, any of the first five voices could arguably be declared ‘No 1’ of all time.. But Manuel Torre has been put first, because as one of the oldest [b 1878], his savage voice is rooted in the distant past from which Flamenco came. Still, Tomas Pavon is equally great, for the same reason [though a bit younger], and so too El Terremoto, Manolo Caracol, and Nina Pavon, the incomparable Nina [older sister of Tomas]. Just thinking of them brings tears to my eyes. But some people rank The Shrimp as the greatest ever, and he died not so long ago, yet here he only comes in at [8].. But he is magnificent too. The guitarists are old greats.. The guitar is there to amplify the singing, respond to it, not dominate or lead it.. An accompanist. Thus there is something un-Flamenco about non-accompanied guitar playing of Flamenco music. It does not work. Yet it has become common place. Similarly with dancers; they should augment the lone human voice. But that too has gone by the wayside..

This list is influenced by the authenticity, depth, power -- the ‘duende’ -- of the cante jondo -- the deep song -- of these singers. It also reflects services they rendered to Flamenco music. Several of this top 10 sang older song forms, or less well known and less often performed song forms, preserving them for future generations. Without the top 5 or so, Flamenco might have just disappeared from the world. Or worse, the ‘light’ café type of Flamenco, full of narcissistic grand gestures and posturing [pretend, not real, passion], might have taken over from the real Flamenco of heart passion at its most extreme. Every time a Flamenco singer raises his voice, he ‘mounts the rim of the well’, in the deep place of life and death, and he must fight for life against death, and be prepared really to die in every performance, because if he cannot die, then he is not in jeopardy, and duende will not come. In the old days, gypsies

sang mostly for friends, spontaneously, when the spirit took them. Having to 'perform' to a set time and place in cafes, or music halls, much less formal concert halls, was always hard.. It led to short cuts.

Once Nina was singing for a group of aficionados and one chimed up, 'this is worthy of the Paris Lido.' She was so stung by this remark, equivalent to calling someone a coward, or saying they had no integrity, she stopped, paused, collected her forces in an eerie silence, like a gathering storm, then with tears in her eyes suddenly relaunched into some of the greatest Flamenco singing anyone had ever heard. It wasn't recorded= the best of Flamenco never could be recorded. Even the scratchy old 78s we have from the earlier eras, now available in shiny CDs, give only an impression..

This list is also pretty much all Gypsies, with only 2 non Gypsy 'Spaniards' on it. Nothing could be more mistaken than terming Flamenco 'Spanish music.' It is nothing of the sort. It is Gypsy music -- like the Roma music of Eastern Europe which is not Bulgarian, not Romanian, not Hungarian, not Balkan, not Russian.. It can be said this is Gypsy music influenced by dwelling for centuries in Spain, but stronger influences shaped it-- the Arab music and culture of North Africa, and the sacred chanting of Coptic Egyptian Christians, Jews, and particularly, it is said, the Byzantine Greek Christians. Then there is the influence of all the places the Gypsies passed through in their westward migration; and their source itself, the music and culture of Rajasthan in the north west of Mother India. More than a year ago, a TV programme went all over Rajasthan and listened to the varied native musicians [usually living as outsiders at the fringe of the villages]. The parallel with Flamenco was audible..

Flamenco has combined some of the ecstatic yearning of the East, with a pained and struggling heart -- like Jacob at the fast flowing river, who fought an unknown spirit in the form of a man all night, and won a blessing, but only through a wound. This suffering that deepens the heart, and this fight in the heart for something at stake it does not understand, is what Flamenco acquired by going West.

Anyway, these 10 voices of Gypsy 'hard travelling and hard times' can be commended to anyone who 'enjoys' a music that has the strange power to rip their heart out, and throw it bleeding on the ground. Manuel Torre, my personal all time No 1, sang from a duende so powerful, listeners ripped off their shirts, becoming moved so deeply that their hearts were bursting out of their chests. The power of duende, in the singer and in the listeners affected by him, is 'wild.'

Everything tame; everything structured, organized, ordered; everything contained; everything shallow and superficial; everything far from the stricken and glorious heart deeper down, is ripped to shreds, pulverized, destroyed. The duende reveals the spirit that indwells the heart when true, and thus shows up the false heart; it does more than this, it puts the surface heart, the heart nice, and pleasant, and reasonable, the heart normal, conventional, and easy, to the sword. For us humans who have betrayed the true heart for all

the centuries since we left the Sacred Beginning, its appearance in nakedness, in blood, in pain, is something like a huge natural disaster, a cataclysm; it reveals the different heart we could use to live a different life, the lost heart, the broken heart, but the heart that can be reforged by the power that must expose its tragic reality.

Duende plunges us into the life and death edge of the true heart. It exposes our fallenness, and charges us -- with electricity -- get up!

In all the ancient temples and churches there is very spiritually compelling 'sacred' music. Only the music of duende, only the music with "black sounds", is 'holy.' The holy is terrible, it destroys us to remake us. Will we remain in that conflagration?

Miles Davis said, 'when I hear Flamenco, I want to fall to my knees.' Miles Davis understood the duende of Deep Song.

It comes from where we are liars and betrayers of the depth of the human heart, but it recalls us to that place, and it re-baptizes us in the truth of the struggle there, and it promises us that what wounds us and fights us will finally empower us to bear and contend in a new way, a way worthy of the heart.

A commentator says, on the nights when Manuel Torre found the duende, the dark sounds, 'his song would become unbearable, leaving the listener breathless.' Your heart stops, when the true heart, in its suffering, in its battling, ascends the stage and steps forth, to reclaim the world it has let go.

Ole!

2,

The true -- not dishonest and nonsensical -- meaning of 'wild' is Daemonic.

But the Daemonic gets confused and degraded in the lingua franca, almost worse than that which occurs with 'passion.' Van Gogh painted in the white heat of the agonized ecstasy for the last year of his life, creating more masterpieces in that one year than most other painters managed in their whole life. Yet, many people think the state of agonized ecstasy induced by duende is just an 'out of control' hysteria. The comic book accounts of Dionysic frenzy, eyes popping out and craziness abounding, are incompatible with the grace and strength needed to sustain duende, as Flamenco singers do over a long night [as in the "Black Nights" of Manuel Torre], or Van Gogh over a long year. This touches on trance, but it is more: the trance is seized, possessed, and indwelt, by the dark spirit of the Daemonic. Holy Fire courses through the blood; that is why, in this altered state of the heart, the veins bulge. I have heard Cheyenne and Lakota drummers, linked straight 'down' to the true heartbeat of humanity, pound out that rhythm with the drums over days without let up, and not missing a beat.

The duende of Deep Song in Flamenco is one of the most pure expressions of the Daemonic. To embrace it makes us conscious of the pain, the blackness, the deeps, through which the heart must pass, to reclaim its calling as the 'secret agent', the Spirit inspired and Spirit sparked, engine of God in a world without fire, but burned down to dead ashes. The Daemonic has to destroy our attempts to normalize the heart's fallenness, our attempts to pretend nothing has happened when we threw away the heart; we try to just get on with life, as if no calamity marked our very Origin, and so we make of our nice, pleasant, reasonable, lawful, life the most terrible lie. Play the Game by the Rules, and all is well, we say, trying to be happy, and trying to succeed, without any heart, as if we need no heart. That is a Tower built over a vast and gaping Pit-- as I saw in a vision in my 20s. The Daemonic lightning will strike the Tower, bringing it crashing down, to reveal the Pit which it 'covers over.'

One day, at Easter, Manuel Torre sang a 'saeta' to the Mother of God, bringing the centre of Seville to a grinding halt for two hours during the Easter celebrations. This was no interference. It was an earth-shattering eruption of the truest meaning of the Cross.

Gypsy Flamenco does not provide an Answer, but it presents us with the profundity of the Problem, and keeps us nailed there, through long hours. Just to be nailed to the strange point where the heart is lost and can be regained, crucified in that paradox, just to stay there and not move out of the crossing of roads, shatters us and strengthens us. It sobers us. It puts us close to the fire that consumes us as the devouring worm, and close to the Fire of Holiness which, alone, can make any dent on our situation. In this cauldron of fire, no Light of God, no Light of the Eastern Eros, can penetrate. No Light overcomes the evil lodged here. You cannot prematurely harmonize this place of destruction and resurrection. Even before the possible process of violent reversal, and breath-taking change, happens, you must just stay, stand in the fire pit, bear it in your kidneys. The Bible calls this staying with it, bearing it, enduring it, 'patience', but it is active patience.

Duende is our struggle with the Holy Fire meant to indwell, inspire, 'drive', the human heart. In Flamenco, the heart's loss of True Fire is exposed; and this also exposes its sorrow and mourning over that -- the only fully sincere repentance -- and its struggle to be true to the edge where the tragedy bites, and remain there. There is no hope in restoration; that would be dishonest, premature, fabricated. Instead, there is the terrible dignity of simply suffering and fighting to hold again the ancient ground that, in the far past, humanity abandoned, giving it over to the evil spirit, and making it the place of abandonment, of forlornness, of no hope in God, or in humanity, or in oneself.

This is the killing ground deep in the human heart and at the core of the world. In duende, we reclaim the killing ground for humanity, and then, once we can hold our ground there whatever the assaults of evil, of shallowness, of lesser forces inner or outer, then we reclaim this killing ground for God. With us holding our ground in this place of dereliction and heroism, life is possible and death is possible, and the Daemonic God comes. First to fight us, as a

commissioning of us to fight evil, and fight for the world. Then to fight with us, as the power that chastises us, and breaks us open, remakes us in a furnace so terrible and so austerely beautiful, even angels hide their all seeing eyes from its mystery.

You climb no ladder of altered, ever purer, states of consciousness. You stay put, and the fires burn, and you are burned to ashes and yet you begin to burn with the Fire that does not consume.

Rumi=

“If your knowledge of fire has been turned
To certainty by words alone,
Then seek to be cooked by the fire itself.
Don't abide in borrowed certainty.
There is no real certainty until you burn;
If you wish for this, sit down in the fire.”

3,

Something has changed in the Abyss beneath our feet, as we walk the dusty ground.

We are back on the killing ground. The evil spirit does not have it all his way anymore.

We have not triumphed in any final sense. Never the less we are back on holy ground, back on the killing ground, and that lays down a marker. It says, I am making my stand. I am not going to be pushed off this hard and hurtful place where I will suffer and fight to stand.

Anything more is in the hands of the Daemonic God, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God. When we fear the Daemonic more than the world, people, evil, we will have taken a further step.. There are many more steps on the killing ground.

After the Black Night, we are spent, and strangely re-empowered. We have regained honour, regained integrity, regained the capacity to make the heart's vow.

We cannot prevail on the killing ground. None the less, when the Daemonic God comes, and at that moment we again stand on the rim of life and of death, we can vow our heart to his heart.

This is the start of the different life, the life in which the heart comes back.

Vamos ya!

THE BURNING OF PASSION

The German for 'passion' is as clear as ancient Greek, and ancient Hebrew, on what this abused word really means. Thus, the German is 'leidenschaft', which is close to Kierkegaard's Danish word 'sufferingship', but the German is arguably clearer= it means, according to my German speaking friend, 'you suffer for something you love.' The person who told me this then qualified it a bit more; it means, he said, 'you do something, and suffer, but you do that happily.'

From passion as 'suffer for love', clear in Greek, you also get to the Hebrew, 'carry a burden for love.' From this you get to, 'whatever you do that is hard, for love.' And next you get to, 'everything you do that is a sacrifice, for love.'

All our crying, sweat, and blood, expended for love, is passion.

All we do that is risky, full of jeopardy and danger, for love, is passion. When we pay a cost for love, in our action, that is passion. Only passion pays the ultimate cost.

Thus passion is love at its most self-giving, self-transcending, and self-emptying. What you do for love, no matter how it comes back and hits you, is passion. Only passion drives action that is of supreme meaning, and purpose, to us. Only in passion do we give it our all.

[1] The Russian playwright Chekhov to a friend= "As far as I can make out the order of things, life consists of nothing but horrors, squabbles, and banalities."

Without passion, Chekhov is right. This is the world, if passion fails.

[2] The British film-maker John Boorman= "What is passion? It is surely the becoming of a person. Are we not, for most of our lives, marking time? Most of our being is at rest, un-lived. In passion, the body and the spirit seek expression outside the self. Passion is all that is other from self. ..The more extreme and the more expressed that passion is, the more unbearable does life seem without it. [This] reminds us that if passion dies or is denied, [then] we are partly dead and that soon.. we will be wholly so."

[3] The American screen-writer Paddy Chayefsky, scrawled on a scroll in urgent hand writing=

"It is passion that carries man to God
And passion is a balky beast
Few men ever let it out the stable. It brooks no
bridle, indeed it bridles you; it rides the rider.
Yet, it invites man..
above his own inadequate world
and makes real such things as
beauty, imagination, love and God

and all those other things that are not quite
molecular
but are.”

Then in larger letters=

“PASSION
IS THE VERY
FACT OF GOD IN MAN
that makes him other than a brute.”

The existential fact, not some theological vision.

IV: THE JEWISH STRUGGLE WITH THE DAEMONIC

“You are merciful to all; ..and overlook men’s sins so that they can repent...

You spare all things because all things are yours, Yahweh, the lover of the living,

You whose imperishable spirit is in all.”

Wisdom of Solomon, 11, 26-27

“Yahweh, your God, is in your midst, a warrior whose power gives you victory.”

Zephaniah, 3, 17

“Those who trust in Yahweh will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love.”

Wisdom of Solomon, 3, 9

GREEK SPACE AND JEWISH TIME

[From T. Boman, 'Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek', 1970]

1,

The old cliché is that the ancient Greeks were visual, the ancient Jews verbal.. Or, image versus word.

However, vision is indeed major to the Greeks. Most of their terms for 'knowing' are derived from the stem in Greek for 'see.' A thinking with the eyes, proceeding from what is seen; yet it was also necessary to see what is invisible to the eye and inaccessible to the senses. This too is sight, 'viewing', *theoria*.

The Jewish Bible does emphasise the importance of hearing, and the spoken word. Vision is a distance sense, takes in vast swathes and perceives the overall pattern. Hearing is a 'closer up' sense, nearer and more intimate.

Vision seems to favour the mind, while hearing favours the heart.

For the Greeks, truth is 'that which is unveiled' [unconcealed, unhidden]. That which is disclosed, clear, evident. The concept of truth in Sanskrit is typically Greek: 'that which is' is 'the true' [and even 'the good']. For the Indo-European peoples, stretching from India to Greece, TRUTH IS ONTOLOGICAL.

For the Jews, truth is expressed by derivatives of the verb 'aman' – to be steady, faithful; 'amen': verily, surely; 'omen': faithfulness; 'umnam': 'really'; 'emeth': constancy, trustworthiness, fidelity to reported events; 'omenah': pillar, door post. For the Jews, and maybe other Semitic peoples like the Arabs, TRUTH IS EXISTENTIAL.

The Jews do not ask what is true in any objective sense, natural or supernatural, but they ask what is personally certain-- what can be depended upon personally because it has proved itself reliable; what is faithful in the existential sense.

The Greeks are interested in what is in agreement with impersonal being; 'seeing into' this being does not require any personal relationship to it. The Jews are interested in the disclosures, or events, that are personally relevant to them; addressing such disclosure, or events, requires a personal 'face to face', or 'heart to heart', relationship.

When confronting a new reality, the Greek asks, how does this manifest being?

When confronting a new reality, the Jew asks, who are you, what do you intend?

2,

But there is a second contrast even more interesting.

Greek thinking is concerned with 'synthesis', Jewish thinking is 'analytic.' 'Reason' in Greek is derived from 'gather'; the points to be taken into consideration are sought, brought together, and arranged into a pleasing whole-- and in that way the truth is demonstrated. You can see it for yourself.

The Hebrew 'bin' means 'understand', and implies 'to dismember, to separate'; hence 'binah' means 'understanding, discernment, insight'-- the ability to separate the non-essential and external from the essential and internal-- the 'heart of the matter', and once having found it, to express this as briefly and pithily, and as pointedly, as possible. Once the 'point' is uncovered, there is no need for any detailed demonstration, or any extensive development of ideas. A better term for all this than 'analysis', with its modern connotations of the intellect reducing things to their mechanical components, might in fact be 'delving', or 'in depth delving' in order to get to the real core of any issue.

When it comes to getting through the defenses of hearers, the Jew tells a parable, tale, story, which goes direct to their heart in such a way, they cannot contest it. The Jews also like repetition, to hammer home a point. In their writing style, the Jews do not build step by step, as in architecture, but build more like music where the theme is set forth at the beginning and returns later in constantly new variations.

Other Hebrew terms for thinking -- yadha: know; ra'ah: see; shama: hear -- serve the purpose of finding a point rather than of furnishing a proof. Even 'seeing' is different; visible things become signs for the Jew, disclosing to him the qualities of their possessor or creator. When we have discovered these, we have seen things correctly. For example, everything King Solomon made 'testified' of his wisdom.

Obviously, the Jews also knew of an external seeing which could discover only the surface of things, "but not until one had plumbed the depths and seen the inside of things, their true content and their centre, did he really understand the matter" [p 204]. The Jews coined separate expressions for the two kinds of observation: to see the surface or appearance, and to see the heart, or truer essence [1 Samuel, 16, 7]. In Isaiah, God utters the reproach against Israel that 'they see without understanding' [Isaiah, 6, 9]. For a Jew, true religion is learning by sight, seeing with eyes open how God carries out his purpose in life and in history, but a seer -- ro'eh -- is a person of God who sees what is hidden from other people, be it animals who have run away,

hidden crimes and deviously masked evils, or future events. The Wise person sees deeper than others; when it is declared [Ecclesiastes, 1, 16] “yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge”, this person ‘observes’ the world in a very different sense.

Greek thinking is often claimed to be ‘clear logical knowing’, but that is more true of the Latin contraction of all things Greek into a more superficial package; it certainly misses how intuitive and inner looking the Greek nous is. Albert Einstein speaks in Greek vein= “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.” What is the case is the Greek tendency toward holism, and ontological rooting. The Greeks look for the harmony, the overall shape, of things hanging together. In that sense, yes, a gathering in. This gathering can reveal the meta pattern of the whole, the grand design in things that is not reductive, but beautiful, alive, good, mysterious. But the danger in this Greek pattern making is that discrepant things, what Kierkegaard calls the absurd, do not fit in; dissonance is too readily balanced with the overall resolution. Rough edges are knocked off, and ignored. This makes the Greek mentality especially ill-suited to accept the Daemonic, in God or in nature, or in human existence.

Here is one example of the Daemonic in nature. A physicist on British TV is currently explaining how the entire universe was formed from a chaotic cloud of swirling gas, and he compares the shaping of the solar system to a tornado! Whirlwind; storm, wind, lightning; earthquakes; volcanoes; all these and other such events are Daemonic.

Greek thinking seeks, as Heidegger argued, to get to the being in which all things inhere; for the ancient Greeks, the Platonic ‘ideas’ were supposedly the seeds of all being. There is a connection, then, between idea—being—seeing into things. The Greeks used thought to portray the architecture, both manifest and latent, of all things in their order of being gathered in, and inter connecting. The term harmony means not only that things are gathered together in a holistic pattern, but that they do not clash, fight, contend one with another, for that would rip apart the single fabric all indwell in their multiplicity.

But things do clash, as well as dance and co-inhere, as Heraclitus acknowledged. Paradoxically, it was the war gods at the dawn of time who were the most protective of, and kind toward, humanity, bestowing upon humans all manner of divine gifts that helped them survive, prosper, grow. This paradox is Daemonic.

In distinction to the Greeks, the Jews used thought to reach deep psychological understanding. Hence the ‘heart’ is a Biblical category, and does not just mean ‘the centre’, as it does in Greek, but the source of intent and motive, the engine of movement, and ground of sincerity or duplicity in

terms of being reliable in relationship. The Arab word for heart means 'that which can turn over', as in turning over a new leaf, and further implies 'that which can travel a far distance' [towards a far shore we might otherwise consider unobtainable].

3,

Boman offers a final contrast of Greek and Jew; rest, harmony, composure, and self control-- this is the Greek way; movement, life, deep passion and power-- this is the Jewish way.

For the Jew, everything is in movement: God, humanity, nature and the world. The totality of all this is 'olam', and is in time, subject to history, and so life is ever changing. "The fact that God created the world and mankind once and for all implies that God makes history and brings forth life and that he continues them until they achieve their goal" [p 205]. Thus 'being' is the same as 'energy', and God is not only Creator, but also world-perfector, and hence must be the redeemer of the world. All sources of being are in God; thus nothing escapes the journey, and risk, all created things are on, as they move toward their purpose.

Greek-- space; Jew-- time.

It was inevitable, then, argues Boman [and maybe he exaggerates, without proper nuancing], that Jewish thinking became more psychological, in that it is concerned with our state of heart, how we are reacting, what is up with us as we journey and battle through time. By contrast, Greek thinking is more metaphysically philosophical, in that its focus is on the over-all pattern of being, and hence it is less concerned with the human, more likely to want to subsume the human into the holistic pattern, or is simply not interested in psychological agonies and vicissitudes because they actually do not have any bearing on the meta whole, but merely tend to obscure seeing it in all its oneness and variety, its beauty, goodness, and intelligible but subtle structure. To 'see' the whole, and accept our place in it, we should try to still the agonies and ecstasies of our reactions to 'how things are going', and adopt a more quiet, contemplative stance. Then we will see 'how it all fits together', and how marvellous its harmonics and dynamic balances really are. We will be joined to what we see, in the soul. Greek knowing is unitive. It unites us, inside, and unites us with the outside.

This argument has a certain validity, though it does ignore the Greek tragedies-- yet perhaps the Greek description of the 'tragic' suggests these are persons who break connection with the meta world order, and so are punished for getting out of step in the cosmic dance.

For the Jews, wrestling with God, themselves, and the world, as they voyage through time, the ups and downs, the falls and recoveries, the endless

strivings and wrestlings, including searching out God in the most severe difficulties, are all needed, and are not to be 'calmed' out of existence. Just rendering the depths of human passion more 'benign', as you see in Buddhism or in St Maximos, is no answer to the tumults of existence we must go through, to exercise heart and get finally to the heart of all things. We must 'pass through water and fire', Isaiah says. We must drown, we must get burned; that passing through deep things, which are at risk to degeneration and destruction, yet if we get through 'prove' something profound, is necessary. The Jewish way is dramatic, because everything is on edge, and it could either make it all the way, or go over. Our deeper passions are more evil, yet they contain the only sparks of a more God-like love. Being non sexual, being non aggressive, being kindly in a rather impersonal and sublimated way, is no answer to what is being tested, and must be proved, over time. Redemption is at stake, and it is to this outcome the man or woman of faith is staked.

Clarity of picture, in the Greeks, is bought at the price of downplaying motion; we cannot see movement, we sacrifice it to put snap-shots at different times together, holistically. But the deeper stream of existence is all about change, movement, dynamism, including fight as well as dance, non-harmonics, not just harmonics, the irreducibly real that fits no picture but bangs the heart, not just the sacred geometry that puts consoling arms round us. The discrepancies, the gaps, the unknowns, the messes, the ambiguities, the wounds, drive things forward. When in imbalance, you must move-- or fall down.

4,

Greek= soul--mind.

Jew= heart--soul.

Soloviev distinguishes soul and heart thus.

Soul= 'the thirst for immortality.'

Heart= 'the hunger for truth and moral perfection.'

Yet there is complementarity between Greek and Jew, as Niels Bohr argued in regard to particle and wave in physics. For the Greek, reality is Being. For the Jew, reality is Movement.

Reality is both ontological and existential at the same time; this is logically contradictory, but it is so.

Yet they do not simply balance, yin/yang fashion; for a time, the Eros of the Greeks predominates-- when we think back to the lost harmony at the

beginning, or think forward to a new, regained harmony at the end. In the middle, however, the Daemonic of the Jews is gambling with everything that the human heart can 'come through' the ordeal. It is like in Flamenco. The ordeal is life and death, you can really die in it; we resist for all we are worth, yet once dumped in the ordeal by fate, once on that electric rim where it is all to play for, and the stakes are ultimate, there is nowhere we would rather be.

Ole, they say in Spanish, to keep us going.

WHAT GOD PUT ON THE JEWS

The struggle of the human heart with God's Gamble

1,

The uniqueness of the Jews is that God ties himself to history-- not just the history of the Jews, but by virtue of them, the history of all humanity. A friend calls this 'bizarre.' It makes religion existential, and this worldly-- religion ceases being ontological, and other worldly. For the Jews, ultimate things have to be found in the passing, or lost, forever.. For most religions, the passing had been regarded with suspicion as unreal, or a lesser kind of reality; to attach oneself to the unreality, or the relative reality, of the passing is to look for happiness, and meaning, where they cannot be found. It is to bind oneself to illusion.

To risk losing the ultimate in the passing is a Reversal of what many religions regard as 'spiritual.' This is why the heart is so central, and different, in Judaism. The human heart is the vehicle of that risk. It is the heart that 'tests' the eternal in time, submitting to its own testing through the exactions of time. What heart stands or falls? Is this heart shallow or deep?

The bet that God made with the Adversary at the start of the Jewish journey -- in the Book of Job -- is gambling on the outcome of the entire stretch of human history= that humanity will come through. The human heart will rise to the challenge put upon it by existence; the Evil One; and God.

This three-cornered pressure is always with the heart. The Jews have a term in Hebrew for this world, in its historical 'long march', as the existential arena of spiritual test= 'Nisayon.'

God said to Abraham, 'come out', and this means, emerge from the Great Round of the Whole. This is where the 'personal God' begins. The Daemonic is the personal summons to a personal heart. The heart is called into the world as the 'fire pit' of the personal God. No attitude of mind can prevent the heart getting burnt. The Daemonic is a fate from which there is no escape, material or spiritual.

2,

The other importance of the Jews is that they resisted what God put upon them. Their very name declares this. Jacob is the father of all those who struggle against God..

God accepts our resistance, since it produces a wrestling with and searching out of 'the deep things of God and the deep things of humanity' that comes to the heart in no other way. Blood, sweat, and tears, deepens the heart.

What we resist has to be delved for what truth is in its heart. The Lie, if struggled with, leads to the Truth the heart stands on.

If the passing cannot become the dwelling of the ultimate, then the gamble is forfeit and all is lost. There is no ultimate to fall back upon, and into which to retreat. If the passing proves unable to lift the weight and carry the load of the eternal, through the contending and deeds of the human heart, then everything ends not with a bang but a whimper.. This is the unbelievable burden on the heart.

The 'load' that God puts on the Jews, by asking them to have a heart in the three-fold situation into which they are thrown, is very heavy. This is different from what God asks of other peoples. God asks something new, and specific, of the Jews in becoming 'God's chosen.' Chosen for what? Chosen to show all mankind what it means to have a heart, a heart deep, true, tested and proved, in the arena hardest to endure.

The reason this burden was put upon the Jews did not become immediately apparent. It would only become clearer far down the line..

What is immediately apparent is that fidelity to the path down which God is leading the Jews will be a rocky ride. It asks of the human something peculiarly difficult.

What is that weight of heart so hard to pick up?

What is that burden of heart so hard to carry?

The load put upon the Jewish shoulders and back, which really means a burden whose weight falls directly on the heart, is to contest this world for redemption.

What is the weight we can no longer lift?

What is the burden we can no longer carry?

Can we lift the weight again?

Can we carry the burden again?

None of us knows the mystery of the heart, which assumes in the deeps the staking of the ultimate to the passing.

Yet we assumed it, and though we buckled and fell, we persisted, after a fashion..

Such is the story of the Jews, and by virtue of them, the story of humanity.

It is about whether we will use the heart, in an existential cauldron, in this world, in the whole span of history.

Will we lift the weight, will we carry the burden, of staking the heart to what is at stake in what is passing?

THE HEBREW WORD FOR PASSION= 'Cleave'

1,

Because the word 'passion' is so degraded today -- confused with ego ambition, impersonal sex, violent bullying, etc -- it is necessary to use a lot of other terms which are cognate with its real meaning. There are a number of key metaphors and alternate expressions, such as the leap into the unknown, being staked to the ground, and others...

Passion is the key to the Jewish approach to faith in the Old Testament.

There is another word in Hebrew for [the Greek] passion'= this word is 'cleave.' Cleave is a strange, and powerful, word which turns up in various places and in various ways throughout the Jewish Bible. A man cleaves to his woman in marriage; the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth; tired bones cleave to the skin. But what really is striking is that in Deuteronomy, early on in the Old Testament, the text repeatedly says, again and again, 'cleave to God.'

Passion is our cleaving to God.

I love the very word, 'cleave.'

In English, as in Hebrew, this word carries a paradox, a contradiction, a mystery, a secret. For, it means both to join with, and to separate. In fact, more concretely it means both a warm embrace and yet when we wield a sword we can cut an opponent's head in two= we cleave them in half. To cleave is at one and same time to hold on to and unite with, yet also to rend, to tear into pieces, to divide. Poetically this captures the peculiarity of passion. To cleave is to love, yet this very love contains a sacred violence, a fight, a separating.. Cleave is not cognate with the Greek 'agape'; agape is the crown of Eros, its compassion, its philanthropy, its benevolent charity. Cleave, by contrast, is the dragon of the Daemonic= it is the koan of fire, divine and human.

Without cleaving, we cannot face and come through all the 'existential exactions' that befall us as a fate. The Greek for passion, 'pathos', carries this connotation of being put in 'a room of no exit', where the alternatives disappear, and it all comes down to only a very few, but immensely powerful, moves you can make 'on the rim.' In Greek, passion is what you suffer, inescapably. But the Hebrew 'cleave' is more strong in both its passive acceptance of what cannot be changed, and in its active way of meeting that, of staying with that, of wrestling that, and coming through. This is where the sense of 'violence' comes in to cleaving [Mathew, 11, 12]. It punches through.

By accepting the unacceptable, it knocks down and punches through existential walls, it strides into and crosses existential gaps, that simply cannot be knocked down or crossed except by the power of this kind of passion. It is this passion that God encouraged in Israel-- unlike the Greeks who, though they recognised the Daemonic wound of fate and the suffering passion it sparked, never the less gradually turned against all passion per se, for the sake of light, transcendence, joy, freedom, unassailable knowledge of spirit. The Daemonic was rejected in favour of Eros; the divine dark that indwells the dark of existence, the realm of Spirit, was rejected in favour of the light that brings all potentiality to fruition, the light that loves and heals what comes to light in its gracious and golden embrace, the realm of Logos. The Jewish cleaving does not make this flight from the Daemonic, but violently embraces its violence, not only being cut to shreds by it, but cutting through it to reach a far shore otherwise not reachable.

This is passionateness of heart, and for the Jews the whole span of its holy mystery, from primitive beginnings to increasing existential sophistication, is summed up in this word 'cleave to God', and 'cleave to this world in its redeemability.' Without the increasingly radical cleaving that is deepened passion, the human being does not arrive at holiness, and stands outside the most wonderful and momentous mystery in existence. The hidden God, and the hidden wisdom, are only flushed out of their place of hiding, are only dug out, through the cleaving that is passion's free and loving embrace of existence's wound.

Kierkegaard's understanding of passion as necessary to existing brings his account close to the Biblical cleaving. He says that we need passion to exist - - and if you don't realise this, you just do not understand what it means to 'exist'—in which case, you are not really 'here' but in a head trip to somewhere else: you've left existence in this world. Some people avoid by virtue of fantasies of sex, or wealth, or status; some avoid by resort to control, power over things, domination; some seek comfort and luxuriatingness; some pursue philosophy, theology, ontological structures. We all choose our preferred escape.. Without cleaving, we don't have the energy, the muscle, the motive and intentionality, to stay, to get stuck in, to see it through to the end. Without cleaving, we cannot stand in this world and really take on the terror and beauty of existence in all its existential bite. It is precisely this most irrational and testing reality of existence which hides within the depths of its existential predicament an entire wisdom of God; this is what can become the wisdom of God united with the wisdom of humanity in the travails, the battling and raptures, of the heart. Failing this, cleaving has no point.

To cleave is an action, and it implies a sticking to it and sticking with it that is key to passion.

In the Orthodox church recently I heard another phrase, from St Paul, also relevant here. He refers to= 'fervour of spirit.' Passion is the fervour of our spirit; but what could 'impassion' such fervour if it were not 'the' Spirit? The

passionate are not Logos people; they are Pneuma/Spirit people. The Spirit becomes the main help for those who risk the way of passion.

Putting the two phrases together, 'cleaving' and 'fervour of spirit', you get this= those who cleave to God will receive the Spirit.

Those who cleave to God will know the Spirit directly in the fervour of their spirit, which is the fervour impassioned in their passion of deep heart.

2,

I ran into a plethora of slightly differently nuanced accounts of the Hebrew root meaning of 'cleave.' There were different spellings in English [such as QBDW and BAQA]. Yet the range of meanings seem a family of close relatives, rather than strangers..

The basic meaning is 'adhere.' When you adhere to something, you embrace it in a very strong way. The marriage context in Genesis speaks of leaving mother and father in order to cleave to the spouse, and by that cleaving, become one flesh-- or as it was explained by certain Jewish commentators, to become a combined entity, a dual unity, not exactly a single person, but a closeness and intimacy so potent between them, the two persons become 'as one.' This is not Oriental fusion, nor is it Western duality. Whatever we cleave to, be it in marriage, in fighting spirit, or in redeeming the world, passion and its Other remain distinct yet become 'as one.' This is beyond oneness or twoness. It is a state of communing. Buber would call it I--Thou, or maybe that 'We' which emerges from I--Thou as a further stage, its crown.

Cleave is always in Hebrew in the masculine, singular, imperfect tense= passion is spiritually masculine, as in St Peter's hidden man of the heart; it is singular because the impetus for it comes from within the unique person, the distinct personhood, the unrepeatable personalness= I cannot give myself to life for you, nor can you do this for me, it is something we must each do ourselves; and it is in the imperfect tense because it is an action and this action is still incomplete, it is on its way, always travelling, battling, changing, shedding the old for the sake of the new= it has not arrived yet, but it is going, fundamentally on the move.

Adhere means to stick to something, and it also means to stick with it, to remain committed, through thick and thin. But there is another, and much more active and aggressive, implication to cleaving. Thus it means to 'break open', or 'break through.' Indeed, to cleave also means to 'rend open', or even implies 'a violent cutting into pieces.' Passion is terrible in the Old English sense because it does not relent; it is the hunter who cannot be deflected or distracted, seduced or intimidated, off the hunt. It is the warrior whose fight will not submit. Passion carries on, despite, not because of, conditions, circumstances, exigencies. It takes the hit-- and gets up, and walks ahead. Thus passion separates those who cleave and continue from those who bail out prematurely, because they cannot take any more. The cutting edge of

cleaving also cuts through delusion, deception, lies. Thus in every respect it does not stop where most people stop.

I dreamt of a friend recently who, in the dream, announces from the extremity of their depression= "I am going to flush out God from the place where he is hiding." The aggressivity in cleaving is, at its most profound, a refusal to be put off by God's hiddenness, and becomes a fierce determination to break through to where God is hidden in existence. Depression slays all other hopes, dreams, yearnings, of life, so we can seek the one thing needful. God likes to be hidden, but likes even more those not intimidated by the unknown God, the absent God, the defunct bad daddy God who is either off somewhere else enjoying his bliss or even if with us cannot do anything effective anyway.. On this hunt to dig out God from where he is hidden in the abysses of existence, we pass through water and we pass through fire; we enter the dark; we plunge down; we go in over our head; we are stretched to breaking point and beyond. We go into hell, losing all hope. We curse God and die: but we don't. We continue, even though we have lost anything and everything that could comfort us, secularly or religiously. We even let go guilt, blame, condemnation of self or world or God. 'Cleave to God' encompasses all this. God loves our violence of quest, and makes it more so, makes it necessary if we are to continue, without cashing in the chips. To stay in the game is impossible, as the stakes go up and our losses spiral out of control, but to cleave means being in the game to the end.

Many people give in and give up well before the end-game is reached; to cleave is to hang in, and hang tough, and refuse easier and more safe and reassuring substitutes. In the end, we are naked, and want nothing except the unvarnished reality and its truth.

This is where cleave acquires its double sense of a love that not only warmly takes hold of reality, but separates reality from illusions, in the ultimate; and not only warmly embraces truth, but separates truth from lies, in the ultimate. A person who cleaves to God is a lover of reality and a lover of truth= such a person is not fooled by, drawn to, or in any way a lover of, illusions and lies. When you cleave to 'what is what', you come to see and appreciate how 'what is not what' kills existence in all its facets.

Even in our fear of God -- which in Hebrew means not something frightening but does suggest 'holy terror', awe, respect, reverence -- we should begin to understand that the Daemonic is serious. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God; but all existence is in these hands, and risking and suffering and venturing this in order to find God in existence, is much more terrible. It is not pap for infants. It is not the rules and regulations, the well-marked paths, of conservatives. It is not the sloppiness and timidity and indifference of liberals. To be a lover of God, to be a lover of this world in its redeemability, and to vow to find God in the place in the existential paradox where he is hiding, is terrible; but such is cleaving. To cleave is to fight for something, and to fight for something is to be separated from it, yet refuse to allow that separation to become final.

In marriage we are separated, yet fighting to become united. In the fight for the world, in the fight for redemption -- not transcendence -- of existence, we are separated from redemption's 8th day of completion, but travelling toward it, battling to reach it, struggling to make it real, and sacrificing our all to make it truth.

Such is the warmth and burning of the flame kindled in our cleaving.

3,

But there is another amazing theme= when people speak so often in English of 'believing in God', they are mis-speaking, and misunderstanding what they are saying. To cleave to God actually means to trust God, as an unknown and hidden reality and truth, sought for but not yet found; to cleave to God means to have faith in, to rely on, to depend on, this Great Mystery.

Now, the vital point= where the English Biblical text speaks of 'believe', the equivalent Greek Biblical text uses 'pisteuo', and this verb is much closer to cleave. In effect, we should stop speaking of ourself, or others, as 'believers', because what this really means even in Greek, and much more so in Hebrew, is that we are all 'cleavers.' We are cleaving to a mystery, we are adhering to it and as it is cutting through us we are cutting through it, to break open and break through to a new land of heart. For where is God hidden in existence? God is hidden in the deeps of existence, and that means, God is hidden in the deeps of the heart.

When we cleave, we go through hells, pits, voids, of God's absence. In these times and places, we are in strange terrain, and belief in any creedal sense does not help us in such a situation. It is in some ways a shame that the early Christians thought they needed a creed in words= 'I believe in this, that, the other..' This is Greek, not Jewish; cleaving is existential, not doctrinal. As Martin Buber puts it, you don't cleave to your idea of God [a statement 'about' him], you cleave only to God; nor do you even cleave to your 'relationship' with God, because you don't cleave to a relationship, you cleave only to God. The cleaving is the relationship; and however much you try to state, or think, its mystery, the mystery is itself existentially challenging, it causes us 'black inexplicable pain' in Lorca's words, and the mystery eludes all words and all thoughts. It is found, understood, its wisdom dug up, only in a living way in the throes and in the thick of the existential problem itself. The Jewish cleave means, go through this, be in it, weep, curse, cry out, let deep call to deep: this is faith. Your dogmas and doctrines are existentially dangerous, because they encourage people to flee the existential cauldron and take refuge in the words and thoughts which try to express mystery, but still are not, and never can be, the living reality.

Equally, when in John 11, 25, we read Christ saying: "Whoever believes in me, although he may die, yet shall he live", we should know that rendering the English as 'whoever believes in me' is fundamentally misleading. Belief in

this case suggests assent to a creed with our head, or emotion; assent to dogmatic or doctrinal propositions. This is not what Christ is saying. Christ is saying: whoever cleaves to the Christ in the abyss where all is lost will come through to the other side. I know many anti-religious believers who are, despite that, or indeed because of that, cleaving to God, and even cleaving to Christ, in the dark and difficult place where real passion is afflicted, stricken, hurt, broken, yet at the same time, forged, destroyed and reborn, its mettle and steel purged and honed and raised to fiery life.

Belief in God means cleaving to God in the midst of the absurdity of existence, and in the midst of all that destroys us and God and world. Yet we go on. Yet we proceed. Yet we will not turn back.

This points to another meaning of cleave: when we humans cleave to God there is a sense of a more dependent being 'leaning on' a more firm being. The old hymn, Rock of Ages, invites the 'cleaver' to lean on God. Israel was invited to do this towards God. Christ speaks in this same vein when offering to carry our yoke with us: not that he will carry it for us, but he will con-jointly carry it with us. The weaker can lean on the stronger, and by this, gradually assimilate their strength, and its properties and attributes of stead-fastness, enduring and undergoing, and most powerful of all, 'bearing up.'

This means that cleaving is not only a personal action of heart; cleaving is also a trust and faith in, a leaning and depending on, a personal God who gives his personal word. This is already evident in the Biblical cleaving of marriage: you pledge your 'troth', you give your word to be real, to be serious, to be committed, about the impossible task of the two becoming as one. Similarly, a warrior makes a vow, which promises him to the fight. Believing and cleaving are on different levels entirely: believing is abstract and theoretical, cleaving is existentially concrete and actual.

You remain within your comfort boundary, when you believe. You put yourself on the line when you cleave.

I know only a very few people who believe and cleave.

I know many people who believe and do not cleave.

I know even more people who do not, and will never, believe but who cleave.

You will only know which of these 3 you are if you examine your heart. Do you use religion to skate over the existential chasms where God is hidden, or have you let these chasms wound you, so that you can die in them-- or find in this very dying the leverage, the spark, from which to launch your search for the one thing needful, your search for the unknown and hidden God, right in the midst of existence in this world?

The believer can be cool, calm, and collected. The person of cleaving has terrible ups and downs, weeps bitter tears, knows the heartbreak of God absent from the human heart, and the human heart absent from itself, in all the world.

Believing in the bright Christ of dogma and doctrine is not the same as cleaving to the dark Christ who is in the profound hells where all human beings are lost.

The person whose life is cleaving will find the heart of God and by this, find their own heart, and find the heart in all the world.

4,

To cleave is passion: it points to a strong love whose commitment is personally trothed, pledged, vowed, promised, and by putting up with all the cuts that come through this immersion and plunge into existence, cuts through.

There is a lot of guff, waffle, flim flam, as well as all the poison, to cut through. If you cleave, you are cut by God, and this enables you to cut through yourself and cut through the world.

Cleaving therefore also carries the connotation not only of making a vow, and promising yourself to 'the whole damn thing, no matter what', but also of this commitment being manifested in an increasingly hard fought and hard won loyalty, fidelity or faithfulness, all of which can be summed up as truthfulness. Be strong, it is said in the Cante Tenze; but it could as well be said, be true.

God has, to an extent we do not 'understand' because we have not broken through to its reality, truth, wisdom, in the heart, already cleaved to us. God has pledged his troth, vowed and promised himself, been loyal, faithful, true, to us, no matter what.

This is the significance of the deeds God performed in the Old Testament to encourage the Jews. God cleaved the Red Sea, to let them through, to escape Egypt [Psalms, 74, 15]; God cleaved the rock in the desert, to give them water, as they traversed the lost place looking for the new land [Psalms, 78, 15]. Many people misconstrue these events of divine providence. They do not mean we won't, in leaving Egypt, be dumped in the vast desert, before we can reach the promised land: this promised land is a new land of heart we will share with God, when his heart is found, our heart is found, the world's heart is found. It is not yet. But it is both what olden and new covenants are pledged to. This is what it was always about.

These events of divine providence, or divine wisdom weaving into the story of existence lived out on the ground, occur for one reason: not to promote naive,

facile, escapist hope, but to tell us something more fundamental, something we sense, but which God occasionally comes out of hiding to reveal.

This is that we are not asked, and not inspired, to cleave to a God who is not cleaving to us.

We cleave to God because before we were forged in the furnace of passion, he cleaved to us.

5,

It is all about one thing only: a new land of heart; it is not yet, but it is coming. Cleaving is passion because what it relies on, in its courage and vulnerability, is the not yet.

It means, in the heart, 'your word is good enough.' Here, in the end, Logos and Spirit converge. Logos voices the promise, Spirit brings it to pass, in and through the very agony that most threatens its loss.

This is why, in the end and at the deepest, there is no goal, no point, no justification, for cleaving. It resists all explanation, theological, psychological, scientific.

Cleaving cleaves in order to cleave. This is sufficient.

To say more, now, would be cheating.

And cleaving is the only honest thing in existence.

WHY DID JOB REPENT?

1,

“Dear Jamie:

I think I have finally understood what you mean by passion. I used to think it was commitment and the mystery of commitment, because all commitment, by necessity, is blind or at least very very short sighted. In my life, commitment has always felt like a calling: '*This thing I must do*' -- seems to come from outside demanding a response one way or the other. So I thought that was passion, a willingness to give up one's self to this calling, blind -- on faith, as it were. But now I see that it is also what follows after: Submission. Submission to the consequences of commitment made blind, because if you could see, you would never commit in the first place! The fine Italian hand of God I think!

So the understanding I have come to is that passion is a short term thing: *Yes I will! Or No I won't!*, and a long term thing where this will/won't is disciplined or not against circumstance set in motion by choice. So passion is choosing and choosing and choosing like a sailing skiff, constantly tightening against some kind of wind to keep the momentum, no matter what the weather is like or who agrees or disagrees, and passion is the hope which is sometimes all that is left that the wind you chose is a good wind, and passion is the despair that well no you probably chose a bad wind -- because who can know the wind?

Love,
Anita”

2,

Dear Anita,

What you say about 'commitment' and 'submission to its aftermath' is true. The wind in your example is the Spirit. Hence the savage and inevitable highs and lows of staying with passion.. Dispassion, balance, a medium place of 'cool, calm, collected', is simply not the experience of the person who is sailing by that wind... Spirit, which is Mystery, is all the passionate have to inspire, guide, prod, 'bring them through', the trackless and dangerous wilds of existence..

It was Aubrey Baillie -- talking about 'situated action' -- who first alerted me to the fact that "all actions have unforeseen and unforeseeable consequences." But we cannot see the consequences of our commitment for another and more radical reason: the world-process is unfinished, still open-ended, still all to play for. The deep dark abyss where no knowledge, even 'enlightenment',

can penetrate is the risky and dangerous existential matrix of the world process where it is all still unfinished, not yet done, incomplete, and no human can know how it will turn out, because God will simply not disclose that. No buddha knows. No prophet knows. No visionary seer knows. No mystic knows. Christ does not know, according to his own words in the Gospels, because only God knows. You have to dive in and give it your all, with no guarantees how it will go, how it will turn out. No spiritual light can penetrate the existential dark because this is where it still could go either way, this is where it still is on edge, and we do not know and are not given to know what our contribution to it will or will not do. All we know is, we are indeed called/summoned to do it.. And since redemption is for all, over the whole span of history, God's promise is not to redeem any individual or group in their finite space or time-- thus one's own existence could be entirely wrecked and redemption still perfectly on course! That is why 'there is no hope'; we must go to a place beyond 'hope in life'; death is, therefore, crucial to getting there.

This means there is a further dimension to the submission inherent to passion, a more fundamental 'amen' in it. This more radical surrender to God is in the peculiar story of Job. Job is one of the paradigm 'sufferers' of the 'Daemonic' in the Jewish Bible. There are three primal figures in Judaism 'wounded by the Daemonic' in different but fundamental ways -- Abraham, Jacob, Job -- who because of this wounding founded the true meaning of Judaism. Abraham has to be willing to give up the thing in his whole life most precious, good, and miraculous, for God; he loses the straight and solid ground of reason and morality, and is plunged down into the mystery of sacrifice where only faith in God's personal promise can uphold the human heart. Jacob, starting off as a devious trickster and archetypal mother's boy, fights the angel of God all night, to win a blessing, and finally prevails, though the blessing he seeks is only granted with an injury that will trouble him the rest of his life; yet through this battle he establishes the integrity of the honest contention between God and humanity. Job's story demonstrates something further= Job makes a final acceptance of the irrationality of God, and the absurdity of existence. This acceptance takes the form of a radical and fundamental repentance.

3,

In Job's story, which Jews up to the time of the holocaust hardly noted or liturgically celebrated, Satan is depicted exactly as William Blake describes him -- the Adversary in the sense of the Accuser, the Witness for the Prosecution. Satan challenges not only humanity but really God-- the challenge is to God's faith in humanity, and by extension, it is a 'judgement' on, a negative condemnation of, God's entire 'project' with human beings. Satan says to God, 'let me test the innocent and righteous Job, and he will prove a fair weather friend, a cupboard love believer.' Satan here is not the tempter to evil ways, but the Judge and Jury determined to prove to God that

human beings are smaller than God's faith in and venture with them requires. Satan always sees the worst, and has his own agenda for wanting to bring humanity to its worst, to prove something to God.

Hence Satan is not just the Accuser of humanity, but is the Accuser of God's trust in humanity.

Now, what is interesting is that when the Daemonic sufferings come, and the wife counsels existential despair -- 'curse God and die' -- three righteous Jews turn up to debate with Job the meaning of his afflictions. All think Job must have done something wrong-- for in this primitive phase of Judaism, God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. In effect, the three Jews remonstrating with Job take up the Satanic Accusatory position, insisting to Job he must have secret sins he never looked at-- in order to keep going their belief in reward and punishment. They cannot get off this doctrinal idea, and have no way to cope with innocent suffering, blameless suffering, suffering for which there is no moral explanation in terms of God being just: repaying good with good and repaying bad with bad. It would seem that these three Jewish judges represented to ancient Judaism three different interpretations it held concerning 'reward and punishment.' Each stream believed in God adhering to strict justice, but the 3 positions all nuanced it differently. Probably these 3 interpretations survive in Judaism down to this day-- though since the holocaust any idea of God's strict justice is hard to maintain. The rabbi Lionel Blue said to me of the 6 million Jews killed in the Nazi death camps, "we knew we were bad, but not that bad."

The crucial point is that Job stubbornly sticks to his innocence, sticks to his righteousness, but refuses to despair finally, throwing it all back at God as 'making no sense', nor will he enter the blame/judgement universe the 3 Jewish religious persons are totally sunk in; he does not judge God, nor does he judge himself. He sticks to the fact there is a mystery, a paradox, an ambiguity. That is what he still holds on to and throws at God-- 'why'? Yet he won't blame God, or blame himself, to get off the hook of this lived koan. He insists it is a koan, but that is a way of not trivializing his suffering, of not pretending it can be explained away. He agrees with the wife that it does not add up, morally or philosophically; yet by refusing to blame, judge, condemn God, he still trusts in God in some very stretched but firm way. He addresses God and looks to an answer. He may not be, in Kierkegaard's terms, ready to assent to the Absurd, and leap into it, but he stays in it. If he played the game of blame, judgement, condemnation, the 3 'religious' people are playing, he could not stay in the tension.

Bernard Shaw accused God of one-up-manship in his providing of a Reply [not an Answer]= 'where were you when I made the heaven and earth?' But Job is grateful and content that God comes to him person to person, and speaks to him, and his accusers. In this climax of the story, God is not pulling a stunt of one-up-manship on Job, but telling Job that God is responsible for

all creation, and thus there is no way the creature can second guess how it is that the Creator holds it all in his hand, and even more arduous, redeems it all. This is all God will tell Job, it is not an Answer to satisfy the moralist or the philosopher, but it is a Reply. By refusing to answer the creature, the Creator says to him, you will have to trust me. This trust is trust in the personal God, who offers 'person to person' promises, and asks of us in doing this, trust my word.

Job repents at this moment. He says something like the following: before he had heard about God, from afar, but now he sees something of God face to face, and he accepts it, and by accepting, repents of the limitation of his previous 'righteousness.'

I wonder if anyone stuck in reward and punishment, and using it as Satan does as a basis to blame, judge, condemn, could ever understand this repentance of Job?

What is he repenting for in fact?

God knows.

God tells the 3 Jewish 'comforters' that they were all wrong -- each of the 3 positions is wrong -- and Job was right in all he said to them in the midst of his pain and doubt and torment. *Job had been right both to insist on his righteousness, and also to repent.* That is the paradox of this mysterious story, but God affirms it, and won't make it add up neatly for the moralistically inclined. And in fact, God is so angry with the 3 judgemental Jews he tells them they can only get on a good footing with God again if Job offers sacrifices for them: by Job's forgiveness of their moral narrowness, and moral cruelty, will God re-embrace them.

At this point, the claim put forward by so many Christians, that Job is a prefigurement of Christ -- the ultimate innocent suffering -- seems to hit the nail on the head. Still, this still does not illumine why Job repented. All through the story the 3 Jewish judges -- who are revealed as 'self-righteous' as far as God is concerned -- urge Job to repent, but had he listened to them, he would have repented for the wrong thing= his real repentance would have been undermined and distorted. It would have turned into a sort of neurotic guilt: 'I am suffering, therefore I must have done something wrong; this is God punishing me for what I did wrong, so I better repent of it, if I want to stop suffering.' Job hurts in suffering, as we all do, but he refuses any easy way out of this Daemonic wounding-- neither the existential route of suicide rooted in despair, nor the route of moralistic guilt. By embracing the paradox of undeserved suffering -- a paradox as much a pain to his spirit, as to his body and soul -- Job comes to a different level entirely, the level where he and God can meet over the whole issue of suffering, deserved and undeserved, and a mysterious link between Job and God can be forged. The strict justice

scenario the 3 Jewish judges are stuck in precludes the repentance that gets the human heart onto this darker, stranger, abysmal place with God.

What can such repentance really consist in? It is existential, and profound. It is not moral, and trite. It accepts the 'not adding up-ness' of existence.

4,

We 'repent' of our subtle demand that God take care of 'me' [and mine], which means we always put our take on God and restrict God's freedom.

The deepest repentance is the creature's 'letting go' of God-- letting God remain in darkness and do what he needs to do, as the only Heart ever to apprehend the Big Picture. We get mere snippets of it through mysticism, vision, flashes of insight or even more slowly gained understanding.. Faith is trusting what God is and does off our radar.. Off the table.. Out of the box.. God acts through Reversal, inversion, turning everything upside down and inside out.. We want to scale down God to fit our want/view, but God will not accept this. Even righteousness is not something that can limit God's love. God's love exceeds all attempts to measure it in our human terms: Job gives up all human measuring, he repents of having 'put this measurement on God', and he accepts that God is beyond it, and his trust in God is to let God be free to do what he must do, no matter what it costs Job personally.

The creature accepts to be in the hands of the Creator: not only accepting the uncrossable gap between them, but also continuing to trust this God who is off any and all scales of human evaluation as the guide and inspiration for the deeper and greater risks of passion.

If Job only accepted God's transcendence, this moment would not have power. To let the ultimate Other be 'other' to you, yet to continue relying on the Otherness in its presence to and immanence in your existential life, needs faith. It is the very personalness of God -- his dispositions, which can neither be understood nor predicted -- that is so hard to bear in our personalness. De-personalising, or im-personalising, the whole thing would take the torment, angst, troubledness of spirit, out of it all, but then so too would the passion go.. Passion is also remaining in the suspense, bearing the unrelieved tension, but using that tension as the bow that shoots the arrow.

5,

By this repentance that lets go of God, lets God be free, yet still remains bound to God in trust and faith, the passion driving the human heart goes to a different, deeper level. This different, deeper level took the Jews who passed through its gateless gate to the bigger Judaism that finally produced Christ; but the Jews who never passed through this 'eye of the needle' created, out of their existential failure truly to repent of what most separates God and the

human, the smaller Judaism, the Judaism of a narrow interpretation of law that progressively lost the poetry and prophecy pointing toward the Messianic resolution of Israel's long and arduous struggle with the Daemonic God. This remains the stumbling point to this day: we still have those who turn the Daemonic into something moralistically demonic; they are like the 3 judges who accused Job, manifesting the spirit of the Satanic Accuser; yet we also have those who, in Job's spirit, can cease to sin and still make the journey into the existential depth that climaxes with repentance toward God. These are in the Messianic spirit. In those still confusing the necessity for 'existential consequences of action' with Satanic reward and punishment, Satan wins his argument with God.

There is so much about love, and the Daemonic driving force serving its supreme aim of redemption, we don't know and cannot know. We have to let God hold it all and accomplish it all, as he determines, not as we wish. This doesn't mean God will do it for us; it means until we come to this moment of submission, which for Job is repentance, we would not be able to accept God's will and use our passion to work with it. Job becomes the gateway for leaving beliefs 'about' God behind, and plunging existentially into the fathomless reality of God's actual will, and by trust and faith in it, uncovering its mission in the world and its summons, or call, of us to that mission. To 'do' something for redemption, we must go on leaning on, relying on, throwing ourselves into the Abyss of, this Great Mystery.

6,

Job loses everything good, but something different, and profounder, is restored to him afterward. What is this restoration?

Job's story tells us that to go deeper in heart, and emerge greater in heart, we will have to lose the good that is ontological -- a flowering of being, the 'life more abundant' that is joyful, plentiful, and fruitful -- and lose the good that is ethical -- an uprightness of action, the 'good intention' that is manifest in the virtues of sincerity, generosity, openness.

This loss has to be understood outside its own terms of reference; it cannot be understood ontologically or ethically. There is nothing lacking in the flowering of being, nor anything lacking in the uprightness of action. Sin is not the issue. It is perfectly true that sin routinely restricts the fullness of our aliveness, and undermines the integrity of our standing. None the less, losing such fullness and losing such uprightness -- symbolically the wife and husband of a marriage inherent to goodness -- is not punishment for sin. Job's loss is existential, and can only be understood existentially. The Jewish Scripture crucially reveals that Job was not a Jew; he was a pagan who had reached a wholly genuine spiritual condition of goodness of soul and of heart, yet he becomes one of the pillars of Judaism when he accepts the terrible fate in which God allows this goodness to be ripped to shreds, because there

is something beyond the trials and terrors of its loss that is more radical in heart. A new land on which the heart stands, acts, and makes sacrifice, is at stake. But getting to this new heart is horrendous. To be a Jew it is not enough to be born to the tribes of Israel and Judea; it really means to accept, however complainingly and resistingly along the way, to undergo this horrendous journey from an old heart that is perfectly good to a new heart that is vast enough to contain the heart of God.

If we want and choose love where it goes deeper than the good, and will rise again greater than the good, then we will let our heart be broken.

There are layers to our heartbreak over God. One underlying layer is anger, our anger with God in regard to the things he allows to happen to us, and to everyone, in this wicked world; these are things that outrage, offend, disgust, our sense of what is right, just, fair. This anger with God sets him and us in contention. Few people are honest enough to admit their contention with God, their absolute resistance to God's Way of redeeming the world. It is not good enough. It is too vulnerable. It is too costly. It is too heavy a weight to carry. It is a suffering too piercing to bear. None of us can bear it. We scream our heart rooted No at God, every day, every second, until the heart really breaks. Then we know a silence only disturbed by tears.

Beneath the anger at God, we are hurt by God. This is the real issue. The hurt over God is like a dry well in the burning desert. We can drown in our tears, and so there is in the sorrowing a truer grieving and a more phoney exit into self-pity and self-pity projected onto others we imagine as hard done by just like us. Thus, moralism can creep into this level as well. Never the less, hurt is what underlies our anger, and can change its violent protest into a profound grieving. Blessed are those who mourn..

What is this hurt that breaks our heart, more fundamentally than anger?

Christ experiences it on the Cross as God abandoning us. You can moralise God's abandonment if you are in sin, but what if you are not in sin, but living and doing in the good? What then?

The God of the heartbreak, as an old Celtic Irish prayer calls him, abandons us even in our goodness of being and action, and this is what hurts the heart to the very quick.

It must be put into existential terms. Everything you loved and put your heart into has become a pile of dust. The ultimate cut to the human heart is God saying to our whole existence, our life and doing, our caring, our effort for what is good, 'nothing doing.' The really horrendous blow to the heart is when God, through what happens in the world during this existence, pronounces unequivocally to us that all we wanted, and all we were prepared to give and to do, for the good, is 'not going to happen.' A wall stands before

the heart, and we crash into its immovable rock face, which declares to us, 'no deal.' Our innocent service of God is thrown back into our face, as if we were so fundamentally useless, that God cannot even be bothered to punish us. He just abandons us wholly.

It is all taken away, and you look out on a bleak landscape littered with your unredeemed tears and your unredeemable blood. It has all come to this, and this is no good, nothing is any good, and if you rage against the implacable fate that holds you in its iron grip, nothing changes. This is the real meaning of depression which people do not comprehend. Check mate. Stale mate. It is all over.

Mourning opens a different route through this territory of heart.

What happens next is not a matter for words, but has to be experienced. This is what happened to Job after endless eons in which the black pain lay heavy on his heart, a rock pinning him down, under whose enormity he could not move; and this is what happened to Christ as he was nailed to the Cross, and Descended into Death and Hell.

7,

Christ took it to the absolute extreme maximum, to include all of us. He embraced, and uttered, our heartbreak, 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', and then he submitted to its exacting sword cut, 'into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Christ accepted the death in our heartbreak, Christ plumbed the depth in our heartbreak. He let die all the hope in life rooted in goodness, and brought a new hope beyond the old hope, a hopeless hope, a hope only born beyond the real destruction of all reasonable hope, all yearning hope, all hope in all in life that is 'already meaningful' and invites us to tap into it.

What is this hope that is not hope as we understand it, and hope in it?

In the depth, where death claims everything which had been good, a new love is born, the love that will not relent, the love irrational, fierce and tender, full of tears for what has to be lost, but on fire with what emerges, like a phoenix from the ashes, in the aftermath.

In the new land of heart, the heart walks a stranger path, and undergoes the unbearable and the unendurable, but it comes through.

This, at any rate, is what God's gamble with Satan is betting on.

GOD IS A GAMBLER

1,

The Daemonic is the 'left' heart side of God.

Most people, whether Christians or not, indeed whether any religion or not, prefer to stay on God's 'right' side, which is a blend of mind [cosmic order/insight] and soul [cosmic beauty/compassion], but without the dynamic of the heart, divine and human. It is the dynamic of the heart most people do not want to rely on. They do not want to be in the edgy and costly existential position where trusting this dynamic puts them. Religions are built round mind and soul, and the heart is banished.

The heart is a dark secret.

The dark secret is that the way of the heart is a gamble that God is taking with all that exists; and this gamble will not pay off if we human beings do not pick up the heart, which is a heavy weight we think we cannot lift and a deep pain we think we cannot bear.

God is gambling we will step up, and carry the weight and endure the pain. The heart has a cost, for God and for us.

God is gambling that, like him, we will pay the cost.

These things cannot be explained. Our desire to have them explained is so we can invent yet another excuse for not stepping up. In our own heart we know the score-- so we might as well stop lying to ourself, stop lying to other people, stop lying to God.

Blaspheme against God, spit on God, scream to God, but don't tell me you don't know what the left side of things is. Saying you can't bear it does not help, because whatever you say, you are bearing it. You know it deep in the heart, as is so for every man, woman, child, who has ever lived or ever will live. We are bearing it even when we cannot bear it.

When you try to avert your gaze from what the heart always must face, the pain in the heart becomes unbearable. When you close your eyes to this escapist gaze, and again stand before what the heart always faces, the pain changes. It does not hurt any less. But the unbearable becomes a forge of grief and flame.

This cannot be explained to those who have thrown their heart away, whether in the name of religion or in the name of worldliness. The heartbreak is in you whatever you do, wherever you go. Moses won't take it from you. Buddha won't take it from you. The profane prayers you utter out of your heartbreak anchor you in the heart, and do not allow you to pretend. These prayers are holy.

2,

There was no heart in Buddha's enlightenment. It took Buddhism one thousand years --through people like Dogen, the founder of Zen -- to start to pick up the weight and embrace the pain. This is because what the heart must face is shocking. We will settle for far less. But the Daemonic God, who inflicts the weight and pain in the heart that we cannot escape, will not settle for less. God is relentless, and unrelenting.

God is gambling we can go deep, and in being deepened, can become great. God is gambling, because the heart is free to step up or stand down. It is not a foregone conclusion. It is not guaranteed. If humanity fails, God has failed. A friend said, 'God believes in us'; yes, but that is the gamble.

3,

Another friend is a Zen Buddhist, though born a Jew. It is the Jewish element in him that understands, and warms to, what it means that God has a heart, and has risked entrusting humanity with a heart that can either respond to God's heart or repudiate it. For all creation has been placed in the hands of the heart, not just divine but also human. Both must stand, act, and come through together-- or nothing will get through. In that eventuality, it will all fall, endlessly, into the abyss. Zen has given my friend much. Being a part of something bigger, which is intelligent and philanthropic, rather than living as a separate ego, has been transforming. But the Daemonic is a different kettle of fish, and my friend knows it. He knows in his bones what it means that God has risked the entire creation to the way of heart, and that the outcome of this risk remains uncertain until the last breath, until the last sigh, until the last cry and last shout, of all creation that finds its voice in humanity's anguish and agony of heart. It will go to the wire. It is Lorca's 'battle on the rim'-- and as the options close, one after another like the doors in a room slamming shut until there are no more doors and it is just the room of no exit we confront, the real truth at stake is revealed. We finally end up naked, confronting what is in the heart, and confronting what it asks from each of us.

There is a way to invert Buddha's first noble truth. The real reason why everything is in flux, everything is changing, nothing is fixed, is because the journey and battle of heart that all humanity is making, like a huge caravan crossing an uncharted waste, is not over yet. Its outcome is not known to any human being. The outcome, the end, cannot be foreseen because we have not arrived there yet, and to arrive there will be the journey and the battle of many generations to come. What will happen and how it will all turn out cannot be guaranteed in advance; no one knows this because it depends on the heart blood, heart sweat, and heart tears, not yet shed, not yet given. The story goes on. The edge and the cost continues. It is not over until it is over, and it is not over yet.

This means no one can know the outcome, and that means, we are all suspended in the risk. Its suspense rises and falls, ebbs and flows, but is

never to be overcome in some state of consciousness where we discover we are ontologically secured. If the heart succeeds, all things will be ontologically secured in the end; if the heart fails, all things will be ontologically lost in the end. When we take up the burden of heart, we take up this suspense about the story we are still living, about the edge we will venture out onto further and further, about the cost we will pay and pay. When we assume the heart, humanly, we enter God's gamble of heart.

It is not secured. It will be in risk to the very end, and knowing God, it will finally seem lost before it can win through.

4,

But this means, then, that Buddha's first noble truth is true for an existential reason he missed entirely. Everything is in fundamental flux, everything is inherently changing, there is nothing eternal reflected from above and fixed here below, because God's risk and our risking of it is a story not finished yet, a story still being travelled and fought for, a story still in the making over generations, a story still suspended between break-down and break-through, and a story whose deepest tears, sweat, and blood, are still being shed, and whose greatest deeds of sacrifice are still being enacted.

It does not just depend on what you will, or will not, do. It depends on what others will, or will not, do. It depends on all of us.

This means we do not know yet what the human being 'is', because the human is still in fundamental and radical 'becoming.' What a human being will become is open ended. It could end up as something small and shrivelled. It could end up as something large and expansive. What the heart will do, finally, when it has got off its back where it is fallen down in the dirt, and gets to its feet, no one knows, and no one can know. These are the secrets hidden in God. God sees the heart. For us, the heart is dark while we are still evading it, and even when we return to it, it is black in depth; we cannot see, because we must live and act, a red fire of love glowering deeper down, and ready to come forth.

What the human 'is', as of any 'now', cannot be defined, or set in stone by any description, because humanity is 'a work in progress.' You and I, and everybody, is inherently unfinished. It is all unfinished. And the change, the flux, that is basic in everything and in everyone is because we are all moving toward what we will become, but we have not by any measure arrived yet. Buddha's first noble truth, rendered existential rather than ontological, is saying it is all on the move because the gamble is still 'on-going.' The game is on. All things will continue in movement until the gamble God is taking with the ontological through the existential is resolved.

Something in our heart says no to the gamble. Something in the heart has faith in the gamble, and foolishly, vulnerably, bravely, generously, dives in. This is the heart's no and yes, and that too is part of the existential suspense that never ceases in the way of heart. For, we never know if we are up to it,

until we dive in, and once we have dived in, we never know if we will reach the far shore. But something in the heart already is up for it, even as the other part faints away. We recover, and we go anyway, also assuming our doubts and weaknesses and flaws and failures to hit the mark. We don't shed any of this. We carry and bear it, even as we really commit to and go into and undergo the real extremity of the risk. There is an innocence of heart that will have a go, even without knowing the price. This is the pathos of the heart, so touching, so moving, in young people. Later, the price bites, and we still go on. We get ragged and strained, and ugly, but there is an even greater nobility and glory in that. When the chips are really down, we bet our all.

We really do not and cannot know what God is doing with the world. We don't know how it works, all we know is we have a place in it and we have a hand in it either working out or ending badly, in ruin and dereliction. This ruin and dereliction in which it really can, and might yet, end is already prefigured: it is the mean streets all around us, in the poverty, the brutishness, the aimlessness, the hollowness. William Blake's apocalyptic poem called 'London', where he sees on every face he meets 'marks of weakness, marks of woe', is all around us, showing us what failure of the heart will mean if it becomes the final word on the project that God ventured with us. Satan the Accuser is before God day and night, telling God we have already failed, and are entirely worthless, but God does not relent towards this Moral Accusation of the Evil One any more than he will relent to our cowardly and lazy plea for an easier life. God reserves his judgement. He carries on. Because God does not relent to the devil's judgementalism or to our desire for a quick fix and an easy path, it goes on. The relentlessness of God is Daemonic, and we register this in the heart as a pressure on its action that does not, and will not, ease off.

Our life is what we 'do' with our life; the gamble is in how we live, and how we act. This is not religion. It is life. It is the life and death of the heart.

The heart is the only hero this world has. The heart is the one who loves to the absolute max, and that means, the heart lives and dies by sacrifice. The heart is a warrior.

A friend, who is Greek and an Orthodox Christian, sent me one of those quasi-Jungian accounts of the warrior as 'an inner archetype', similar to the 'inner child', and the 'inner goddess', and all that sort of spin about the psyche's images. Though the thumb nail sketch of the warrior's activity and energy was all right as far as it went, a much profounder way of reading the warrior is needed. The warrior is not a preformed archetype in the soul-- he is what the heart does or does not do in the situation where it is called to Act, but is on the edge, and must pay a cost. An archetype is an impersonal force. The heart action that makes a warrior is 'heavy carrying' and very costly in 'deep suffering' for the heart. It is personal, but with pain and with weight. No Jungians -- or their new age derivatives -- understand the warrior truly because they are just not involved in the heart. They are involved in the soul, but you cannot become a warrior through soul. You must risk the heart.

God is gambling with existence-- and the only card up his sleeve is the heart.

5,

My Zen friend, who is Jewish, understands the contrast and balance of 'the Daemonic' [left side] and 'the Eros' [right side] of God through the two sides of life he names as 'beauty' and 'horror.' Horror is part of the Daemonic, because God does things with existence, given the risk to which he subjects it, that to us are horrifying, horrible, horrendous. We mutter 'that's the way it is', or even, 'it has to be like that', yet the bitterness in our resignation is obvious; and the pious mouth their pretend acceptance in an all too easy 'thy will be done.' But we all find the gamble not to our taste, and no one would choose it, or arrange it like that. As Kierkegaard rightly claimed, the way the gamble works, works out, works through, does not add up. It does not make sense. Horror is a thing of gaps where you get stuck, a thing of rims from which you fall, a thing of cross-roads where you are forced to choose though not knowing what will happen as a consequence, but putting up with it either way.

My friend is honest: he prefers life's beauty to life's horror. It was meaningful to him to discover this beauty as a cosmic, and objective, pattern that is visible and invisible, that includes matter but reaches into spirit.

The Buddhist approach to evil reflects the fact that its focus is mainly confined to the realm of Eros, but does not enter upon the realm of the Daemonic. Buddhist evil is all about the limitation we put upon ourself, in trying to be a separate ego, with a discursive mind, and self-promoting impulses. This cuts us off from the real source of what is inherently good. Buddhism is optimistic, because it is within humanity's effort to take these self-created shackles off the self. When this happens, we still must live in a world of limits and deal with them, but we are free of what we ourselves generate out of our own mis-perception and mis-directed desires, and so we can be happy. Yes, we can find happiness living in connection with Eros.

The path of Eros remains, from the Daemonic perspective, incomplete. At worst it is a fool's paradise. At best, it is a fleeting taste of what once was, in the beginning, and might be again, in the end, but which in the middle is not secured, and is not securable, unless the heart intervenes. The middle of the story is where heart steps up and takes it on, or refuses it and falls down.

Consequently, evil has a different face in the Daemonic, because the Evil One named in Hebrew as 'the Adversary', and given the title 'the Accuser', wants God's venturing of heart with humanity to fail. This guy is playing for keeps. Evil in Buddhism can be reduced to the psychological, virtually identified with our human delusive machinations and rigmarole, but the evil that confronts the Daemonic is a real Other, a spirit, not a piece of human psychology projected out in a symbolic form. This Satanic spirit wants the risk God is taking with humanity, in existence, to come to nothing, and thus Satan is really out to get us, and he is not messing around. He is the killer of the

heart. He is behind everything that kicks the wind out of our sails, that kicks the stuffing out of us, so that we either distort or give up on the heart.

Satan starts his attack when we are young. He is the killer of the child, and what he engineers to happen to the children causes them to give up on the heart for the rest of their time on this earth. Satan will break your spirit, intimidate your passion, extinguish the flame in your heart. He will lead you out of the heart's wilderness prematurely, and then become the judge and jury condemning your laxity, your transgression, your 'sin.' The whole false notion of sin, with its belittling of the human, and its aim of murdering the spark in the human, is Satanic in origin. 'Man the miserable sinner' is Satan's view on the human heart.

I met this spirit in my early twenties in a vision that has marked, scarred, driven, my whole life. I had dragged a figure on a raised dais, surrounded by 12 disciples seated at a long table, off his perch, and forced him to the ground. It was Satan, being worshipped as Christ, and in my heart I had known this and obeyed some wave of divine wrath that directed me to drag this phoney impostor down from his high position, and expose him. As I held Satan on the floor, his face changed and revealed who he was. His red eyes burnt into me with their fury, a ravaging fury, a raging fury, a fury against us all that is never satisfied, however much it gorges on the tears and blood of our human failures. His look said it all. He said to me in silent words, 'you naïve little shit, you have no idea what you have taken on. I am going to fuck with your life in a way you cannot even imagine.' He spoke like a street thug, trying to impose his will by force, and the profanity of his words was an expression of utter contempt for me, or anyone else, who stood up to the Satanic Accuser.

The vision ended, though those red eyes of pure hatred remain with me. But I am still here, thanks to God. I experienced in that vision of my innocent youth the Daemonic Wrath that will not let Satan win by cheating. If he wants the human heart, then he is going to have to come on the killing ground and take it.

The killing ground is the place in the world where the two roads, Eros and the Daemonic, inter-sect and 'cross.' This place is horrendous, but it is also holy.

This is where it will be decided, finally.

This place is not on the mountain with Moses.

This place is not in the meditation hall with Buddha.

This place is terrible, and yet it is also wonderful for those prepared to see the story to the end, and go all the way. For here is where the devil of pure hate is going to be flushed out of hiding, and is going to have to really take it on. God's gaze is upon this arena, and remains ceaselessly fixed on this 'contest of love', as Christos Yannaras once called it. This is where the human heart will finally be tested and proved. This place is where the devil is going to be

brought down. There is no guarantee. But if it is going to happen, it happens here.

6,

My Serbian friend, profoundly given to Eros, though with a relation to the Daemonic through being an accomplished martial artist in Okinawa karate, understands love primarily, and almost exclusively, through the right side of God's Eros. This love gives light. This love gives beauty. This love gives each human being, as every creature and thing, a place in a bigger whole, a whole so marvelous, no one can encompass it, though all benefit from it.

This light beautifies and enlivens and sanctifies what it illumines. It takes joy in what it loves, even as the Beloved knows a joy beyond all images and beyond all words in the Lover. Lover and Beloved unite in Eros. Everything is well. All manner of things are and will be well.

But..

But the Daemonic throws that wild card in the dance of Eros. Why does it interrupt the love that Eros bestows? For all those for whom Eros is love, and that means many Christians, especially in the East but also in the West, as well as many Buddhists and many of no religion who nevertheless are connected to the Goodness of Life, like a fountain overflowing in a parched desert refreshing and renewing everyone, the Daemonic seems strange, alien, threatening. So it is.

When Black Elk spoke of 'the beauty and strangeness of the earth', he was experiencing, he was beholding, the beauty of Eros and the strangeness of the Daemonic.

The Daemonic is not simply what spoils love, as we would all like love to be= the ever growing tree, the ever overflowing fountain, the unending flowering. The Daemonic is in fact, as I said to Alex, 'the love beyond love.'

This love, by risking more, gives more.

In Eros, things are good for God and for the creation that breathes, and lives, in God. The Daemonic calls us out of this Eternal Dance, and throws each of us back on our unique personal stand, or lack of stand. Why? Because this is the way of the love beyond love.

This is the way of the love supreme.

7,

The love beyond love is the love that risks everything and then goes beyond all limit to retrieve, to carry, to pay for, what can be lost, what already is lost, and what could be in the final end forever lost. Eros is natural. The Daemonic

is hard, strained, naked, ugly, extreme. But the Daemonic loves deeper, and the Daemonic makes us greater.

When you, in the deep heart, break down and then break through to the depth of what God's heart is doing, your tears will change, your screaming agony will find peace, and in the fathomlessness of the abyss beneath your heart and in your heart will rise the flame that loves God without reserve. And when that day comes you will do more than forgive God, you will trust and have faith in the gamble, you will exult in it, you will laugh and cry about it, released from all your fear of it, and you will dance like a drunken man, and more than this, you will step up, and ready yourself to fight.

Do you understand this?

Naturally we fall in love with God's Eros.

But when we love the Daemonic heart of God, which is going all the way, which is carrying the heaviest weight, which is bearing the deepest suffering, which is paying the most costly price, then our heart is moved, and we burn with love for the love beyond love, and in that burning, we gladly take it on and step up, thankful for the divine faith in us that dignifies us with our portion of carrying the weight, our portion of bearing the suffering, our portion of paying the price.

This love that most people do not want to face, do not want to carry and bear and pay for, do not stand before and stand up for, is love at its most absolute extreme.

It is the love no one wants, it is the love no one recognises, that is the love supreme.

This is the love that goes with us, and stands with us, and will never abandon those it has risked. For, in risking us, it has risked itself.

If the human heart ends in hell, then the heart of God will remain forever in hell with us.

Alex, my perceptive and beautiful friend, understood the love beyond love. I spoke a few words, only a few words, and we both lapsed into silence.

Yes, he said.

We have to venture the losing of love really to find how deep and great love is.

CONTENDING WITH GOD= The Story Of Jacob

PART ONE

1,

A friend in America requested a Scots name for her new Border Collie pup. So I pondered, but as I did so, she decided on my name, Jamie. The pup is OK with it, I am OK with it, and so it goes..

But she did some digging into the original meaning of names, and found that 'James' at root signifies 'the supplanter.' This is not because of some tribal rivalry in ancient Scotland, but because the name James is the translation from the Hebrew 'Jacob.' It is the Hebrew name 'Jacob' which means 'the supplanter.'

2,

As a result of this, I got interested again in Jacob's story, and went back to look at it in more detail. Its central motif -- Jacob's wrestling with God -- is embedded in a very strange tale indeed. Some people regard Jacob as a type of trickster [like coyote], but reading the story in full suggests he was not a trickster, not a sacred clown, not a holy fool, but something altogether more prosaic and human. What comes through is almost endless deceit. Jacob was a deceiver, and involved in other people's deceit, right up to the moment when he fought with God, and won the name of his people, 'Israel.' How could such a flawed human being rise to such a profound event as the battle by the river with the unknown man, or mysterious spirit, who stands in for God, and in some sense is God?

Even more fundamentally, how could such a flawed human being, living repeatedly in untruth, both his own and that of other people, become the vehicle through which is revealed the truth about God's relationship with the people chosen as the preparation for the coming Messiah, the Redeemer of All?

How can God mold such poor clay to his purpose?

This is the most important thing about all the Old Testament stories= the Bible portrays the Jews constantly, not in any magically grand light, but rather in a hyper realistic light that reveals the human clay in all its weakness, flaws, foibles, evasions, and 'sin.' Never before or since was a 'holy people' so manifestly full of craziness, and downright evil... On one level, it is bizarre that the Jews are painted in such an unflattering manner. On another level, it is wonderful and really the whole point that they are portrayed as 'losing the plot' and wandering 'off focus' virtually all the time..

They are a people who, like their father Jacob, fundamentally struggle with God, and this very struggle is the 'good ground' God wants, and from which he brings forth unexpected fruit.

When it comes to the human heart, out of the worst God brings forth the best, out of weakness God brings forth strength, out of brokenness God brings forth change. It is human vulnerability that gives human power its point of contact with divine power. When we eliminate our vulnerability, in order to try to self-improve and expand our power by our own efforts, divine power abandons us, and leaves us to it.

This is a hard, and strange truth. But such truth is the driving engine of the Daemonic God.

The God revealed in the story of Jacob, and the human relationship to him which he blesses because he can indwell its heart and remake it, is not the God of the pious, not the God of the moralisers.

3,

Jacob was the Third Founding Father, after Abraham and Isaac. Abraham's story is astonishing-- Kierkegaard wrote an inspired book on it ['Fear and Trembling']. Isaac's story seems a bit quiet [and might therefore be seen as establishing Eros in distinction to the Daemonic], but with Jacob we are back with the extraordinary. That this man won the name of Israel, through battling with God, is a key ikon of the Daemonic God, not just in his dealings with the Jews, but also in his dealings with the whole world. Jacob's journey from deceit into the profoundest truth of the heart of God in contention with the heart of humanity makes Jacob not just the paradigm for all of Israel's future travails, but also the paradigm for all of humanity's travails on the very long and very hard road of redemption.

For this paradigm establishes what is at stake in God's promise to Israel to redeem the entire world process, in its materiality, space, time, history, and in all its persons, creatures, beings, and things. A redemption not fully physical, and not fully all-inclusive, would be a sham, a cop out, a betrayal. Consequently there is nothing magical about redemption; it is on the contrary bitingly existential and savagely realistic. Because the existential truth of the world is hard even to face, much less transform in the direction of a total redemption, a Jew will always be the first to say, 'there is no transformation, there is no redemption.' The Jews were the people chosen by God to suffer for the reality or unreality of the transformation involved in the universal redemption.

Redemption is all or nothing. No Jew will accept as redemptive a scenario that improves the spiritual part of the human being, but abandons the material part; the founder of Hassidism, the Baal Shem Tov, declared that 'for a Jew, the physical *is* spiritual.' Nor will any Jew accept as redemptive any scenario that elevates a few human beings, but jettisons the rest of humanity. Redemption is audacious, yet subject to the harshest conditions, and

severest limits, that challenge and stretch its power. In a sense, there is a contest, a clashing, an opposition, going on between the world's refusal, or inability, to shift, and redemption's implacable Daemonic power that will not settle for anything less than total change.

This is why Jacob's life is always full of strife, trouble, turmoil. Absolutely nothing in Jacob's life comes easy. Everything comes hard. Hardship was forced on Jacob, at every turn.

Thus, Jacob's story founds struggle with existence and struggle with God as the only path in which God is dynamically -- Daemonically -- brought into existence.

This is why 'stones' form a constant leitmotif through-out Jacob's life= he puts a stone under his head as a pillow, he constructs a marker of stones after his vision, he has to remove a stone blocking the well to draw water for the woman he loves, he makes peace with his father-in-law by setting up a border of stones between them; one writer interprets this metaphor of the stone as 'contending with the hard, unyielding nature of things.' The transformation involved in redemption must contend with the hard, unyielding nature of things, or it is a lie, a piece of romanticism, or mere idealism, a flimsy chimera-- not something to stake your life on.

However much Jacob starts as 'crooked in heart' -- another word play on his name -- he is 'straightened out' not by pious or moral living, but the sheer intractable existential truth that constantly scars and burdens him, and which drives him ever deeper, whether he wants this or not. His love for God is shown in this= he keeps faith with this terrible and beautiful road, he does not give in or give up prematurely along the way; he leaps into the unknown, and undergoes testing trials, for something great, without in any way fully realising where this odd path he walks is really going. He contends, he wrestles, he strives, with the intractable truth, the hard unyielding existential truth, of the world. Such truth is crucial to the purpose of the Daemonic God for the world.

4,

The three crucial and earliest ikons of the Daemonic God in action are the three Biblical stories of [1] Abraham, the father of the real meaning of faith; [2] Job who suffered innocently and came to accept its necessity; [3] Jacob who literally wrestled with God= the deceiver became true in battle with God. Each of these stories is profound, but Jacob's is foundational for the Daemonic God of heart passion in strife with the fallen -- the lost and betrayed -- human heart passion. Jacob becomes more and more ardent as he goes along because his journey gets more and more arduous.

In Jacob, the human heart is scorched by the divine heart, but Jacob does not just passively take this. He actively strives against it, and only by his active striving against God does God's striving reforge him.

This is the peculiar paradox at the heart of Judaism, the koan for which there is no solution.

Such paradox where a contradiction holds is sometimes referred to as being caught in 'the horns of a dilemma.' If you side with either horn, you will lose the paradox. If you deny either horn as a danger to be surmounted, you will lose the paradox. Only if, between the tension of the two horns, you find the mysterious and difficult third that encompasses yet transcends both, will you have 'come through.' This is what Jacob does, in all his life, but especially in his battle with God.

Hence Jacob's story is no comfort to [1] authoritarians or conservatives, who think that God should rule over humanity like a dictator over his subjects, and that this is done by the dictator handing down fiats from on high. Nor does this story comfort [2] liberals and relativists who think God tolerates anything and everything.

In stark contrast to [1] authoritarianism and [2] liberalism, this story [3] not only shows God working with human failure -- Jacob gets the blessing precisely as a bad boy, the blessing emphatically does not go to any good boy -- but also shows God forcing humanity to stand up for itself, give account of itself, and 'honestly' lock horns with him in a battle neither can win in any ordinary meaning of victory.

This is the strangest and most mysterious truth of the story. What was the battle between God and Jacob? What was at stake in this battle? What does it mean that in a sense Jacob prevailed and God lost, what does it mean that in a different sense God prevailed and Jacob lost?

The paradox cannot be reduced to 'obeying God' or reduced to 'defying God.' It is neither, it is both. It is something more than these usual human categories in which we articulate 'patriarchy.' There is no doubt that, largely against their will, the Jewish people are forced to come out of a motherly relationship to God and bear the brunt of a fatherly relationship to God. But this father, this ruler, this lord, is stranger and more mysterious than any human patriarchy can grasp. 'Call no man father' indeed.

Jacob's life, which started in deceiving and theft, and went more and more into fated and fateful wrestlings with the hard and the profound, is not a story about [1] a father subduing and dictating to a son, nor is it a story about [2] a son rebelling against and overthrowing a father= the only two options with the usual sort of worldly father-son relationship.

Jacob in no way merely 'submits' to the will of the father; on the contrary, he is the very archetype of one who resists the discipline, the correction, the direction, of any father, first in his own flesh and blood father Isaac, but more especially in the fateful battle by the river, he takes on God's spiritual fatherhood, his rule, his position as lord, and he challenges it by demanding something from it. Jacob neither submits to nor rebels against God, yet he seeks something from the father, and through the fight with God, Jacob wins

what he has sought. At the end, in a certain peculiar sense, Jacob prevails with God, but in another reverse sense, God prevails with Jacob. For Jacob finds in God the different fatherhood he challenged God to give him, and God finds in Jacob a servant, a friend, a son, worthy to carry that more difficult but redemptive meaning of the divine fatherhood in his human heart.

Jacob is not merely 'brought to heel' by an angry God determined to demonstrate his fatherly authority and domination. Nor is Jacob flattered, or 'let off the hook', patted on the head for being himself, and seeking to 'please himself.'

It is a stunning paradox. Jacob strives against a false fatherhood he will not accept, yet he does so for the sake of the darker, stranger, true fatherhood he is seeking-- but only by contending with God does he find it.

A tremendous truth about the mystery of the Daemonic in its working with, and working in, humanity is revealed in this story..

Both sides lose something, both sides win something. What is lost and what is won unites the divine and human hearts in the most suffering fate, in the most weighty burden, in the ultimate sweat, tears, and blood, of redemption.

PART TWO

5,

Jacob's story, at its beginning, is all about the deceit born of human rivalry. Rivals do not give away to each other, or share with each other. They steal from one another, and kill each other, over what each one wants exclusively for himself.

Jacob has a twin brother, called Esau, and the story tells us that Esau just managed to pop out of the womb first, making him the elder sibling, but Jacob was battling in the birth process to get out ahead of Esau and so was right on Esau's heels. In fact, he was born grabbing Esau's heel. This gives the origin of the Hebrew name Ja'aqob, for 'aqob' implies a 'crooked' heart [Jeremiah, 17, 9], while 'aqeb' means 'heel.' Jacob is born saying to his brother, "you cannot get ahead of me, I'm right on your tail, watch out, I will overtake you." This theme of 'sibling rivalry' predicts the whole future relationship Jacob has with Esau, and thus competition and dissension among brothers, rather than cooperation and unity, becomes the central theme of Jacob's life. There is surely a kind of resonance here back to the two brothers who are the children of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Cain is the grower of crops who is not blessed by God, while Abel is the nomad keeping flocks who gains the blessing, but in revenge Cain kills Abel. Cain is the metaphorical figure of the high civilisations that began their 'rise' with storing grain, while Abel is the metaphorical figure of the earlier Shamanic hunting and gathering societies always on the move, and travelling light. God prefers the nomadic life of few possessions and human inter-dependence to the settled life of acquisition

and hoarding; the former creates human sharing of the good things, the latter creates 'every man for himself' in regard to good things.

Hence, 'rivalry between brothers' is the first manifestation of human fallenness, and symbolises much more than the rivalry among children in the family setting. It manifests the crooked heart in humanity that makes brothers into competitors. When the true relationship with God is lost [Adam and Eve], then the true relationship of brotherhood among humans is lost [Cain and Abel].

At any rate, Jacob is rivalrous with Esau from his first breath [though there is a suggestion in Genesis 25, 22 that both babies in the womb struggled within Rebecca to get out first]. Jacob is also battling against 'primogeniture', the whole notion that the first born takes the lion's share. Or is he merely claiming this unfair privilege, which exemplifies everything wrong in the usual [false to God] kind of patriarchy, for himself? Jacob is the selfish person who, almost against himself and in spite of himself, is driven beyond his own narrow boundaries in search of something on a deeper level. This depth intrudes, and he cannot ignore it. But that suggests Jacob is initially ambiguous. He is, if not a trickster, then at least Ambiguity itself. He is someone who deceives to get his own ends, but it is this very person who has it in him to father a people in the true fatherhood of God.

Simple right/wrong morality is no use with Jacob; we cannot neatly split right and wrong in his case. Though much in his heart is like Cain, something else in his heart is like Abel. The wheat and tares are mixed together. More importantly, the wheat and tares are not fixed in their opposition, but are in dynamic inter-action. Such a heart can change.

None the less, Jacob is obviously the kind of child that any traditional patriarch would disapprove of. Isaac doesn't much interfere with him, but it is clear early on that he is a mother's boy, spoiled by mother, cosseted by mother, protected from father by mother. This kind of son is well known to modern therapeutic psychology. Jacob learns from an over indulgent mother to cut corners, to use charm, to avoid masculine challenges coming at him from other boys, as well as from his father. Self-discipline is far from such a boy= he grows up expecting to get by on talent, or on his wits. He isn't pushed by masculine influence to develop muscle, character, strength. This doesn't mean he is effete. It means he is more like Eros was as a child in Greek myth= his mother's delight, because he has a masculinity not closed off to women, not armoured, not shut in and shut down-- in the name of masculine toughness. Like Eros, he enjoys women, and there is a flow between his kind of eros-ic masculinity and the feminine. Each likes the other= they are in a dance. But masculinity of a more abrasive and more aggressive kind is excluded from their twosome, by definition. Jacob is certainly not yet the kind of warrior toward God he later becomes; and early on we see nothing to reveal he will go in that direction.

The story tells us that Esau worked in the fields, while Jacob stayed in the tents. Esau was never appreciated by the mother, he was a father's boy of a

certain kind, rough and ready, toiling all day, not afraid of hard labour and physical difficulty. His complexion was 'ruddy', that healthy red which comes from bracing activity in the outdoors. What was Jacob doing in the tents? Scholars disagree on this, and some very ultra kosher interpretations exist that are not in tune with the whole thrust of who Jacob clearly was in his early years. So, while some people say Jacob was praying in the tents and studying like a religious good boy should, that scenario is very much to be doubted. He was hanging around in-doors, laughing and flirting with the females of the household, playing, doing some obligatory study, but mostly just listening to and telling stories, or enjoying music, no doubt being a delight to all who inter-acted with him, but pointedly not going outside; he was in the tents to have fun and avoid the gruelling labour Esau had conquered as the mark of his manhood.

The first indication of the limitation of the kind of traditional father's boy Esau was, and Jacob's future path, comes in the famous incident of Jacob conniving to trick Esau out of his inheritance. Rebecca must have helped Jacob, her favoured child, with this plot. Esau comes in from the fields, starving from hunger, and Jacob uses a soup of lentils he had just cooked to persuade Esau to give up his right, as the first born ['bekorah' in Hebrew], to the father's blessing ['berekah' in Hebrew]. The bargain is= Jacob will let Esau eat the steaming food, and Esau will let Jacob go in his place to Isaac to receive the old man's recognition as the son to receive the first-born's inheritance. This inheritance is not simply material, but really it is spiritual. The covenant with God, forged by Abraham, will pass from Isaac to Jacob instead of from Isaac to Esau.

The text gives hints at this point in the narrative of why God prefers Jacob's mother-derived ambiguity to Esau's father-derived solidity. Esau is covered in hair, he is virile and potent, a man confident and at ease in the world, while Jacob is described as a bit 'simple' and this does not mean stupid or backward, but implies someone who lacks his brother's 'worldly confidence' needed for surviving 'the ways of the wicked world'; the description can be read to mean that Jacob is 'innocent.' Jacob's relationship with his mother has in fact spiritually preserved a quality of childlike innocence-- does this even prefigure or anticipate Christ as the Lamb of God, the innocent one? Jacob may be charismatic, but his real saving grace is his innocence. He has the latent integrity that indwells those innocent of the world, and not powerful in overcoming the world according to its own lights and its own methods [the Hebrew 'tam' can mean both 'integrity' and 'innocence']. This lack of worldly power allows innocence to become a vessel of divine power, for it preserves something pure in the human heart in its relationship to God. Jacob may be a rivalrous supplanter on the surface, but deeper down he has the real purity of heart that marks those who are innocent. It is their curse and blessing.

Again, ultra pietistic interpretations disparage Esau at this point, and try to whitewash Jacob. This does not respect the actual account in the story, which is not clear, but partakes of the usual messy double-sidedness inhering in and surrounding Jacob. Esau makes an odd, almost throw-away remark in justification of why he prefers the immediate food to the long-distance

promise of God to Abraham, and that is it. Personally I do not believe the Midrash reading which claims Esau had committed murder, adultery, and idolatry, the three cardinal sins, that morning, and was famished from his exertions! This is the very good-bad/right-wrong/good-evil 'splitting', or dualism, that this story is manifestly not about. Doubtless Esau did not take the religious dimension of his inheritance all that seriously, and stated this -- maybe as a dismissive joke -- in his willingness to trade his birthright for food. Maybe he thought Jacob was 'having a laugh', and didn't really believe it would happen. Esau feels like a robust and cynical man, and thus this trade-off might have been done in an almost dismissive spirit.

The implication is not so simplistic, and easy, as saying Esau is the man of flesh and Jacob is the man of spirit; it is more subtle than that. Esau is the father's man who, in conquering the world, has been conquered by the world. Jacob is the mother's man who, in being innocent of and therefore not tainted by the world, stands a chance to discover the radically different relationship to the world that the true father has. The promise to redeem the world is the true father's heart. Jacob could end up, as so often happens with the innocent, as someone simply destroyed by the world; or he might have escaped being moulded and fixed into worldliness for a different end.. As his story goes on, it becomes clear where this hidden, or latent, pureness of heart leads him. It leads him to reject the false father dominating the civilized world, yet it does not make him a rebel [and we know from mythology and real life that many rebels against tyranny end up worse tyrants than the authoritarian boss they depose].

Rather, his heart purity drives Jacob, unbeknownst even to himself, towards the fateful encounter in which he becomes the ultimate warrior, the warrior whose adversary is God. It is out of God being our adversary that God becomes our advocate, our redeemer.

If Esau is only too happy to sell his birth-right for a 'mess of pottage', it is because he is taken up with overcoming the world in its own terms, which requires much masculine grit, but this very triumph inherently rejects God, because God overcomes the world in a different way, and therefore needs a different kind of masculine 'fighting spirit' to represent his way. Esau reveals himself as the man who thinks he has defeated the world by his power and potency in worldliness, but such a man has lost the true father's blessing because he has in fact sold out to the world.

Esau's kind of father-oriented masculinity has conformed to some image of mastery, or control, that it thinks of as victory, but which in fact is a defeat for it without there even being a fight; and thus this kind of tough-guy stance, and combative virility, is in fact the castration of a man. Tell that to all the tough-guys wandering around in every culture on the face of the earth= you think you are in command, you think you are men, but the spiritual truth is the reverse= you are not men, you are castrated. These men have no power to redeem the world= they have no Daemonic spirit, they have no heart passion. They dominate the world-- and fear the world dominating them; thus they see

themselves as winners, and fear being losers. But in God's eyes this stance has already lost the good fight, and will never be able to win it.

This is why the Jewish Bible [Malachi, 1, 2-3] says that God hated Esau and loved Jacob, from before either of them were even born. It is the stances they existentially took up that God hated and loved. There is plenty in Jacob's character to hate, and plenty in Esau's character to love. And by the end, Esau has forgiven Jacob and found a certain nobility, while Jacob's tumults and problems continue on and on, into the story of his son Joseph. But that is not the point= a certain balance, a certain justice, is finally achieved between Esau and Jacob simply as two human beings equally dwelling in God's love. But, it remains the case that Jacob's way of 'being in the world' with his masculine heart is embraced, and Esau's way of supposedly defeating yet actually conforming to worldliness with his masculine 'brain and balls' is rejected, by God. The latter is and will always be a part of the problem, even though it touts itself as the solution; the former is also no less a part of the problem, but has the potential dynamism to grow through travail into becoming part of the genuine solution. This is the spiritual difference between the brothers.

Jacob, as a man of the mother, has two directions in which he can go.

If he responds to the narcissistic and oedipal potentiality in the relationship to his mother, he will become as a man what is depicted in Greek myth, and well known to therapeutic psychology, as the Narcissus--Oedipus kind of man. The world is full of these ungrown up boys who get by on charisma, and beneath its glittering surface are often deceivers and thieves. But there is another way it can go, and Jacob's story shows us this other way. It is this other way that is blessed, reluctantly, by Isaac, but is confirmed by God.

The other way is how innocence grows into passion. This is the secret of Jacob= his innocence became passion. This is what saved him, and what God took on, to reforge into something more. Jacob the unworldly innocent was destined to become the man of passion whose fight is with God.

This fight was God's call to him, and in his innocence, Jacob heard it and responded.

Jacob was destined to fight God, and by this fight, to become the man in whom God fights for the world.

6,

But we are getting ahead of the story. The incident where Isaac gives Jacob the blessing that Esau has thrown away is instructive.

Isaac has decided he is so old, it is time to give the blessing, and so he asks Esau to go out and hunt some meat, so the father can have a meal before the big event with his son. Rebecca overhears this, and tells Jacob, pointing out it is 'now or never' for Jacob's trick to be put into motion.

The old man is semi blind. But he has perfectly good ears. Jacob fears the ruse of pretending to be Esau will be found out; this is our typical fear of punishment when we know we are about to do something lacking in integrity. Rebecca comes up with the solution; Jacob comes to Isaac dressed in a hairy coat, to simulate Esau's body, and sure enough, Isaac runs his hands over the hair and says, this indeed feels like my son Esau. Isaac prefers Esau, it is clear from the context, simply because he buys into the 'first born son' ethos of that time and place. The first born not only gains the superior rank in the family, a double portion of all the father's goods, and the family's priestly office, but most significant for a Jew, the promise God gave Abraham in the first covenant. Yet Jacob is forced to speak to his father, and in claiming he is Esau, the old man has to know from the voice that the person in front of him is in reality not Esau but Jacob, and that Jacob is therefore lying. Why then does Isaac continue with the blessing of Jacob, instead of his preferred Esau?

Isaac is not fooled, at least not fully so, but against his wishes gives in to a fate that seems to be working against his natural inclination. Some impetus from God is present in the situation, and it stays Isaac's hand= he does not unmask the deception, as he could and perhaps from a purely social and cultural perspective he should, but he goes with it. He blesses Jacob.

The text says that Isaac, after coming to full awareness that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau, 'trembled' with great fear [Genesis, 27, 33]. It is as if Isaac has existentially chosen to risk the implicit and mysterious spirit over the explicit and defined rules of tradition. Yet after this choice, he fears he has transgressed.

No doubt Esau hardly cares about the spiritual dimension of what a father passes on to a son in regard to the new Jewish covenant, and cares only that his material inheritance, thus his worldly standing, will be diminished, if Jacob 'gets the nod' ahead of him. Once Jacob has left his father's tent, and Esau has returned to it, the elder son realises the enormity of what has happened between Isaac and the younger son to his own detriment. He pleads with Isaac to rescind the blessing, but Isaac cannot; all he can do in the face of Esau's entreaties is offer his more favoured son a lesser blessing.

Not surprisingly, Esau becomes enraged. He had forgotten the deal he struck with Jacob, as if he never took it all that seriously, but he remembers it now with resentment, and regards himself twice deceived [Genesis, 27, 35]. Esau determines to take revenge, and thinks in his heart he will kill Jacob. After all, Jacob did not beat Esau in any fair contest. The younger brother just manipulated his older brother in a moment of weakness, then snuck behind his back. How can your worldly power be stolen from you, by some little creep who is his mother's favourite, but has never done a single decent day's work for their father? We can easily imagine and empathise with Esau's murderous hate for Jacob.

But Esau remains the archetype of the man who cannot discern what is of ultimate value in the world from what is ephemeral chintz. He is remembered, rightly, as the kind of man who, blinded by the false vision of masculine power and potency, throws away in the dirt his own truest dignity and real 'standing', for the sake of conquering worldly things that, at the end, don't amount to a hill of beans. At this point in the story, Jacob is far weaker than Esau, far more the fast sleight-of-hand boy than the hard working and accomplished man, yet Esau cannot see and discern with the heart, he is comfortably accomplished in the world but for that very reason he is also eaten up by the world, and thus his virility of manhood is lost to God and in God's eyes is castration. It is in the mother's boy that the true father sees a latent power and potency like his own terrible Daemonic strength. The only strength that matters in a man is the strength penetrated and illumined by God's strength, for God's strength is what takes on the redeeming of the world.

This also prefigures Christ= only those who start innocent and vulnerable will grow into the real power-- the power to redeem the world.

Jacob has to run-- because Rebecca intuits Esau's murderous intention toward her beloved son; she knows full well that if he stays, then sooner or later he will be killed by Esau. Hence, Rebecca commands Jacob to flee to the house of her brother, Laban, in the far away land of Haran. This will kill two birds with one stone= hopefully it will create the conditions [Jacob's absence] in which Esau's rage might slowly fade away, and Jacob can find a wife among his uncle's daughters, Leah [the elder], or Rachel [the younger].

7,

Fleeing from Esau, Jacob comes to a place called Luz, where he spends the night. He has left home so quickly, he has brought nothing with him. He is destitute, frightened, adrift. This is where he uses a stone for a pillow. During the night he has an awesome visionary dream-- the vision of the stairway, or ladder, between earth and heaven, with the spirits going up and down upon it [Genesis, 28].

The next morning Jacob anoints the stone, naming it 'house of God' [beth-el], and then he makes a vow. As is usual for Jacob, the oath is more of a demand than anything else= "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that [one day] I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God" [Genesis, 28, 20-21].

Jacob verges here on the presumptuous, but the Jews have always been bolder with God than anyone else, and God likes 'chutzpah.' Boldness only works with God when a person is sincere; otherwise it is arrogance. Often we have to be between a rock and a hard place before we will drop our play-acting and pretence, our defence and self-protection, and become real. It is when we are in extremity, stripped bare, that we have power with God.

But in reality the stupendous vision of two-way traffic between heaven and earth is an encouragement to Jacob. Heaven is being embodied in earth, the earth is being transformed redemptively by heaven. The ladder, or stairway, is the 'gate' of heaven, and it is being flung wide open. This is a second blessing of Jacob, this time by God, not by any human father. Jacob, whatever failings were the trigger for his 'leaving home', is henceforth on new terrain, in deeper waters, existentially in the hands of God. If 'it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God', then the terribleness of the Daemonic God has now begun to seize hold of Jacob as his son, in order to remake him. Even the root of Jacob's name has another meaning in Hebrew, which only seems appropriate from this point on= for the verb 'ye'aqeb' can mean 'he wrestles.' Jacob has begun the journey toward his wrestling with God. From now on, he is more and more neither the man of the mother, nor the man of the world, but something different forged by the terribleness of God= 'he who contends', the one who seizes his fate, the one who takes on his adversaries with both hands. His evolution into a strange kind of warrior has begun.

One scholar thinks that Jacob's ladder, or stairway, is the inverse of the Tower of Babel. Babel implies confusion, and a scattering of peoples. Thus Jacob's vision must prophetically point towards, if this interpretation holds up, a coming clarification and gathering in. Israel is the immediate target of this, but beyond the Jews themselves, the ultimate target is the world. In the redemption, there will be a permanent spirit road between the spiritual and physical realms, and this will be for the nations a new ability to understand each other and a collecting together. The 'Babel' of confusion and division will finally end.. But this is still far off= a prefigurement, a pretaste.

Over the next years God will protect Jacob. But at the end of this period of plenty, more deception kicks in, another flight happens, and Jacob has to meet the God in battle whom he has both in a sense defied yet always sought.

This story does not found the kind of patriarchy fundamentalists, evangelicals, conservatives, and authoritarian Christians of every ilk claim that it does. Jacob's story does not confirm patriarchy. Nor does it throw away any fatherhood, and revert to matriarchy. Jacob's story subverts patriarchy, religious and political, for the sake of a fatherhood that is key to the love God has for the world.

This love is ultimately redemptive, and thus sacrificial. It does not command the world by force, nor rule over it from a great height, but gives itself away to the world, to plant a seed deep within it that has the power of a spark to ignite from within. Such will be the way the world changes..

8,

After the vision, Jacob goes to the far country of his uncle, and meets the love of his life, Rachel, whose beauty spears him to the quick when he first lays eyes on her. So here is a man in whom God's Eros has not disappeared,

even if the grip of the Daemonic is upon him. He is moved by the beauty of woman. The woman signifies the sacred, and much else vital to creation= thus a redemption that suppressed, rather than liberated, the feminine would be as useless as a redemption that could not take on the intractable existential truth of the world.

On his way to Laban's settlement, Jacob stops by the well where the shepherds were gathering their flocks to water them, and at this symbolically feminine place, he meets his uncle's younger daughter, his cousin Rachel, who is a shepherdess. His attraction to her is instant. There is a sparkle in her eye and she is shapely and beautiful, the story says. He falls in love with her immediately, and remains in love with her for the rest of their days.

It is probably significant, though not much commented on, that in his first encounter with Rachel, the usual canons of patriarchy in regard to the man--woman relationship are reversed. Thus the betrothal convention stipulates that the woman should draw water for the man-- and in a Jungian archetypal sense this makes sense. Water is feminine, and thus women gift its sacredness, life, and mysteries, to men. But when Jacob meets Rachel, it is he who draws water out of the well for her. Moreover, given the difficulty inherent to his path, there is a stone blocking the mouth of the well which he must exert himself to remove, before he can draw up water for the woman he loves. Jacob is being chivalrous toward Rachel. But perhaps the reversal in this scene is a way of saying that Eros remains in the hands of the Daemonic. Eros is not eliminated by the Daemonic, but Eros rests within the Daemonic= this is Judaism. Other religions might seek Eros alone, or as in puritanism, seek the Daemonic without any husband-wife relation with Eros. This too is paradox= Judaism retains the Eros of the ancients, but the Daemonic holds it in its hands, because the Daemonic is responsible for the world process. Eros is a part of the world; it cannot save us from the world. In the same way the soul is part of the heart; the soul cannot save us from the heart. The Daemonic is the heart's existential fate, as it is the world's.

Typical of the obstacles he must always overcome, Jacob will only win Rachel after protracted labour against resistance. The mother's boy thinks women are there for the asking, it is all too easy, but Jacob will have to unlearn that in fighting for the only woman he wants to marry. God even 'shuts up her womb' to Jacob for years until she finally gives birth to Joseph. A man who can wait for a woman really loves her. Jacob is a lover.

This too is beyond the usual patriarchy, which downgrades women, and certainly fears any Eros linking the man to the woman. Such patriarchal men only see women as sexual provocateurs, because of not being able to love them; and they also split the dangerous sexual woman, the whore, from the safe mother figure, the madonna.

Even if not stated in black and white, it is clear from the colour of this story that Rachel is essential to Jacob's struggle on the narrow ridge, with reversion to pagan matriarchy versus 'macho worldliness' as the converse abysses on either side of it. Without Rachel, the redemption for which Jacob

suffered, carried a burden, made earnest endeavour, and paid a cost, all his life long, would not have been reached, and grounded. Marriage is not some concession to the human need for sex. In its totality of love, sex, and friendship, it is crucial to redemption. Thus Jacob's story is spiritually not his alone; it is Jacob's and Rachel's story.

But even this is still a prevision, and will take much time to work its way to the forefront.

PART THREE

9,

Jacob spends a month in the camp of his relatives, and then asks Laban for the hand of Rachel in marriage. Another deal ensues= Jacob will work 7 years for Laban, and only then will he be allowed to wed his beloved. These 7 years seemed to Jacob "like a few days because he loved her so much" [Genesis, 29, 20].

But the theme of deception is far from finished in this story, for now Laban tricks Jacob. It seems that what Jacob did to Esau he must experience the other way round in Laban doing it to him. Why is this? Is it because 'what goes around, comes around'? It is not clear. Deception remains a central part of what Jacob must wrestle with. Even Laban's name, on one interpretation, means 'the deceiver.' It is as if in ending up inextricably involved with Laban, Jacob has to meet the externalised apotheosis of his own self.

Be that as it may, Laban's trick is to switch Leah, as the veiled bride, in the place of Rachel, at the very last moment before the wedding ceremony takes place. According to Jewish tradition, Rachel and Jacob feared that Laban might pull such a stunt, so they worked out a way to expose it, but Rachel catches the eyes of her older sister, and feels compassion, which means she cannot publically shame Leah. The wedding of Leah to Jacob goes ahead.

What is clear is that the theme of rivalry between Jacob and Esau is repeated with the younger and older daughters of Laban. Some commentators claim that the tension between Leah and Rachel will 'cascade down the centuries' and be reflected in the fractiousness of their descendants. Later Rachel will say of Leah, when her son by proxy is born= "With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed" [Genesis, 30, 8]. Hence the rivalry, and the deception that accompanies it, does not end with the sisters, for the children of Leah and Rachel will also be rabidly competitive. This results in Rachel's firstborn son Joseph being sold into slavery to Egypt, through yet another trick played on Jacob. This trick is similar to how Isaac was fooled; Joseph's tunic is soaked in goat's blood. It is as if the struggle between, and necessary connection of, deception and truth is constantly being repeated in this narrative, through later events that have a spiritual analogy -- thus a causal connection -- with earlier events.

It would seem that deception stands in some dynamic relation with the truth towards which Jacob is so painfully striving.. Deception provides the travails that are like the birth-pangs for this truth.

When the switching of brides is unavoidably exposed the next morning, Laban comes out with a lame excuse to Jacob= in this country we don't let the youngest daughter be married off before the firstborn daughter. He implies Jacob was at fault for being naive, and he was not at any fault. Moreover, he is quick to turn this situation to his advantage. He offers Jacob another deal= if you will work for me another 7 years, then you can have Rachel as well as Leah. I will let you have a second marriage of the heart to the younger daughter at the end of the week, when we have finished celebrating your first marriage of obligation to the older daughter. This is an offer Jacob cannot but accept, even though it means he will be tied to Laban in a kind of labour slavery for another long stint. This chunk of time will not pass so quickly..

Jacob slept with Rachel and loved her more than Leah [Genesis, 29, 30]. God sees that Leah is neglected and opens her womb, while Rachel remains barren. Leah's first son Reuben is born. Then second, third, and fourth sons are born to Leah, and by this point, Rachel is seriously jealous. Rachel demands children from Jacob and he gets angry with her, saying it is God who has refused her motherhood. So Rachel gives him her slave girl, and two sons come through this. Rachel feels she has won against Leah now. Not to be outdone, Leah gives her slave girl to Jacob and two more sons are born. The race is back on! God is moved by Leah's sorrow at being unloved, and so she gives birth to more sons, her fifth and sixth. Later she gives birth to a daughter, Dinah.

Rachel is one down again, but not counted out! For God remembers Rachel, and "opened her womb" [Genesis, 30, 22]. She gives birth to Joseph, declaring that God has finally taken away her shame.

It is at this moment that Jacob says to Laban that he wants to depart, as the full 14 years are up and the contract between them is finished. Laban offers Jacob wages, but Jacob wants his wives and children, and agrees to stay longer if he can choose from Laban's flocks -- which have hugely increased under Jacob's stewardship -- the striped he-goats and speckled she-goats, as well as all the black sheep. He wants these particular animals for breeding purposes. Laban sees no threat in this request, and agrees. This will commit Jacob to further years of work.

Jacob figures out a way to keep the superior mating stock he has taken out of Laban's flock entirely separate from it, so that when their stronger offspring are born, they will belong to him, not to his father-in-law. As this genetic selection proceeds over time, it obviously must happen that Jacob's herd is increasingly giving birth to better, more sturdy animals, while Laban's herd is giving birth to worse, more feeble animals [Genesis, 30, 37-43]. The usual ambiguity inhering Jacob and those surrounding him is still in play.. Laban's animals have increased quantitatively under Jacob's management, but

gradually he is without those of the highest quality, and is left with those of inferior quality. Has he benefited, or lost out? Who has tricked whom?

Whatever its meaning, Jacob's stratagem makes him rich, in the next 6 years. Finally he is a man of property, "the owner of large flocks, with men and women slaves, camels and donkeys" [Genesis, 30, 43]. But this, as is usual with this story, only stirs up rivalry= Laban's sons become bitterly jealous, and start complaining that "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father; it is at our father's expense that he has acquired all his wealth" [Genesis, 31, 1]. Laban has reached the same dark conclusion. And who can say they don't have a point? Despite his mystical experience, and the promise God made to him in its midst, Jacob is still on the receiving end of deceptive dealings, and is giving back as good as he gets.

10,

There is an ambiguity in the human heart in regard to being good and being bad. The fact is, all human beings are both, but the key thing is the tension and dynamic between the 'two hearts.' Jacob lives in the ambiguity of this tension and dynamic, and this is paradoxically what makes his heart reachable by God.

Thus Jacob is the affected and affectable heart that can go either way. Leonard Cohen's song declares the ambivalent reality as only a Jew could= 'I will love you if I can, kill you if I must; I will kill you if I can, love you if I must.' Jacob's road is not separating deception from truth, but working through deception to truth. This is the royal road, the heart road, in Judaism-- which has been so misunderstood. The conservatives have made this road rigid, when it is inherently dynamic; the liberals have made this road sloppy, when it is inherently discerning.

Jacob founds what Christ will later say to St Paul= 'My strength is revealed in weakness.'

PART FOUR

11,

In the midst of the increasing tension between Laban and Jacob, God's voice tells him to flee= "Go back to the land of your forefathers and to your kindred; and I will be with you" [Genesis, 31, 4]. Jacob then gathers Rachel and Leah out in the fields, and puts his take on Laban's cheating, and his own fidelity to what God wanted, for he tells them that he had seen the idea of separating the goats for selective breeding in a dream. Is this excusing himself, or is he speaking truth?

When you just are keeping to the rules, there isn't a conversation with God about life. However, 'to live outside the law you must be honest' [Bob Dylan]. The people involved in this process are struggling, taking risks, sifting and being sifted, as they go along.

The sisters rather predictably agree with their husband, and this sparks Jacob to ready his family and herds for departure to the land of Canaan.

From this point on, much action occurs in a short space of time.

Rachel steals her father's household idols. Jacob yet again tricks Laban by getting away without being seen. He crosses a river, and makes for Mt Gilead. Within 3 days, Laban is told Jacob has pulled up stakes and fled, and, taking a retinue of male relatives with him, he chases Jacob and overtakes him at the mountain. Big trouble looks imminent.

Laban confronts Jacob, and they have a blazing argument-- which might explode into physical violence at any second. Laban accuses Jacob of tricking him and driving off his daughters like prisoners of war. Laban claims he would have sent them away rejoicing, with songs and music. This seems more a debating point than anything else; given Laban's track record, it is to be doubted this would have been his reaction to the climax of the bad blood simmering between him and his nephew. He says Jacob has acted like a fool, and he is within his rights to do him harm for this; but then he confesses that God visited him in a dream the night before, and told him to 'say nothing to Jacob.' Well, he has just said it.. He ends by asking why Jacob stole his household gods?

Jacob defends the rapid departure, saying he had been fearful Laban would snatch back his daughters. Then Jacob deflects the obvious anger between the two men by saying he will put to death whoever stole Laban's gods-- not knowing it was Rachel. So for the umpteenth time, we are thrown into moral ambiguity, and confronted by the complexity that constitutes human relationships. Laban proceeds to check inside all of Jacob's tents, one after the other. When he comes to Rachel's tent, she has hidden the family objects under her robe, and is sitting on them. She says she cannot rise, as it is her woman's time; this lie is designed to protect her theft, and it works. Laban buys her excuse for remaining seated, and leaves the tent. He is empty handed, after his search.

Jacob loses his temper now, and turns the accusation back on Laban, asking what crime has he done to be set upon in this rude manner? He goes on to say that in all the 20 years he worked for Laban, he dealt straight with him. Ten times, Jacob accuses, Laban changed his wages. Jacob points out the vast amount of labour he has put in for Laban. He ends by saying, last night -- - referring to Laban's dream? -- God has delivered judgement.

Laban insists he could still claim as his all Jacob's wives and all Jacob's herds, but he decides to be magnanimous. "Come now, let us make a covenant" [Genesis, 31, 44]. This seems like the typical argument rooted in patriarchy, over which man owns the women and which man owns the goods- - with the two not regarded much differently. But a redemptive touch is reached in the making of peace, for rivalry gives way to brotherhood. It is

early days in redemptive history= the time of women, and even of animals, will come..

Jacob seals this covenant by making a cairn of stones, to act as the witness. Jacob names the monument marking the boundary between Laban and himself Galeed, and Laban says he will not cross it to attack Jacob, nor will Jacob cross it to attack Laban. There is an animal sacrifice that night, a parting meal, and the next day Laban rises early, kisses his daughters and grandchildren, and leaves. But Jacob's troubles are not over. As he departs the camp with the people and animals, spirits appear. It is like that brief glimpse of ghosts walking through the walls of your dwelling, portending something, but you don't know what.

Jacob has Esau to contend with, and he thinks this will be the last challenge, the final contention, in his life of trouble and strife.

But things are about to be radically reversed.

Jacob's expectation could not be more wrong.

Jacob sends messengers ahead of him to Esau, to try to smooth things over. They return and say "Esau is already on his way to meet you; there are four hundred men with him" [Genesis, 32, 7]. Not surprisingly, Jacob is fearful and distressed. He makes a plan for meeting the onslaught, but knows perfectly well he will be overwhelmed. If this is payback time, he is done for.

Now, arguably for the first time in his life, he prays to God out of the deep heart in real repentance. It declares, I am here, I know what I have done to my brother. I need you. It is one thing feeling God is pouring his bounty of Eros on our heads, it is another thing entirely to be facing death, facing the real existential crunch, and having to decide if we trust God to be with us in this place. Jacob's heart cries out to God. This is a moment when some of the moral fudging possible over the question of women and possessions has to stop. This is stark. This is clear. This is it.

This is 'the battle on the rim' Lorca speaks about. This is for life, this is for death. It all has come down to this.

What Jacob cries to God -- squeezed out of his heart that has been squeezed by existential apprehension and agony -- is twofold. He asks for help, for protection, for God's strength, and he asks if God's promise to make him the father of a people more numerous than the sands on the seashore, granted in the vision of 20 years ago, is true. All our heart rooted crying to God, all our prayer of the deep heart, asks God= is your promise, is your vow, that stakes your big divine heart to my small human heart true? It is not believable, of course. It makes no sense, obviously. It is too personal, too much a relationship of your Thou to my I, to be possible, isn't it? The divine is an impersonal immensity, and the best I could wish for as a personal and limited

being is to disappear into that. Why should God want my heart, and why should my heart trust that God has a heart? Why should God's heart have dealings, terrible and deep, as well as great and awesome, with the human heart?

Why has it come down, at this time and place, to my heart? I am frail, vulnerable, exposed, too affected and affectable.

But it does come down to this.

It comes to my heart, and your heart. It comes down to a particular personal heart in a particular time and place.

It comes down to this. God is staked, and you must be staked where God's promise, where God's vow, bites. Where it can stand, or flee. Where it can contend, or fail. It is worse to trust God being staked to the ground, than to trust my, or your, being staked to the ground where God has come.

But this is what it is. This is what it comes down to, in this place at this time. We stand together, and we stand over an abyss. Both God and I are in this test. It is safer that heaven remains above, and does not come below.

But this is what it is. It is now. It is here. Time is up. The abyss is beneath us, and fate is ahead of us, but coming fast.

"Then Jacob passed that night there" [Genesis, 32, 14].

12,

Morning brings dawn, and that encourages hope. Jacob decides to choose a gift for his brother. Your conscience is far from blameless, so that ratchets up the tension as well.. What if it is God in the shape of Esau that is the nemesis which comes back at you for what you have done? So you decide to really gild the lily= you will send your wronged brother, out for your blood to put that old wrong right, scores of goats, sheep, camels, cows and bulls, donkeys. Lay it on thick, and maybe that will mollify him. Address Esau as your lord, and call yourself his servant. You are being humble, and conciliatory. Will it succeed? Will it be enough? Look at you= this is your last trick, this is still the tricky-dicky boy trying through sleight of hand to avoid head on battle. But you know perfectly well you are whistling in the dark.

In the deep dark of your heart, in the black of the God who has seized and is squeezing your heart, you know a battle is coming. Even as you try to again cheat your way out of it, you know it is coming, and has all but arrived. Beneath the crooked heart of the mother's boy, the heart strengthened by the difficult, hard road you have walked down, your true manly heart, is calm. It is at peace because it knows the war is on, and strangely it also knows, in this last instant before it all happens, I was born for this.

I was born to this. Fate has overtaken me, and now is my destiny revealed.

I was born to a battle, and now it is come. Amen. There is an 'alas' in this, but there is also a 'thy will be done.'

I am ready. This is the real surrender= the acceptance of the Daemonic. You cannot run anymore. There is no fudging it, and there is nowhere to hide. There is nowhere to go. It has arrived, and you have arrived with it, and that is all there is. Even prayer, now, is no more.

The day passes in a stunned and yet peaceful silence. I am waiting for what has already come.

13,

I expected you in the first light of morning, but you came in the night, unexpected, and when I saw you, I could not believe it, and yet I knew you, because I had been carrying the wound of the knowledge of you all my life.

You came like the thief in the night, but you were not a thief, you were the ultimate enemy of and the ultimate strength in my heart. I waited for you all my childhood. I was restless being flattered by the women, and impatient around the bragging of the men. I knew what awaited me. I was sucked in to what was all around me, but I waited underneath it all, for your coming. I relished the battle, and now I join it with an exulting heart. You will wound me, but I will wound you first, as the mark of my sincerity towards you. Then I will bear forever the wound you leave in me as the meaning of our encounter.

I am he who fights God, and is fought by God.

I am he who wounds God, and is wounded by God.

The women imprisoned in flattery and the men imprisoned in bragging will not understand our fight. The world will be indifferent to it.

I am he who fought God for love, and was fought by God for love.

I am he who wounds God because of God's love for me, and I am he who is wounded by God because of my love for him.

God has fought me, God has wounded me, because he will not give up on that love. I was tempted to put many other things in its place, and I gave in, many times, day in and day out, but I never forgot what I knew in my childhood was stalking me, and secretly my life became my hunt for it.

God has fought me, God has wounded me, because he will not give up on this love, and I fought him, I wounded him, because I resisted it and then embraced it.

I am he who prevailed over God because God loved me; I am he whom God prevailed over because I loved God.

I am he whom God is wounded for, and I am he whom God wounded, for this love.

No, you cannot comprehend it at your safe distance. Step into the arena where there is a fight, where there is a wound, and you will know for yourself what I knew that night.

I had ceased running and turned round to embrace it.

Its fight prevailed over me, because the fight for love prevailed in me.

Its wound remained with me, because the wound in love went deep in me.

You came, unexpected, in the black of night, and in that blackness we contended, hour after hour, and in the morning the red blood of sacrifice was spilled.

The red of this blood was also the red of the fire to come.

14,

The account of Jacob's battle with God is sparse, enigmatic, elusive.

In the night, sometime before the stranger came, Jacob sent all his wives, children, and animals, over to the far side of the river called Jabbok. He remained on the near side. "And Jacob was left alone" [Genesis, 32, 25].

Without any warning, a man appears -- or it is a spirit -- and this mysterious intruder is immediately locked in battle with Jacob. There is no build up, no 'introductions', no preamble. A man, or a spirit, suddenly is wrestling with Jacob. This man, or spirit, stands in for God, and in some sense is God. The man, or spirit, is nondescript= there is nothing to be said about him. He just is. He grasps hold of Jacob, and Jacob responds. The fight erupts out of nowhere, but once on, it stretches through the long hours of the night.

Can Jacob lose this fight? He can. The two figures battle on the edge, by the dark waters of the fast flowing water. If Jacob loses, he will plunge into this water of lostness and be swept away. Can he win? The fight becomes what boxers call a 'war of attrition', in which neither side overwhelms the other, but both simply go on inflicting maximum damage on each other. Jacob and the

stranger must be equally exhausted, but as the hours wear on, the fight does not let up.

Jacob fights. Jacob strives. Jacob wrestles. Jacob contends. Jacob struggles. All these words are true to Jacob's battle on the edge, near fast flowing water that will carry him into oblivion if he loses his standing, and falls down, and in. He has to hold his ground, and he does. As the night deepens, Jacob exerts a pressure born of the effort that comes to you when all effort is spent; you are no longer fighting on your limits, but fighting beyond yourself. Slowly, imperceptibly, Jacob begins to win. His heart is found true, and found strong, in this battle that he never chose but had been awaiting, and secretly seeking, all his life. Little by little, Jacob's heart waxes, and his opponent's wanes. The dawn is coming.

As the first faint light starts to push back the night in which they had striven, this stranger --the intruder, the non-descript adversary -- realises he cannot overcome Jacob, but is by small degrees being overcome by him. The man, the spirit, who stands in for and in some sense is God, then wounds Jacob, to make him relent. The wound is variously translated as a stab to the thigh, or even as a blow in the socket of the hip on the sciatic nerve. In truth it should not be literalised over much, because this wound, like the fight that it climaxes, is in the heart.

Jacob is fighting, striving, wrestling, contending, struggling, with God about the heart, in the heart, for the sake of the heart. The future of the heart is at stake. Neither party to this heart, divine and human, can withdraw from such a battle. Both are staked to what is at stake for the heart.

What is at stake is battled over, and the battle culminates in a wound. A wound 'resolves' the fight.

Jacob will forever afterwards limp.

Yet even after he is wounded, Jacob will not let go, and goes on "wrestling" [Genesis, 32, 26]. The man, or spirit, does not want to stay in the day-light. His appearance, and mission, needs the night. He says, let me go, for day is breaking. But Jacob replies, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

What happens next explains it all, and is inexplicable.

15,

I strove with you, to show you I was sincere, to show you the heart you gave me, not to run from it, but to lean on it and act from it, as you wanted. I affirmed the will in my heart you put there, but I also strove against your will, I had to resist it, I had to question it, I had to honestly declare its otherness, and my mistrust in your otherness. I always demanded you be as I needed you to be. And, it did not distress me, or throw me, that you resisted this

insistence of mine that you serve my scenario of the heart's life. I knew it could not be as easy as this, to make you a part of the circle of my heart's affections. But I had to believe I mattered to you, and it was through your beneficence to my need that I first was drawn to you. Yet I always knew there was something greater than this, something deeper than this, and even as a child living in the circle of my affections, I prayed for this to break in upon my life. So, when you came, I had to try to prevail, and yet I knew that it would be reversed, and you would not prevail over me but prevail in me. Your greater and deeper heart would fight, and wound, my small and shallow heart, in order to enter its life.

In the long hours of contending with you, I became exalted, and the wound you inflicted in my power to stand and to fight brought me back down to earth. You enabled me to stand up to you as a man, and affirm my human heart, but in the end I was grateful that you both acknowledged my power with you and demonstrated your power is greater and deeper. This is why I would not relent, until the wound was inflicted.

In what they remembered of our encounter, they recorded only my name with you. But they left out your name with me. You would not give me your name, but our encounter revealed it.

My name became Yisra-el, which means many things all pointing toward the same paradox. One who has struggled with God, striven against God, battled God. They called me, he who has been strong with God. They even said of me, he is one who has power with God.

They called my children Yisra-el, because the blessing I asked from you was granted in the changed name you gave me. Only you know the name each of us has in your heart, burnt into it through a wound. My name, and my people's name, remembers my journey from a crooked heart that was rivalrous with the brother to a heart that was strengthened, and empowered, through fighting God, but they also forgot something that only you and I know.

You would not give your name to be remembered, and recorded, because only those who fight you and are conquered by you in conquering you, only those who restrain you and are restrained in the restraining of you, only those who wound you and are wounded in the wounding of you, can know your name.

God fights, through a wound.

That we are made strong against you is not the full paradox of the name you gave me, and my children. My name contains a plea, a request, a prayer. In the end I was not the gifted boy, nor even the exalted man battling in the full immovability of his strength, in the full flow of his power. In the end, I knew you would wound me, and I accepted it, because I wanted you to conquer in my conquering, I wanted your strength in my strength, I wanted your power in my power, and in the end, I even understand the last amen in my heart. If

there was a submission in my life, it was only then, and only to that. God fights, through a wound. To fight for us, God is wounded. And thus for us to fight God's fight, we must be wounded by God's wound.

God's strength, God's power, is not a majesty that imposes itself upon the world; that night, as the hours of struggle and battling wore on, a false father died, and a true father was born.

The wound not only showed your heart to me, it opened my heart to you. I saw the greatness and depth, and I aspired to it, I admired it, I honoured it, I respected it, and yes, I Jacob, deceiver and thief, corner-cutter and easy-way taker, bent my knee to it. I fell on my face, and I sang inarticulate praises to you. A child who had not had a father, I found in you a father stranger, darker, more fiery, than any of my scenarios, wishes, hopes, could have arranged in my head. All that nonsense died. Before, I had always asked things from you. Give me protection in the dangerous world beyond my familiar home, give me Rachel who delights my heart and stirs my loins, give increase to my wealth and worldly position, defend me from my two faced uncle, save me from my aggrieved brother. Always, I was asking for something. When I held onto your emissary and your presence, in the last of my strength, in the fading of my power, I ceased asking for anything. I asked for your blessing. I could not take this for granted, but humbled and even contrite, I stayed your departure a moment longer to confess I wanted, more than any strengthening by you, more than any empowering by you, your approval. I wanted you to say my heart was worthy of the one and only heart of supreme worth. I had begged before, for your bounty and your help, but now, beyond the limit of my persisting, I abjectly pleaded with you. Father, may I have your blessing.

This is the significance of the name you gave me. It came with your blessing. It was your blessing. You pronounced my struggle, my striving, my wrestling, my battling, true, and worthy, and you made it the door-way into a reversal that only you and I knew, but was not remembered when our encounter was recorded. You are the God of reversal, the God of the strength in weakness, the God of the power in vulnerability. You fight, and you reverse this fight through a wound. The wound was not the climax, but the whole point, of our fight.

This is what you blessed, as the dawn stole away the night in which we had contended.

16,

The next day Jacob assembled his family and his animals, and went out to meet Esau. Esau's spirit of revenge had been draining away over the years, and the gift of stock had touched him. It was an acknowledgement, in Esau's terms, of what Jacob had stolen away. The meeting of the brothers is joyful. Esau offers to accompany Jacob home, but Jacob will go more slowly because of his children. Jacob's convoy will rejoin Esau at Mt Seir.

Jacob arrives in a place called Shechem, where more disaster befalls his entourage. He buys some land, and his only daughter Dinah is raped by the local prince, who wants to marry her. Two of Jacob's sons take terrible revenge, tricking the local men involved in attacking their sister, and by that ploy killing them as well as the prince. Jacob is silent during this incident, but on his deathbed he rebukes Simeon and Levi for their vengeful anger [Genesis, 49, 5-7].

As Jacob and his retinue nearly reach Canaan, Rachel dies in childbirth, giving birth to Benjamin. He is 'the child of sorrow.' We can only imagine Jacob's sorrow. After the stupendous event, beyond human comprehension, at the river, he loses his beloved. God gives and God takes away, almost simultaneously. God changes our relationship to the world, but despite the exulting, and the suffering, and the final revelation, in the divine encounter, the world is still there. The world goes on, just as before, because it is the world that has to be changed. We are changed, only to change the world.

Jacob buries Rachel, and leaves a monument to her. The place is just outside Bethlehem, where Christ will be born more than a thousand years later. Pilgrims still visit Rachel's tomb, to honour her willing suffering of a wave tossed husband. They loved each other.

Jacob finally saw his father Isaac again in the place called Mamre, outside Hebron. When Isaac died at the age of 180 [maybe this is measured by lunar months, but the old man was very old indeed], Jacob and Esau buried him together, as two loving brothers grieving for a father, in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought as the family burial plot many long years before. Abraham was gone. Isaac was gone. It would be many years more before Jacob, the third of the early fathers of Judaism, would go.

After the fight, the wound, the blessing, at the river, Jacob's troubled life went on, and the weird intermixing of the holy and the profane that marks the way of redemption in this world just continued. Only in extreme old age, near death, was he granted peace. Jacob died at 147. According to Jewish tradition, he died trying to prophecy the exact date when redemption would arrive, but he failed. Instead he asked his sons if they were righteous, and this meant, would they carry on in the fight, the wound, the blessing, he had undergone for them, and by their reply he understood they would. He died content. We will not be told the when, but it is up to us to faithfully fulfil what we can do towards the how. The rest is with God, and what he will do. No one can know this.

Though Jacob's existence in this world of 'sturm und drang' continued into extreme old age, I imagine him sometimes remembering the fight by the fast flowing, dark waters, and not being able to picture it but recalling it with a stab to his heart. It was something too great for a man, too deep for a man, and thus the human heart that bears and endures it, that carries it as the weight whose load is too heavy for the poor and frail human clay, is ripped asunder, and joyfully weeps tears of grief and fire.

The man [Genesis, 32, 24], who was a spirit [Hosea, 12, 4], and showed the human face of God [Genesis, 32, 30], revealed the great and deep heart of the father.

This is the real denouement of Jacob's story, and the painful but luminous hurt that cannot be described in words, but will never be excised from memory.

17,

You were defeated for love of me, I was defeated for love of you.

My prayer secretly pleaded, may God prove strong. My unvoiced thanks declared, God will prevail.

We know your name. Yisra-el captures the journey toward it, but leaves out the reversal that climaxes it, and is its whole point.

God fights. He who fights God truthfully, and with honesty, will, through a wound, become he who fights for God.

This is the God I met at the place I renamed Penu-el. I chose it because it means, 'for I have seen God face to face, and lived.'

We were told this God never manifests in human form, but he did with my grandfather Abraham, and he did with me. He has a human face, a spirit's potency, and the heart of a father.

This is the true God whose blessing I strove all my life to be worthy of; this striving is what God blessed.

I will fight for, I will be wounded for, I will bless, what he loves.

This is the secret of what changed over that long night, as the heart of God and my human heart contended.

I am Jacob, and became Yisra-el.

HESED

Micah, 6, 8= "What does God require of us? To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God."

PREAMBLE

Recently I found a key and almost impossibly rich term that has so many wheels within wheels, so much that is subtle rather than gross, intelligible in a hidden way yet not fully so on the surface, including a complex context of times and places where it is deployed in the Jewish Bible.

'Hesed' is crucial to 'passion of heart' because it is crucial for its foundation. The only thing that upholds the human heart in its 'passibility' in the abyss is God's hesed, extended to humanity, and requiring a response in reply from humanity. Thus 'God requires the heart' is the secret of Judaism, and the starting point for Christianity.

Hesed upholds passion in the abyss where, if its passibility fails, it can fall without end..

Hesed is the origin for passion, then.

1,

Hesed can mean 'loving kindness', 'mercy', 'compassion', but also as a term of the covenant, implies 'steadfastness', 'faithfulness' or 'faithful love' [Hosea likens Israel's failure of hesed to a whoring wife betraying a loving husband], thus 'steadfast loyalty.' Not love in some permissive, nice, general sense, but the kind of loving generosity and protection you give out of the loyalty of a husband to a wife, and wife to husband, or the loyalty of a father to a son, and son to father, but also brother to brother ['solidarity among those covenanted to each other'].

The covenant is 'reciprocal' for those God loves in this relationship; their 'obligation' is to love him in return, and it seems they mostly do this in how they love their fellow humans within the covenant, especially those most defenceless, and most needy. The hesed of God to the king, treating him as a son to a father, obliges the king to 'serve' God by protecting and caring for all the people.. Similarly, the Last Judgement asks whether we have failed hesed in our mistreatment of the poor, the hungry, the sick and distressed, the prisoners. This is not sentimental. It is because we are in a mutual relationship with God that we have a mutual relationship with our brothers and sisters.

The obligation of reciprocity, a response on the human side to what God gives, is not a law [you cannot compel or force love], but a matter of what the Indians of the Northern Plains would call 'honour.' Honour means 'to keep a

promise', and the covenant is basically, and profoundly, a promise. A promise commits the one who makes it to something. So, if we enter a covenant, we promise each other. It cannot be reduced to mere legal obligations, rules and regulations, because it shows heart-- from God and from the human response to God. In Native culture, to make a promise and be committed to what we promise -- 'we make vows' is how this is summed up -- is very solemn, grave, 'heavy.' It is also, therefore, a yoke, a duty, that weighs on your shoulders and heart. Entering into a promise, a mutual vowing, requires will as well as passion, and is not a matter of variable feelings: today I feel up to it, tomorrow I do not feel up to it. Making a promise commits a person to certain very generous and steadfast actions.

Thus hesed is sometimes spoken of as 'favour', a kind of radical and unreserved generosity, offered freely to Israel by God, within their covenant. It is not deserved or merited or earned; it is given out of recognition of the love, and the binding relationship, that connects the parties to it. You wouldn't do hesed grudgingly, resentfully, as a law to follow; you would do it from the heart, willingly, and walk the extra mile.

One Jewish commentator called it 'covenantal loyalty', or even 'covenantal love', though since moderns have lost the sense of covenant as a promise of commitment -- a promise that commits the promiser to loving, caring, protective, generous, kinds of action -- such phrases probably lack intelligibility.

2,

The clearest 'in' is a Hasidic commentary which brings hesed close to the passion trinity of 'truth [emet], justice, righteousness [or, uprightness].' Thus Jeremiah [9, 22-23]= "...I am Yahweh, who acts with faithful love [hesed], justice, and uprightness on earth; these are what please me."

Agape, the Greek word for love [famously used by St Paul in his description in 1 Corinthians, 13, 1-13], does not have this closeness to truth/justice/righteousness. It has the gracious and 'mad' outpouring of total generosity, and it is directed to everyone, without any discrimination. But -- and this is hard to put in words -- the charity in agape does not link to promise, or honour, and thus does not shade into the passional edge of keeping your word, demonstrating truth in your actions. If agape is [pure] 'grace, graciousness, gratuitous and benign giving to and sharing with one and all', that does not quite get the shape of hesed, in its context. Agape, precisely due to its all-inclusivity, has no cutting blade..

The Hasidic account portrays hesed as truth/justice/righteousness; its Action is Chivalry, whether from God to human, or human to human, because it always implies the stronger or greater taking care of, and being vowed to take care of, the weaker or lesser. Or, in other terms, chivalry is the more constant taking care of, and being committed to caring for, the more frail. Thus, God

loves us in our frailty, and we are to love other humans in their frailty. The loyalty in hesed has a price.

But this implies that the loving kindness is also merciful. This is where 'mercy and pity' [stressed in the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible in 300 BC] enter the meaning of 'kindness.'

Thus, hesed as kindness and mercy seems directly related to truth/justice/righteousness, because if the covenant is inherently chivalrous, then compassion follows as the night the day. Such mercy and compassion is the opposite of Nietzsche's 'Superman' sneering at those less strong, or less gifted, or less favoured [less fortunate], than himself. A lack of hesed would mark a people as inherently cruel [uncaring, unkind].

Capitalism, for example, encourages the absence of hesed among people. Instead of feeling people as brothers/sisters with whom one is inherently connected, and to whom one is committed in ties of loyalty and filial love, and with whom woes and happiness are shared, we start to see ourselves as better, and others as worse, so we deserve our good fortune and they deserve their bad fortune. Solidarity among humans disappears. Many prophets blast Israel on this break down of the social, or inter-human, aspect of the failure to follow hesed. What would Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, say about modern America, with the widest gap between rich and poor, ever increasing?

Hosea, 4, 1= “..Yahweh has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land.”

3,

Also stressed in the Hasidic account is that hesed means to love God so completely -- so passionately -- that a person will never forsake God's service for any reason. And what does it mean to serve God, because of hesed? It includes, the commentary says, such things as the nurturing of a child; visiting and healing the sick; giving charity to the poor; offering hospitality to the stranger; attending to the dead; making peace between a man and his fellow; providing for a bride so she can marry; taking care of the most vulnerable in society, the widow and the orphan. Much of Yahweh's pulverising anger against Israel is not punishment for transgressions of instructions, rules, regulations, 'laws'; it is anger over the failure of the covenantal hesed.

God remains true to hesed, but human beings prove false to hesed; this is a malaise not of Disobeying the Big Boss in the Sky, but of the heart. It is a human failure of passion. And this 'heart failure' is the weightier matter at the core of all ethics; and all the many lesser laws of Judaism flow from it, for without it these various 'instructions' are like 'straining out a gnat but admitting a camel.' Service of God means 'doing' kindness and mercy, 'doing' chivalry; doing hesed.

4,

The account continues. Hesed contributes to tikkun olam= 'repairing the world.' Hesed is part of redemption. Its loving Action redeems the world, it does not give up on it.

This is crucial because though God slams Israel for breaking the covenant, and betraying hesed, the hesed also binds God. God cannot escape his own promise, his own commitment, and this vow of God to Israel, and through them to the whole world process, is to never give up on them. Though hesed is a paradox uniting kindness and mercy with the sharpest and toughest demand for truth of heart in action, and thus righteousness and justice in human inter-action, never the less God cannot abandon those to whom he is promised/vowed/committed, and that means, however frail they become in abandoning the human heart, God's heart must 'suffer' that and bring them through, to a redeemed heart where they can, indeed, reciprocate God's love by loving God and loving neighbour, and even as Yeshua says, loving the enemy [this is the Cross, the final apotheosis of hesed].

So, hesed is love, but love as action. 'Love as action'= passion. Loving action that contributes to the repairing of the world, the redeeming of the human venture, is passion at its most extreme.

Somewhere it says in Jewish tradition, 'compassion is rooted in the hearts of the righteous.' This shows that righteousness was always inspired by hesed, not by law and rules and regulations; it shows that righteousness itself is, from the first, chivalrous, and thus moving toward redemption. Righteousness points to, and is resolved by, redemption. Therefore righteousness has nothing to do with the error of fundamentalist Christians or Jews, that uses the 'reward and punishment scenario' as the ultimate threat to the human heart= "do as God commands, or go to hell". So= "If you obey, heaven, if you disobey, hell; and heaven and hell are eternal."

The fundamentalist reading of the Jewish Bible could not be more in error, more dark, more a projection of human fear and human hate [wanting there to be winners and losers, in the ultimate].

God does indeed punish not moral transgression, but betrayal of hesed. Yet as he says, such wrath is for a season only, the Holy One does not destroy; the 'anger for truth' -- as the Christian Greeks called it -- does not destroy but Daemonically calls a person back to the truth of heart in action, the lightning burns up folly but aims to restore the [deceived] betrayer to the heart. There will be a final resolution= a final restoration of human heart and the world it 'rules' [this is the king]. The heart is the king who is righteous, thus fights for truth against the lie, but this king, filled with hesed in serving God, is ultimately one who is given, even sacrificed [as in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah], for the redeeming of the entire world.

Since chivalry, compassion, kindness and mercy, already 'tempered' the heart seeking truth, justice, righteousness, so 'repairing what is broken' – not judging it as non-repairable and ultimately doomed – is the final destination of the upright heart. The steadfast and faithful heart is vowed to this destination, and cannot stop half way with approving those who stand up in the heart and damning those who fall down in the heart. Everyone falls down.. Who is righteous, in the full sense, except God?

But the God who is righteous, and never becomes sentimental and liberal in tolerance, but demands truth, justice, righteousness, in heart from each personally and from all together communally, nevertheless passes from any narrow demand for goodness that separates sheep from goats to embrace the more difficult task of redeeming one and all. This is thanks to hesed. The real truth is -- as fundamentalists fundamentally misunderstand -- the covenant between God and Israel [and through them, between God and humanity] is a promise by God, a vow by God, that commits God to more than just anger with his people [all people become 'his people'] when they stray; God cannot abandon them, nor ultimately give up on them, even if they give up on God and thereby give up on themselves. God must be steadfast, faithful, loyal. God is committed to his people's heart, in his heart, and therefore when they wander away from the heart, God cannot be heartless about this, but must suffer it, out of love. The suffering God does not begin with Yeshua on the Cross; it goes back to Hosea, and even before. The suffering for love is holy. God's covenant with Abraham, Jacob, and Job commits God to suffering for his people, and dealing redemptively with their suffering in falling away from what he has given them, and called them to. The promise of God is to love his people like a husband loves a beloved wife, whatever her whoring [Hosea went through this]; to love them like a father loves a valued son, whatever his rebellion; to love them like a brother loves a respected brother, whatever his behind the back betrayal. Even if the baby dies in childbirth, yet shall he live, is Yahweh's promise, his vow, in Hosea.

Isaiah, 63, 7-9= "I will recount the steadfast love of Yahweh.. For he said, 'surely, they are my people'.. In all their affliction he was afflicted; ..in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up [like a heavy weight] and carried them [like a load] all the days of old." This anticipates the Christ= "Since therefore the children [of God] share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy [the devil] who has the power of death, ..and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" [Paul, Hebrews, 2, 14-15].

God is committed to a love that can ask for uprightness of heart, but this love that insists on righteousness is also, at the same time, because of the other side of hesed, committed to kindness, mercy, patience, long suffering, bearing and enduring hell for the sake of loving the persons imprisoned in hell [Psalms, 138, 2]. God is committed not just to righteousness for humanity, but to the redeeming of humanity when righteousness becomes lost to them, and they fall into the deep hell in the heart where all passion is dead, twisted, vacant. 'God requires the heart': but God will go to extraordinary lengths, in

his own heart, to restore, to repair, to redeem, the human heart. This is why Christ says, 'I have come for sinners, not for the righteous.' The righteous need to learn not to sneer at, judge and condemn, the unrighteous, but to give -- even sacrifice -- themselves for the lost. Hence 'love your enemies.' This is perhaps a hesed only won by the Cross of Christ. None the less, it is implicit right at the beginning of Judaism.

Psalms [138, 8]= "Yahweh, your faithful love endures forever, do not abandon what you have made."

In Jeremiah [31, 1-3] Yahweh announces= "I have loved you with an everlasting love and so I still maintain my faithful love for you."

5,

The prayer to the Daemonic God of Israel can plead that God is harsh on people's shallowness of heart, exposing and smashing it, because at the same time, this same prayer begs God to be merciful on the deeps of the human heart, where our tragedy really dwells. Deal harshly with our superficiality, but deal kindly and mercifully with our aching and troubled depth. Bring us through it to the far shore on the other side of the fallen-downness deeply entrenched in the heart.

Hit the liars and cheats who pretend all day long to be respectable, but comfort even them, really all of us, as we lay down in the dust, imprisoned in hell. We cry to you God, release the prisoners, even if you must pay a high ransom for them. Only you can pay that ransom. They cannot pay it. Thus 'no greater love has any man than he who lays down his life for his friends.' Be our friend, in our place of abject ruin. We are in hell, and cannot shift. Even if we attain the uprightness of righteousness, deeper down we are still blocked, and check mated. If you do not act for us, as a friend who loves us despite our dire condition, there is no hope. We do not merit your most radical love. But we call upon it, because our faith in you tells us that love has nothing to do with merit.

This is the prayer Yahweh answers.

6,

In effect, God's hesed has not been reciprocally returned by humanity. This is both a sad and grave matter; a tragedy for God and a tragedy for humanity. But neither the observance of the law, nor the battle of truth against evil in righteousness, has any finality; because of hesed, everything points to, and ends in, redemptive action. This is the 'love supreme' the Jazz man John Coltrane spoke about.

This is passion, of deep heart.

The dualism of good and evil, truth and lie, strength and weakness, robustness and persevering versus wavering and falling away, gives way to the Messianic dynamic in which the greater suffers for the lesser, to redeem them.

YAHWEH as the Personal Name of God

1,

God cannot be named, because God cannot be described.. Any description circumscribes the Uncircumscribable.

The name of God given to the Jews, however, reveals something of the nature of God, and the relationship of God to people.

Indeed, Yahweh is the personal name of God, whereas the other words spoken of God are not names but titles, and these refer to the various roles he plays vis a vis people, the world, the creation.

Elohim= God

El= mighty one

El Shaddai= almighty God

El Elyon= most high God

Adonai= lord, master

Avinu= our father

Another Hasidic writer says that the 'many' names of God -- and though there are 7 main ones, in fact there are many more multiple ones -- are adjectives or qualitative terms describing God's many faceted involvement with his creation. These names or qualities are like different rays of the sun, having different kinds of influence on our lives. These names are also, according to the Midrash, the different deeds of God. In this text God says to Moses, "You want to know my name? I am called by my deeds. When I judge my creatures [as to whether they observe justice], I am called Elohim. When I wage war on the wicked, I am called Tzevakot; when I tolerate the sins of mankind, I am called E-I Shad-dai; when I have compassion on my world, I am called Ha-va-ya-h" [some Hasids treat this last word as code for Yahweh]. These names are energies of God, active influences of God; each is some qualitative attribute by which God relates to his creation. It is interesting that Elohim also means 'the Mighty Forces of Nature.' Thus there is some link, often overlooked, between the giant powers of nature and the justice, or injustice, of human society. A society living in injustice is more likely to be hit by natural disasters, in Jewish history.. Both political and natural calamities are warnings to the Jews their society is unjust.

The many names are, then, a divine 'intervention in reality'-- God as ruler, God as judge, God as provider, God as saviour, and so on.

2,

The 'Tetragrammaton' is the 4 letter name of God, YHWH. This is just consonants, with vowels left out, so no one can actually say the name. But Ruth 2, 4 might suggest an early time when the name was vocalised.

The name is first mentioned in Genesis 2, 4, but the well-known story where God cryptically conveys it to Moses is in Exodus, 3, 14. In prayers, Jews speak Adonai, even though they leave YHWH in the text. This practise only arose after the Exile in Babylon. In English, Yahweh was always translated as 'the Lord.' This is a big error, because it substitutes the formality of a title for the personalness, even intimacy, of God's only name. This happened through William Tyndale, who also introduced the speculative, and inaccurate, 'Jehovah.'

Yahweh contains the archaic third person singular imperfect of the verb TO BE. So it might mean, "He exists." But, in Exodus God speaks to Moses in the first person voice [Ehyeh], and so says, "I am", or "I exist." In English, this has been rendered as "I am who I am", or "I am the Existing One", but the best rendering is probably, "I am that I am." This translation captures that God stands on nothing, but stands in himself, leaning on nothing, but being self-subsistent and self-generating, rather than arising from anything extraneous. I am, full stop. The beingness, the existing, needs no other support, ground, origin. It is. It is what is. Everything else that has being leans on, depends on, subsists in, needs, the existence that exists and needs nothing. Its beingness, its existence, is complete, in some way no created being, whether material, organic, human, or even a 'spirit', can attain or comprehend.

Closely associated with being or existing is 'life.' Thus Yahweh is 'the God of the living', the bestower of life, the source of 'aliveness' [1 Kings 18; Isaiah 41, 26-29; 44, 6-20; Jeremiah, 10, 10; 14; Genesis, 2,7]. One of the several properties of Life is Delight. All beings live in Delight, and even sin is a distorted form of Delight [Hasidic tradition]. Life has vitality, strength, and health, or 'well-being.' In God, people move from ill-being to well-being, and from well-being to eternal being [St Maximos].

Some Hasidic people also translate Yahweh in Exodus as "I exist, and I will exist." Or, "I will be who I will be", or even "I will be because I will be." Other renderings include, "I will be that I will be." The Hasidic tradition says of this, only God exists into the future, or has a future that is assured. Living beings have a past and present, but no assured future. This means there is no beginning and no ending in God. God persists, so to speak. God's reply to the question put by Moses regarding his name is, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh", sometimes shortened to 'eh-he-yeh', meaning in English, 'I shall be.' This name of the personal, living God is being, and existence, but it suggests, on-going being and existence with a future. This being cannot fail, cannot diminish, cannot recede like an outgoing tide; it is, and its isness will be. Therefore, all the promises of God to the Jews, and via them to us, have this implication of being pledges that we too, in participating in the isness of God, will be, and will continue to be. This is the Jewish origin for the later Christian preoccupation with 'eternal life.' It is not a reward for being a good boy or good girl; it is what is, and so as we draw nearer to God, our fragile and precarious being is uprooted from its native soil and replanted in God, like a little green shoot grafted onto a large vine. Incomplete existence [human] is immersed in complete existence [divine]; thus does a being inherently without

a secure future acquire a secure future. The latter gifts the former; and so by gift the human becomes something God is by nature.

The Hasids also say that the names, deeds, attributes, influences, energies, interventions, of God, especially the key 7, manifest Holiness. But Yahweh is beyond even Holiness. Holy is 'kadosh' in Hebrew, and means transcendent and apart. By contrast, 'eh-he-ye', or 'I am', is God as being, God as the essence of reality. Thus it is beyond Holiness. If Holiness is God's transcendence, then the beingness of God, signified by Yahweh, transcends Holiness, describing a divine reality that pervades every existence even as it transcends it, and thus relates equally to all realities, whether holy or mundane. 'The sun shines on the just and unjust alike' Christ says of his father, and this is built into the very name Yahweh.

Yahweh has a parallel with Buddhism's Void in all Form-- and in all Form whether translucent like a clear window or polluted with sludge, whether sacred or profane, whether good or wicked. The secret name of Yahweh is, 'heart that holds all realities, gives space for all realities, upholds all realities, unconditionally, treating the first the same as the last, having no favourites but equally upholding in being all realities, and equally available to the Form enlightened by the Void and to the Form in ignorance of the Void, with no preconditions, but unconditionally.'

The beingness upholding in being all beings, unconditionally.

This is Yahweh. This is the Love beyond all love, and loving, we humans know; this is the Isness whose only possible positive description is Love. The 'I am that I am' is the beingness of Love, the Love that bestows existence, and relates with it personally; the Love that upholds it in being, and calls every being out to doing. In this way we participate in, and deploy, the deeds and energies of Yahweh, in our deeds and energies. We become co-Actors with him, which means, co-Lovers of the creation he has made. Only in so far as we seek to love, as Yahweh is Love, do we receive the power inherent to each and every one of the divine names.

Yahweh is the only real name permissible to the God beyond all names. Only this name is an acceptable positive affirmation of the unknown and unknowable Essence of God. The other and basically 'plural' names of God do not describe God qua God, or presume to affirm anything about God in Essence, but they do describe, and richly, the Manifestations of God in relation to his creation, and to his people. Hasidism uses the Greek Orthodox Christian distinction between the Essence and the Energies of God: when we call God provider or ruler, these are 'mere names', describing not God's Essence, or what God is as God, but rather, describing a certain vision of God he grants us to have of him by affecting our reality in a certain manner. So, he provides in relation to us, or, he rules in relation to us. The Energies of God, as Eastern Christianity calls them, or the Many Divine Names, as Jewish tradition calls them, are bridges between God and creation, relational inter-active fields connecting, in a dynamic and evolving way, Uncreated and created.

If you assert one manifestation of God, say compassion, and down play another, say fighting the wicked, then your vision of God's rich relating to the creation is skewed, imbalanced, narrowed.

Yahweh is reality, the reality not far off, but in all things, supporting them in existence-- their true being, and calling them out -- their true action, and relating to them personally -- the Love that carries all being, all doing, and is available to humanity, face to face, and heart to heart.

If you depart from true being, you enter a shadowy and limited being, you become sick. This affects your soul. If you depart from true action, you enter a twisted and harmful action, you become unrighteous. This affects your heart.

Soul: eyes: face. A light in your soul shines from your face.
Heart: ears: voice. A fire in your heart burns from your voice.

Yahweh is existence, Yahweh is reality; thus Yahweh is with us, in all that is, in all that happens. A modern Hasid has Yahweh say, 'Certain things must be, no matter how painful and incomprehensible to your human selves, in order that great things, and infinitely blissful things, should be. But I do not orchestrate these things from some distant heaven, holy and removed from your existential pain. I am with you, suffering with you, praying for redemption together with you. If you cannot experience me, it is not because I am ethereal; it is because I am so real.'

This is moving closer to the Messiah, the God who pours himself out, and empties himself, for love, and who bears the crimes we cannot repay or make reparation for, one human to another, but accepts these harms as wounds to his being.

The Messiah's ultimate deed is hidden, as a secret, in Yahweh's name.

'I uphold all, unconditionally' comes to mean, 'I will redeem all, unconditionally, for I will pay for those who cannot pay.'

Yahweh will take the hit for what he has risked.

This is justice, as well as a generosity going way beyond justice. If God puts us in hellish conditions in this world, where Love is risked, then it is only fair Love carries the greater burden. But Love is beyond what is fair. It is passionate, it is excessive, it goes all the way.

Yahweh's name says, Love comes through. The future is with Love. All else passes away, save Love.

'I will be' is changing to 'I will be with you.' This has existential implications for us, for it also means, 'our fate is with the God who joins with us in existence's pain and absurdity.'

3,

The names of God in more detail..

[1] El: the deity; sometimes the creator; and can mean 'power' or 'might' [hence 'Mighty One'].

It is used mostly in poetry and prophetic discourse, always with some attribute of God attached: El Elyon-- Most High God; El Olam-- Everlasting God; El Shaddai-- Almighty God; El Hai-- Living God; El Ro'i-- God of Seeing; El Gibbor-- God of Strength; thus also the names of humans and spirits: Gabriel-- Strength of God; Michael-- Who is like God?; Raphael-- God's medicine; Ariel-- God's lion; Daniel-- God's judgement; Israel-- One who has struggled with God; Immanuel-- God is with us; Ishmael-- God hears [God listens].

[2] Elohim: power, or 'God is the power over powers', or 'God has many powers.'

Hence also, God is, or deploys and dwells in, 'the Mighty Forces of Nature.' The God doing the creating in the Genesis story is called Elohim. This name is Shamanic, without doubt. 'He is lord over all the things that are lordly.' The lords of Nature, all the spirits, have a lord, a Great Spirit, who is their source. Thus Elohim is singular and plural at once, One and Many. God uses the plural of himself in Genesis, 1, 26, and 11, 7; this has led to tremendous debate among scholars, generating anxiety because of a narrow interpretation of monotheism. Self-deliberation within God can be singular but the 'majesties' of divine presence and action in nature can be plural. As Gerald One Feather once said to me, 'we walk *in* one Spirit, *with* many spirits.' At any rate, the word seems to refer to God as 'the all-powerful One', or 'He who is the object of respect and reverence', or 'He with whom the person who is afraid takes refuge.'

[3] Elyon: the 'Most High', or 'supreme.'

[4] Roi: 'seeing.'

The God who sees [or is seen?]. This term is used of the prophet who is a seer, or visionary.

[5] Shaddai: from the Canaanite north, associated in tradition with the name by which God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and later in the Book of Job.

The word means 'almighty', even 'to overpower' or 'to destroy.' Thus 'the Destroyer' is an aspect of God, from an early time. Another root for this Daemonic word might be 'mountain', or 'mountain dweller.' Paradoxically, the word has by different routes also been associated with God's 'fertility and blessings', connected with 'fruitfulness'-- "May God Almighty [El Shaddai]

bless you and make you fruitful..” [Genesis, 28, 3]. Fruitfulness is obviously a theme of Eros, yet more paradoxically the Daemonic has a different fruitfulness, referring to bringing forth fruit out of struggle, suffering, trouble. Thus Genesis combines both themes: “By the Almighty who will bless you-- with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb” [Genesis, 49, 25]. Blessings of heaven and breasts: Eros; blessings of deep and womb: Daemonic.

Yet another line of interpretation claims that the word means ‘setting a limit’ on God’s acts; the things he does stop at a certain point, but are ‘enough, sufficient, a sufficiency.’ The implication is that God leaves things incomplete, to be completed later on; or that we have to learn when ‘enough is enough’, curbing our demand for God to go on doing miracles for us, while we do nothing. This could be nuanced somewhat differently to mean, ‘the God who is sufficient to supply all one’s needs.’ This word perhaps is a direct precursor of the Mosaic God, in that Yahweh is sufficient in himself, a self-determined being.

[6] Shekhinah: the ‘dwelling’ of God, the presence of God which has descended to ‘dwell among’ humanity.

The word does not appear in the Jewish Bible, but later tradition, including especially Hasidism, uses it to speak of God dwelling in the Temple or among the people. This is the only name for God that is feminine. In the Wisdom Literature, Wisdom becomes not only female, but virtually a consort or partner with God in creation. When Wisdom is feminine, it makes possible not just God’s visitation [comes and goes], but his more permanent and unitary ‘in dwelling.’ Clearly, certain defences of monotheism are uncomfortable with the woman who is Wisdom, but ‘she’ is present in the text. In Greek, her name is Sophia.

[7] Tzevaot or in transliteration Sabaoth: often appears with Elohim, or Yahweh, meaning ‘hosts’ or ‘armies.’

God of Hosts-- many realities, many beings, many spirits, parallels Christ’s saying that ‘My father’s house has many mansions.’ God is a vast community, or a vast kingdom. God of Armies [I Samuel, 17, 45] means that the spirits will fight for truth, against falsity, and that God acknowledges the centrality of fighting even in the spirit world, as well as in human history in the material world [the singular of the word denotes a vast assemblage of the spirits, the plural of the word denotes a vast assemblage of humans]. Community is recognised, battle is recognized, as carrying the ‘stamp’ of God. Both represent plurality, letting many others be ‘other’, giving room for vast divergences. In community, there is ‘unity in diversity’, a harmony of many organs in the body working together as one; but battle signifies a different respect for variation, for the truth itself cannot just be accepted, rather, it has to be contested. Contesting the truth clarifies its depths; imposing the truth by force is weak, and not God’s way-- much as we would all like God to beat up the bullies who terrorize us. But then do we extend that to God beating us up, when we are the bullies? God’s fighting is manifest in several ways, to do with

righteousness, justice, and steadfastness in affliction. Indeed, fighting is at the heart of the Daemonic, and the heart that is torn, honed, tried in a furnace, by it. Israel means 'God fights', and if we are daring in fighting against God, we will learn from this to become bold in fighting for God. Significantly, this word mainly appears in the prophetic literature.

Other names for God, of lesser gravitas to Jews, include the following..

Adir-- Strong One

Adon Olam-- Master of the Universe

Elohei Avraham-- God of Abraham

Kadosh Israel-- Holy One of Israel

Melech HaMelachim-- King of kings

Makon-- the Place

Yahweh-yireh-- God will provide [Genesis, 22, 13-14]

Y-rapha-- God will heal [Exodus, 15, 26]

Y-tsidkenu-- God our righteousness [Jeremiah, 23, 6]

Y-shammah-- God is present [Ezekiel, 48, 35]

Tzur Israel-- Rock of Israel

The Kabbalah -- Jewish mysticism -- claims that the creation was made from the structuring and restructuring of all the letters that form the names of God.

But there is another tradition that derives the creation from just the four consonants of YHVH. This is like the four directions of the Sacred Circle of Shamanism.

Y-- water, south

H-- fire, north

V-- air, east

H-- earth, west.

4,

Yahweh's name is an ikon, a koan, a poem.

Yahweh means, I love the world I created and will not see it ruined, desolated, forsaken. In the end, and over the long haul, I will entirely redeem it.

But all these names are Yahweh, for the same Jewish commentaries conclude that the net implication of Yahweh's name is, 'I will be with you in your present distress, and I shall be with you in future exiles and persecutions.'

God with you-- this is Yahweh.

But over time, it changes, and becomes something more radical in love.

God suffers for you-- this is Yahweh living in the heart of his Messiah.

Messiah is the name of names of God.

It means, Yahweh's heart on earth.

THE LEFT HAND OF YAHWEH= Does Hebrew Have A Term Equivalent to the Greek 'Daemonic'?

1,

As is so for passion, Hebrew has a family of terms to express a spiritual reality.

'Holiness, terribleness, fieriness, dread warrior [Jeremiah], awe, glory', and many others, all are Hebrew descriptions of God that converge toward the Greek term 'DAEMONIC.'

Karen Armstrong quotes a Jewish religious song in one of her books; it captures some of this complexity.

"A quality of holiness, a quality of power, a fearful quality, a dreaded quality, a quality of awe, a quality of dismay, a quality of terror— such is the quality of the garment of the Creator, Master of the Universe, God of Israel, who, crowned, comes to the throne of his glory; His garment is engraved inside and outside and entirely covered with YHWH, YHWH.

No eyes are able to behold it, neither the eyes of flesh and blood, Nor the eyes of his servants [spirits]."

The Eastern Orthodox Christian church sings in its Liturgy, "Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us."

Daniel's vision of God as enthroned on fire is radically Daemonic. The rivers of fire flowing from the kingship of God reveals the Daemonic as the supreme love of God for humanity, and the entire creation.

Though Holiness is overwhelming -- a Jewish friend pointed to this when he refused to describe God in any manner but finally said, to close any further discussion, 'God is the Undeniable' -- and we must first experience Holiness as overwhelming, Karen Armstrong betrays her Western bias, or perhaps just the limit of her own experience, when she says this about the God of Holiness= "There is absolutely nothing tender, loving, or personal about this God; indeed his Holiness seems alienating" [p 216].

Armstrong could not be more wrong in this statement. The Holiness of God precludes sentimental, cosy notions of the Santa Claus daddy, fat and cuddly, who plays such a role in much, especially liberal, Christianity. The Unknown God who is the Unknown Father can be tough, harsh, injurious, yet his paradox is precisely that no other God is so tender, so gentle, so long suffering. Yes, the Daemonic God is William Blake's 'Tyger, Tyger, burning bright in the forests of the night', but he is also 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

There is a paradox in our experience of God as both the joy of Eros and the suffering of the Daemonic, but there is a far more profound paradox in the Daemonic than there is in Eros. Each has its own paradox, but the many koans of Eros have a solution in mystical enlightenment, whilst the single koan of the Daemonic has no solution. The Daemonic God is the God of the Heartbreak, the God who breaks our heart to enlarge it, to make it the human heart carrying the weight carried by the divine heart; thus the God who breaks our heart is also the God who redeems the hearts of all humans and of all creatures and things.

This is the God who suffers for humanity and this is the God who fights for humanity. Without the terrible God, there is no redemption.

2,

The koan of the Daemonic includes good and evil, as well as other contradictions.

Lamentations of Jeremiah, 3, 37-38=

“Who has only to speak to make things exist?
Who commands, if not Yahweh?
From where, if not from the mouth of the Most High, do evil and good come?”

Judges, 9, 23=

“God then sent a spirit of discord between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem.”

In the Revised English Bible [which is a robust scholarly translation], it says=

“God sent an evil spirit to create a breach between Abimelech and the inhabitants of Shechem.”

1 Samuel, 16, 14-16=

“But the Spirit of Yahweh [the Ruach] departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled him. And Saul’s servants said to him, ‘Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubles him. ..it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from Yahweh is upon you, that [a man who is skilled with the harp] will play for you, and you will be well’.”

David is described to Saul in Daemonic terms [1 Samuel, 16, 18]; ‘he comes from Bethlehem, is an accomplished musician, he is a powerful and valiant man, a man of war [a warrior, not a soldier or thug], wise in many matters, a comely person, and Yahweh is with him.’

1 Samuel, 16, 23=

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

It is with the music of Eros that the evil spirit sent by Yahweh is driven out of Saul. But it should be noted, it is the Daemonic that both decrees the necessity of the sickness and finds the remedy..

3,

Psalms, 50, 3=

“Our God will come and will not keep silence: a fire will devour before him, and it will be very tempestuous round about him.”

‘Aysh’= Fire.

Aleph= ox, strength.

Shin= to consume, to devour.

Psalms, 64, 7=

“But God will shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.”

Jeremiah, 4, 4=

“Take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Jerusalem. Let my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.”

‘Circumcision of the heart’= weaned off the degenerate, fantasy-based, loves of Eros that block, and impede, the Daemonic love which is roused in defending the widow and orphan, and is strong in loving the stranger -- the outcast, the outsider, the eccentric maverick, the numinously ‘other’ beyond both family and tribal identity -- giving him food and raiment [Deuteronomy, 10, 16, 18].

Psalms, 18, 7-15=

“Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills moved and were shaken, because of the wrath of Yahweh.

There went up smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth.

He bowed the heavens, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.

He flew on the wings of the wind..

He made darkness his secret place; ..round about him were dark waters and thick clouds..

Before him ..hail stones and coals of fire.

He sent out his arrows; ..he shot out lightnings..

Then the ..foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Yahweh.”

4,

Isaiah, 45, 7=

“I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am Yahweh who do all these things.”

Here, light is related to weal= abundance, joy, and darkness to woe= poverty, suffering.

Eros= Light, abundance, joy. Height and Breadth of Inclusion= Space.

Daemonic= Dark, poverty, suffering. Depth and Intensity of Focus= Time.

5,

‘Olam’= Time, the World, the Everlasting.

Deuteronomy, 33, 27=

“The everlasting God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

And he drove out the enemy before you, and said, destroy them!”

6,

Job, 13, 15-27=

“Though he slay me, yet
will I trust in him
I will surely defend my ways
to his face
Indeed, this might turn
out for my deliverance,
for no Godless man would dare come before him.

Only grant me these two things,
O God,
And then I will not hide from you.
Withdraw your hand far from me
and stop frightening me with your terrors
then summon me and I will answer..
How many wrongs and sins have
I committed?
Show me my offence and my sin.
Why do you hide your face
and consider me your enemy?

Will you torment a
windblown leaf?

Will you chase after dry
chaff?
For you write down bitter
things against me
and make me inherit the
sins of my youth.
You fasten my feet
in shackles;
You keep close watch
on all my paths
by putting marks on the soles of my
feet.”

Job, 12, 13-25=

“To God belong wisdom and power;
Counsel and understanding are his.
What he tears down cannot be rebuilt;
the man he imprisons cannot be released,
if he holds back the waters, there is drought;
if he lets them loose, they devastate
the land.

To him belong strength and victory;
both deceived and deceiver are his.
He leads counsellors away stripped
and makes fools of judges.
He takes off the shackles put on by
kings,
and ties the shackles of kings around their waist.
He leads priests away stripped
and overthrows men long established.
He silences the lips of trusted advisors
and takes away the discernment of elders.
He pours contempt on nobles
and disarms the mighty.

He reveals the deep things of darkness
and brings profound shadows into the
light.

He makes nations great, and destroys them.
He enlarges nations, and disperses them.
He deprives the leaders of the earth
of their reason;
He sends them wandering through a
trackless waste.
They grope in darkness with no light.
He makes them stagger like
drunkards.”

7,

People who cannot comprehend the Daemonic try to 'see it from the outside.' This is not possible. You will understand the Daemonic only when you, yourself, in your whole existence, have fallen into the 'fearful' left hand of God, and you, yourself, in your whole existence, have been shaken down, broken, and finally burned to ashes, by the Daemonic; your identity in ruins, your worldly confidence shattered, your 'hope in life' springing eternal destroyed, your belief in yourself brought to nothing -- brought to the Nothing, as if you had never existed. Only those upended by the Daemonic can speak of it from the inside, from experience, from going through it, from its exquisitely precise undoing of everything -- everything that we treasured, whether really rubbish, or really of value, no different.

Once you have been in the room of no exit, you will always thereafter recognise your fellow wounded ones, the brotherhood and sisterhood of the Path of God's Left Hand. This is the Way of Fire, but Fire subject to Grief, and the Suffering which, alone, reveals what is Deep.

PAGANISM= The Great Mother and Her Son-Lover Ba'al

1,

St Gregory of Nyssa asserts that Mammon is a demon, a devil, an evil spirit, whose other name is Beelzebub. This is actually a strangely brilliant insight. The Hebrew Beelzebub is from the Canaanite, possibly Phoenician, Ba'al. Now it gets interesting and much more complicated. Gregory of Nyssa is telling us Mammon is linked to the figure of Ba'al whom the Jewish prophets repeatedly blasted in the cause of Yahweh. Who is this Ba'al? He is the son and consort of the Great Mother Goddess Astarte [or Asherah, or Ashteroth]. Ba'al is Hebrew for 'lord', and was used in the plural as Baalim. In effect, Mammon is the false god, the idol, in a cult of the Great Mother. Herein lies a tale..

2,

The identification of 'paganism' with Shamanism is a huge error. Attaching the label 'pagan' to Shamanic peoples, especially the indigenous natives of the Americas, was a ploy in justifying their wholesale slaughter in the biggest genocide of human history. There is a hideous irony in this. Since the invaders into native lands were the real servants of Mammon, so they were the true 'pagans', for Mammon is just another name for Ba'al, and Ba'al is part of the old Middle Eastern religion of the Great Mother. It is this religion that was referred to as 'paganism.'

It is this pagan, and idolatrous, Great Mother cult which fought what scholars call 'the Yahweh cult' for Israel's loyalty over almost the entire sweep of the Old Testament. Mammon as Ba'al is the original Oedipus who eliminates his father and marries his mother. Freud's work on the Oedipus Complex is probably more on this mytho-poetic level than anyone has yet realised, including Freud himself. But Jung's break from Freud, oddly enough, blew up over a book Jung wrote which Freud could not accept. 'The Psychology of the Unconscious' gets to grips with the mytho-poetic back-drop to the story of Oedipus, and tries to put it into its proper cultural context as part of the ancient Great Mother religion. Jung makes two advances over Freud. [a] Jung sees the Oedipal triangle between Father, Mother, and Son, not just as outside us, socially in the family, but as inside us, psychologically: the child's libido is drawn back to mother earth, in 'regression', and must fight its way forward towards father sun, in 'progression.' [b] But this individual drama of conflict in our energy between unconsciousness [embeddedness] and consciousness [differentiation] reflects an older and 'immemorial' cultural drama of conflict between matriarchy and patriarchy. Oedipus is the figure on the cusp, with one foot in matriarchy, and the other foot in patriarchy. He is trying to measure up to patriarchy, but secretly he is cavorting with matriarchy; hence his guilt toward the father about his non given up lust for the mother.

It is just here some basic clarification is needed.

Shamanic religion honours both 'father' and 'mother', both sky and earth, both sun and moon, both the air we breathe in and out and the water that flows through everything. There is a holiness of father and a sacredness of mother. This is the primordial balance, and many Shamanic peoples kept it.

However, there is also the false father of patriarchy, and the false mother of matriarchy. Each of the primal opposites has a fallen version: religious patriarchy is a betrayal of the true father, and religious matriarchy is a betrayal of the true mother. Father and mother remain true when they remain together, and are simultaneously co-active; when you have a religion of 'father alone' it tends to drift into the negativity of patriarchy, when you have a religion of 'mother alone' it tends to drift into the negativity of matriarchy. The angry old man in the sky versus the cosmic pudding: both are equally deceptions, but in inverse manner. One perverts the sky, the other perverts the earth. Yet people caught up in the one delusive system tend to sneer at and condemn the different people caught up in the other delusive system. The 'dualistic' opposites are always at war, as well as being secretly attracted to each other. Each has something the other has left out; so each is trying to get that missing element away from the other; patriarchals love to crush women, matriarchals love to seduce men. The one has aggression without sex, the other has sex without aggression. So, each uses what they have to get what they lack from the other. Each is on a power trip glorying in their own thing, out to destroy the thing of the other. A plague on both these houses!

To understand the battle between the Yahweh cult and the Great Mother cult [in Judges 2, 13; 3, 7; 10, 6, and 1 Samuel 7, 4; 12, 10; the Jews are accused of abandoning Yahweh and "serving Ba'al and Asherah"], the battle between the Jews and Paganism, we have to understand a subtle point, which is that there was both something necessary and true in this contention and something that became distorted and false. Most current discussions about this confuse the latter for the former.

It is vital to realise that the Jews were originally a part of the Great Mother religion of the Middle East, and many Jews openly practiced it long after Yahweh became established. Not only to the north, among the Canaanites, but in Israel itself, the Oedipal religion of the Great Mother Astarte and her son and lover Ba'al continued unabated. This means that the Jews were in a peculiar dilemma when Yahweh, the Daemonic God, called them out of this Oedipal Mother--Son conjunction. Whilst the Daemonic Father is not anti-mother, he does break this incestual symbiosis; for a time the mother so nearby has to be put on hold, so that the more distant father, who is hidden and even absent, can be sought. But the Jews found this wound inflicted by the Daemonic hard to bear; constantly they were tempted to rush back to the Great Mother religion for solace. It is just at this point that Freud's Oedipus Theory is so useful. The more tempted we are to rush back to matriarchy when we are trying to be loyal to the true father, so the more we are likely to depart from true fatherliness and develop a stricter patriarchy as a defense against the matriarchy that is exerting such a pull

on us. As a result, the most patriarchal people on top are, beneath, in hidden alliance with the matriarchal; the super-ego would not be so harsh and punitive if it wasn't trying to keep a lid on, and defeat, an id going in the converse soft and indulgent direction.

In short, the Jews were called by the Daemonic to search for the true father, but out of their own difficulty in detaching from the previous maternal set-up in which they were immersed, they not only constantly experienced the regressive pull of the Great Mother religion, but also developed a mother-hating patriarchy to defend themselves from it. In the end, they developed that anti-feminine stance that is typical of all patriarchy everywhere. Women are blamed because they stir up men's hidden longings. Puritanism, moralism, authoritarianism, and its final fruit, fundamentalism, are ways in which patriarchy defends itself from the pull exerted by matriarchy; it openly hates what it secretly is drawn toward.

By contrast, once the Daemonic is established, it brings the mother back, and the feminine, the womanly, becomes its marriage 'help-mate.' Indeed, in late Judaism, under Greek influence, the God of Israel acquires a female consort, a wife, in the mysterious process of creation: the Shekinah or Sophia, who existed before the world was made, and danced before the throne of God, is revealed as God's partner in the entire process of creation.

None the less Ba'al remains a problem both for the Jewish anticipation of the Messiah and his actual arrival, because Ba'al is an Oedipal boy, in love with his mother, and lacking a father. It seems evident that the Great Mother religion, as originally constituted, was simply biased toward the motherly, as Judaism was for a time biased toward the fatherly. The Great Mother religion is a particular religious development of the crop growing peoples of the Middle East; 'pagan' just means 'countryside', and the countryside in question is that given up to farming. Not all farming communities in the world are part of the Great Mother religion; some retain a degree of relationship with father sky however much they emphasise mother earth. But in the Middle East there developed an exclusively mother oriented kind of religion which was focused on fertility, and therefore on sexuality. The Serpent was arguably the central symbol of this religion, and is often represented not so much as the male phallus as the female dance of sexual undulation that draws the male to the female. The Serpent is more likely to be draped over the Mother Goddess than displayed on her son--lover. Nor is this Serpent any simple reptile, or snake, but something mythical: the power of female sexuality as the governing power of the cycles of life and death. Thus the Serpent also represented health, vitality, and the eternal round of Nature, being born, dying, regenerating. The Serpent is the earth's strange power of self-renewal, and its wisdom in regard to this: how to shed your skin, and reappear, and keep on going. In Hinduism, the Serpent is Kundalini, the life-force that is basically feminine in nature, and which should be raised to a higher plane of masculine consciousness.

The problem, however, is that the Great Mother religion even in its benign form is closed to the dynamism of the Daemonic; the earth's little round of coming and going and return, is a small circle. It is too parochial. It is too gentle. It is too undramatic. God's relation with the creation, through the Daemonic, is far more risky and passionate. Something is at stake, which could be lost, and must be regained; all this is simply outside the repeating cycles of the Great Mother. Her fertility, her sexuality, her snake-like energy, are not in any fair sense inherently evil, but they are static rather than dynamic, closed rather than open, safely tucked up rather than on the line. The everyday has its own sacredness, but there is a holiness at work through the Daemonic that is far more upsetting, unsettling, and undeniable. Its movement changes the repeating cycles; it turns everything upside down and inside out.

Thus the problem posed by the Great Mother religion is that in it, the son is Oedipally glued to the mother and under her power; he has no power of his own. He fertilises her, but this is a small and unequal role, because she is fertility itself, and he merely facilitates that fertility. He serves her and is overshadowed by her; thus he 'services' her. However grandiose this makes him feel, he remains a boy to an adult woman. To the Canaanites, Ba'al appeared as a man and a bull, and though the bull has sexual virility, the Great Mother is his keeper; she puts a small chain through his nose, threads the chain, and thereafter can easily pull him along and do with him just what pleases her. The bull is garlanded, well fed, but essentially just led by the nose and used by women as a sperm bank, a phallus they can exploit in achieving their own purely feminine ends. This is the meaning behind the Old Testament's seeming targeting of women as the 'bad guy.' Saul had his heart turned away from Yahweh, and thus away from his calling as Yahweh's instrument of righteousness in the world, by women [1 Kings, 11, 3], and he worships Asherah of the Sidonians: Sidon was the center of the Great Mother religion [1 Kings, 11, 5]. Similarly, Jezebel [really Jeze-baal] caused her husband king Ahab to worship Ba'al and Asherah [1 Kings, 16, 31--33]. The Female Sophia, later on, is very different: she becomes the wise advisor of the king, and even is likened to his throne. So it is not 'woman condemnation' per se at work here, as feminists have claimed, but the Oedipal domination of the mother over the boy that is really at stake; if he gives into this, then however bullish in his phallus he may feel, he never becomes a real man.

The Daemonic Father wants men to stand up and shoulder their destiny as the defender of the truth of the world against the lie that destroys it. Ba'al may be charming to women, because of being charmed by them, but he will never grow into a man of moral integrity. His phallus is erect but his backbone is fatally weakened. He has no passion.

Not only will the mother-devoured son never stand upright, as a father fighting for the world's future, but also he will never be capable of loving and remaining faithful to any woman as a wife, friend, soul-mate. Though women are all too 'familiar' to him, and he knows very well how to relax and please them, he is not capable of having any personal and particular

attraction to any personal and particular woman. For him, every woman he encounters sexually is assimilated to an endlessly repeating 'archetypal situation of mother-son incest.' Thus he 'loves and leaves them', the bee who flits from flower to flower, always after the nectar that intoxicates and enslaves him.

Thus the Great Mother drags the male bull, her son--lover, along by the nose where she wants to go. But where does she want to go? To the bed chamber: provided sex takes place, provided children are born, she is content. The goal of life is more life. But this is energy without meaning. It ticks over, it goes on, it even mysteriously renews itself, but so what? The women of old Israel prayed, in a hidden way, to Astarte, because she promised them that they would be safe in child birth; and her Serpent power promised them a kind of 'eternal life', however an eternity confined to the everyday round, an eternity without Daemonic movement through time, and even without the loving relationship of Eros. The Serpent Goddess is not the Greek Psyche in love with and loved by the Eros of God; the Great Mother religion is impersonal, taken up with natural recurrence, and lacks the ecstatic 'going out of self' both of Joy and of Suffering.

Ba'al, as a mother's boy, may seem very non toxic and accomodatory to women of the Great Mother religion, but they don't want him to be a man. They are out to castrate his masculine phallus under the guise of adoring it. This is how the mother seduces the son: she admires him, she builds him up as the great lover, but she also softens him for her ends, turning his whole being into a slave to her fructification. Many foolish men, glad to enjoy 'easy sex' without responsibility, play this game. In actuality they are too stupid to realise they are being castrated even in the act of 'having their way' with women. At this point, the darker side of the Great Mother religion, of Paganism, becomes more clear. The true phallus brought by the Daemonic awakens the true womb ostensibly being honoured in the Great Mother religion but actually being left vacant.

Ba'al became Israel's enemy not simply because Israel had turned from his mother Astarte to the fatherly Yahweh, but because the Jews were tempted to go back to the motherly to escape the fatherly. Ba'al is their own internal Oedipal boy, undermining the more manly adult trying to emerge.

3,

Was Mammon always disguised as Ba'al, then?

Probably not, for the Great Mother religion had its point, in its time and in its place. But something odd occurred over the changing of time and the changing of place, which both Freud and Jung were trying to get at in their different but complementary wrestlings with the Oedipus Complex. It is impossible really to reconstruct the ancient world, especially only for the sake of our modern axe-grinding sex wars, but it seems clear that Mammon did creep into the figure of Ba'al, where he remains to this day. That means

Mammon has insinuated himself into and become a part of humanity's collective Oedipus Complex.

For, the Oedipus Complex is really a culture myth that speaks of secret realities at work collectively and unconsciously. Isn't it obvious that the 'bourgeois world' is an Oedipal world? Berdyaev= "The worship of Ba'al marked the beginning and was a figure of all bourgeois civilizations, which invariably destroy [an older] sacred culture."

4,

E. Graham Howe, rather than Freud, understood what the Oedipus Complex of all humanity really is.

"We are inclined to take things too literally, and ..say that the Oedipus Complex is an attachment of the boy to his Mother without sufficient regard for the [necessary role] of the Father ..in this Freudian situation [there occurs] an exaggeration of the [protective] role of the mother, who [is in] collusion with the Son, and a forgetting of the authority.. of the Father.

Now I want you to take that as poetry, not prose, and to ask yourself, [symbolically]: Who is this Mother? Who is this Son? Who is this Father?"

Killing the father and marrying the mother= a symbol for the repudiating of the claims of heaven, and by virtue of that, getting into a false and mutually destructive entanglement with the earth.

Humanity has banished our heavenly father, and in his departure lusted after our earthly mother whom we have deprived of the sacred meaning of her earthiness, to render her into a mechanical cow whom we milk 'for all we can get.'

This is what drives Capitalism.

5,

The sacred earth of the true mother is 'taboo' to exploitation. Bonds of respect and love link her to her children.

Once this taboo is gone, the desacralized earth becomes like a permissive, morally lax mother, and the human ego becomes the Oedipal boy feeding off her. In the absence of any restraining father, the Oedipal ego makes use of mother earth's 'goods' for his own, selfish benefit. This Oedipal ego is amorally ambitious. But since his ambition is rooted in milking the merely materialistic, desacralized earth, it has no meaning, it serves nothing, it is fuelled not just by sexual lust, but by the lusting in the selfish greed for possessions and wealth, by the lusting in the narcissistic demand for station and pomp, by the lusting in the proud aspiration for power and might. The Oedipal ego is amorally ambitious for fortune and fame, and all the empty materialistic pleasures they can buy. Material success equals social success.

The Oedipal ego is very pleased with himself when he has got to the top of the greasy pole. He struts and brags, arrogant and superior, because he is the 'lord of the earth.'

The Oedipal ego thinks he is all powerful. He has defeated the father, and taken his 'leading' position, even narcissistically believing he can replace the father's spiritual power by giving birth to his own creative phallus. Yet in reality he has no true creative power. All his phallic towers raised so high into the sky bear witness only to his egomania. They will not stand the test of time. Like the Tower of Babel which they repeat, they will fall to the earth. The only real question is= how much damage will be done to the earth and her children as the glittering edifice built on nothing and for nothing comes crashing down.

6,

It is obvious why Capitalism manifests the universal Oedipus Complex of humanity once we realise who the Mother, the Son, the Father, really are: the actors in its drama.

E.G. Howe ['Who will our physician be?', lecture at the Open Way, 23 July 1969] puts it like this.

"Who is Mother? Mother is a pot. She is a container, and [the] seed of life, ..who is to become an individual, is put into this warm container and is generated in it, and the container is a protective principle to enable life to grow. The Mother is very important as a pot. But pots are more important 'empty' than full, and mothers as protectors endanger the life of this child the moment they become possessive, ..the moment they seek to seal the aperture to freedom. So.. the problem of 'Mother as pot' is that it should be open and do its job, rhythmically holding and releasing.. ..the child comes in at one end and goes out at the other, and this is all a rhythmic breathing process which is part of the rhythm of life.

..the relationship of the contained with the container is the important problem; ..there should not be collusion between the individual and the container the individual occupies..

What we are talking of is the 'material principle' -- mater, matter -- and ..the danger of using and misusing [its motherly meaning]. Let us define misuse.

Misuse is to adopt a relation between the Son and the Mother in which these two collude in a partnership of reciprocal benefit and improvement and security, without relation to authority who represents the needs of the [communal] Whole."

The Father signifies the claim of the entire society, the entire creation, upon the individual. From this claim arises the need for justice that does not allow the interests of the individual to harm the needs of the many. The claim of the community on the individual is rejected in any political, economic, cultural,

situation when 'Mother and Son' collude against the Father [the situation in Freud's own family, as it was in the family of Jacob in the Jewish Bible].

Mammon, the love of money, is always Oedipal in nature when the desire for money is the desire for individual gain, and individual advantage, at any cost to the Communal Whole.

The Mother 'flatters' as well as 'indulges' the Son, encouraging him in feeling his claim to glory matters more than the basic needs of everyone and everything else.

Thus does this Son become a rival to other mother's Sons, each seeking the garland of top dog against all the other 'also-rans.'

Such a Son cannot be a brother to anyone or anything.

This selfish individual cares nothing for the needs of all in an inter-dependent net-work of relationships. Margaret Thatcher= "There is no such thing as society." If fairness towards the needs of all cannot be achieved, then society itself breaks down.

The irony= when the Whole is plundered and ravaged, then the individual dies with it.

The individual who claims the lion's share because Mother told him 'the spoils go to the winner' is in reality consuming the Whole, draining it of lifeblood like a vampire, contributing nothing to it.

'A house divided against itself cannot stand.'

7,

A final irony haunts the Oedipal ego getting materialistically fat on a materialistically fat mother. By destroying the father and feasting off the mother, the Oedipal ego finally awakes to the fact that he is trapped. He is in the end conquered by what he thought he was conquering, controlled by what he thought he was controlling. The degraded 'maternal and materialistic' system of money and power that he invented to 'master' the earth has finally imprisoned him.

His god is money, the priests are the banks, and he is caught in a spider's web of idolatrous delusion from which he cannot escape. With this god there is no redemption from financial sin. This god is ruthless and merciless.

This is where Mammon really ends: the wrong sort of over-involvement in matter, our maternal matrix, finally engenders the exact reverse, a hatred of everything material, of everything in our maternal matrix. This is what Mammon really does: by using and abusing the material world our mother, it generates fear of her, hatred of her, and a desire to destroy her in order, finally, to be free.

The spiritual presents itself, in the end, as the welcome destroyer of and longed for liberator from, the material. This is where science and technology are going. Obsession with the mother ends in loathing of the mother.

This is not what the True Father wants.

8,

Humanity's Culturally Universal Oedipus Complex began after the Neolithic Revolution, when the nomadic life of hunting and gathering was given up for the settled life of crop growing. For a while, the crop growers remembered the life on the road, and still honoured the father sky and the mother earth of Shamanism, even if they emphasised the latter, and played down the former. They lived in villages, and shared the toils and fruits of their life of 'subsistence agriculture.' Probably these villages were formed of kinship groups, and thus remained very democratic..

The change that sowed the seeds for Capitalism came with the transition from the settled life of crop growing to a further 'vicissitude' when such crop growing was organised in a 'more efficient' and 'less egalitarian' manner in order to fuel the rise of city life. The first city in human history is probably Eridu in southern Mesopotamia, the area that became known as Sumeria. It was founded in 4000 BC. Between 4000 BC and 3000 BC Uruk, the first city with unmistakably 'modern' features, flourished further to the south, near the Persian Gulf.

The Great Mother religion that mediates this second 'Urban Revolution' in human history changes the very meaning of 'fertility', from the ripening of Nature, to the exploitation of Nature to fuel the ripening of human life in the city.

No heavenly father, the mother earth dominated and industrially organised so that none of her ancient sacredness can survive in the crops.

A new Great Mother, Astarte, and her son-lover Ba'al, as they were known in Canaan, the land the Jews invaded in 1300-1200 BC.

Look where the religion of the corrupted and corrupting Great Mother Astarte and her devoured and devouring son-lover Ba'al, the religion of empty and vain 'progress', the naively meaningless belief that the future will always be 'bigger and better', has brought us= to the brink of destroying the very earth, the real mother, and all her fatherless children.

9,

What was Abraham called out of?

Out of the town of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, near Eridu and Uruk.

Out of the crop growing newly revamped to fuel the city, and its 'forward thrusting.'

Out of the Great Mother religion.

Out of the 'values' and 'skills' it promoted in a cultural scene given over to richness, as an end in itself, as the only end. Thus a trading and industry supporting the rise and rise of a higher class of wealthy and gifted people, lording it over the new, urbanly created poor. The city and civilisation promoted by the Great Mother religion has all the features we know today= the division into hierarchic social classes, the vast divide between rich and poor; the start of slave owning; the indifference to the most vulnerable [the Biblical 'widow and orphan']. Amoral rules! Provided you are a winner, not a loser; provided you are a success, not a failure; then anything goes! The sky is the limit!

Capitalism 'liberally tolerates' any and all of the injustices that seem necessary for the few to shine while the many remain in the doldrums. A dream long ago= America as a Tower built over a Pit.

People misunderstand Yahweh's burden on the Jews to be 'a holy nation', a nation of justice and righteousness. This is not a collection of discrete individuals, each of whom is ethical. It is far more radical than that.

Yahweh gave the Jews a fundamentally different model of city life, and the building of civilization, from that which occurred in Eridu [4000 BC] and Uruk [4000--3000 BC], and thereafter in the West, and currently, spreading like a virus all over the world.. The task of the Jews is to make the city holy.

Thus the Jewish prophets -- Amos and Hosea in the north [Israel], and Isaiah in the south [Judea] -- voice Yahweh's hot anger at his own chosen people because they have betrayed precisely what they were chosen to do. Thus their religion is outer, not inner, just a matter of gestures without struggle for truth; they think that cultic ceremonies in the Temple without ethical relationships among people in the World is enough to 'pacify' their deity= they do not even know who their God is, as they think his requirements are for ritual purity, rather than moral uprightness in the treatment of other people in worldly affairs no less than in social and family inter-actions [Isaiah, 1-5, 10-11].

Yahweh is the enemy of Capitalism. It is not just that Yahweh forbids usury= charging interest on loans of money. Yahweh insists upon a fundamentally different way of 'doing' the city, civilization, culture. As Gorbachev once said, 'there has always been trade.' Yahweh asks the Jews to adopt a moral attitude towards trading. If practiced, this would stop Capitalism in its tracks.

The Great Whore of Babylon in the Jewish prophets, and in St John's Revelation, is Israel sold out to the attractive lure, and secret toxicity, of the 'material paradise' that has rejected any link to the heavenly father. He will

help us not use our mother earth for whatever we can get to fuel our limitless increase, but respect and care for her, respect and care for each other.

This is what the True Father wants.

But as it was in ancient Mesopotamia 6000 years ago, so it is today, after humanity's third great watershed, the Industrial Revolution. The links, the almost exact similarity, between Then and Now is chilling.. Babylon is everywhere..

Jeremiah= "Babylon has been a golden cup.. that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunk of her wine, therefore the nations are crazed."

Ezekiel= "Babylon's princes.. are like jackals ravaging the prey, to shed blood and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. ..the people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.. Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves [yet] ..the diseased you have not strengthened, neither have you healed the sick, neither have you bound up the broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them."

'You have not sought the lost and you have abandoned the broken'; this is virtually the same criterion of what makes for sheep or goats in the Last Judgement described by Yeshua. 'When you did it to the least, you did it to me.'

It is as John Gibbens says, in regard to one of Bob Dylan's themes, 'every mother's son has lost his heart and sold his soul to Babylon.'

The real men are missing.

Yahweh calls out real men, and this alone makes possible the emergence of real women.

Yahweh calls for justice and righteousness, which is the only thing that can free the earth from the dead hand of egoic domination.

We will all rejoice when Great Babylon the Whore is fallen.

Sayings of the Desert Tradition= "When someone asked Abba Isaiah what avarice is, he replied, 'Not to believe that God cares for you, to despair of the promises of God, and to hate one's neighbour'."

THE MESSIANIC CALLING OF JEWISH RELIGION

The Prophets and Warrior Righteousness as Precursors to the Kingly Messiah

PRELUDE

The Jewish Messiah is a king in the line of David, chosen by God and specially empowered by the Spirit, to take on the impossible task of redemption for the entire world process. Whilst Christian tradition has tried to attribute to the Messiah priestly attributes, as well as prophetic attributes, it is clear that for the ancient Jews the Messiah was a king, but 'king' means something in Judaism closer to what 'chief' means in Shamanism: the central lodge pole of the tipi, against which all the other poles lean. The king is the 'heart' of the people, and this heart reveals, and represents, the heart of God. Moreover, only the king straddles the whole world, with its existential arena and contentions of history, whilst the priest occupies the sacred space of the temple where people unite in ceremonies, and the prophet occupies the wilderness where God, and the spirits, are directly encountered, by the person who can be alone.

David, as a king, is an extraordinarily human person. He was a great warrior, lover, poet, betrayer of his best friend [to steal the man's wife], and creator of songs to God of extraordinary depth. In him, uprightness of heart is complicated by heart depth: this complication is crucial to how Righteousness shades into Redemption; this is why David is the ancestor of the Messiah. David is not a man of stiff rectitude nor self-righteousness; he is aware of his many flaws, and he openly acknowledges them, and repents of them. This too is key to paving the way for the Messianic dynamic that has to seize all of history, all of society, all of 'this world'-- or fail.

The Messianic king has powerful precursors. First the prophets, who speak of both Righteousness and Redemption; second, the entire warrior tradition that upholds Righteousness, not just as a personal integrity, but as the very key to justice for the community of all persons. Obviously, however, a real warrior is not a soldier, nor is he a thug.

It is worth looking at these two allies of the Messianic King more closely, to reach a better understanding of the Messianic calling of the Jewish religion, a calling never really fulfilled by the Jews. It is also doubtful it was taken up by Christians, though this should have been their task.

[!] Enter The Dragon-- The Prophets Come

1,

The prophets of Yahweh are adapted from the Seer and the Ecstatic, which are in reality the two sides of the Shaman. The line between the Jewish prophets and Shamanism is hidden, but direct. In a Greek setting, we might call the Seer Apolline and the Ecstatic Dionysic. This is not the point. In the

religion of the Jews, these two ancient persons of Spirit, at odds with priests, advisors to kings and warriors, and closer to the ordinary lay people, become vehicles of the Daemonic God. They become 'all fire.' They speak and act 'in the Spirit', and their task is to reveal Yahweh, this mysterious God, and school the Jews so they can bear and endure the Daemonic, coming step by step, or stage by stage, to the uncovering of Yahweh as the Fire of Love. A fire seeking material which it can take hold of, and on which it can burn; a fire warm and all consuming. What St Dionysus says about this Fire of God is incantatory:

“Fire is in all things, is spread everywhere, pervades all things without intermingling with them, shining by its very nature and yet hidden, and manifesting its presence only when it can find material on which to work, violent and invisible, having absolute rule over all things.. It comprehends, but remains incomprehensible, never in need, mysteriously increasing itself and showing forth its majesty according to the nature of the substance receiving it, powerful and mighty and invisibly present in all things.”

A statement of Christ preserved in Eastern Orthodox Tradition says, “He who is near me is near the fire.”

The Jewish prophets are the Daemonic dragon, breathing the fire breathed into them.

2,

Later the Seer and the Ecstatic become one person, but early on, they are distinct.

Seer in Hebrew is 'Hoze' [or Ro'e], and a paradigm example is Samuel. The story recounted in I Samuel, 9-10, tells how Saul is looking for his father's donkeys who have run away. After days of searching, he comes to Ramah, and his servant tells him there is 'a man of God' there, and so they go to see this person of 'good repute.' They catch Samuel on his way to a high place where there is going to be a sacrifice which the most prominent persons in the locale will be attending. Samuel is called a Seer, and is running the event, to which he invites Saul and the servant. It turns out that the Seer has been in communication with Yahweh the day before, and thus without hesitation he tells the visitors that their animals have been found. After the sacrificial meal, at which the Seer's guests are given special honour, Saul and the servant are invited to Samuel's home. The next day he accompanies them out of the town, and anoints Saul as the next king of Israel. He says three signs will occur, to confirm the veracity of his statement regarding the kingdom. This all happens as Samuel says it will.

This story illustrates the nature of the Seer. He can hear and see things others do not, which come directly from God. To some extent, the ability is under his own control, since he can be asked questions, and get answers, as the need arises. The Seer is master of his own powers and can work to order. His task is to describe events, past, present, future, hidden from ordinary

sight and hearing. He has a second sensing, or spiritual sensing, denied to most people. His channel of communication is sufficiently pure, and clear, that it can tune in to what God wants people to pick up on in the world. It might be argued that the Seer reveals a hidden stream flowing through the world's events that allows them to be seen or heard with God's eyes or ears. The Seer allows humans access to the unseen dimension of history where God is at work. Without the Seer, Sacred History – or the real story of the world as God and humanity are co-creating it -- would disappear, and the follies, errors, crimes, of humanity would render history into the 'nightmare from which we cannot wake up', as James Joyce put it.

Unlike the Shamanic visionary rooted mainly in nature's sacredness, and conveying it to people who seek instruction or healing from its source of power, the Jewish Seer is God's eyes and ears on history, and as such, he is also the oracular teller of the true story, existential and spiritual, of the journey and battle of the world that 'makes history.' Samuel knows who the real king of Israel is, for example, thus he knows the story that serves righteousness, and is redemptive. The Seer does not necessarily comprehend the full breadth and depth of what God sees and hears on the ground in history, to keep it on track. There is an implicit dimension to the story telling of the Seer; what is conscious to God, but beyond humanity at a certain time and certain place, becomes the unconscious of the vision. There is often, in all prophecies that tell the story of God and humanity's struggle for the world in history a part that can be understood, at that point, and a bigger part which cannot yet be understood because it speaks to a future not imaginable or conceivable. Prophetic revelation thus always contains more explicit and more implicit elements; it has a conscious and an unconscious.

The ability to know where lost things have got to is Shamanic, as well as Jewish; another illustration of the links between Jewish prophet and Indigenous shaman.

Priests were not able to access the kind of knowledge given by Yahweh which the Seer shares with people. For this reason, the Seer is held in high respect. He has a certain authority among the town grandees, and does not answer to them, but is free to do as he chooses. Samuel is treated as weighty, in favour with God and in honour with people.

This picture changes when we come to the other kind of prophet.

Ecstatic in Hebrew is 'nabi', and the plural is 'nebi'im.' The ecstasy referred to seems virtually the same as going into trance; there is often some kind of attack of bodily contortions, crazy leaping, or other manifestations that were rhythmical and dance-like. The state of ecstasy was akin to wild dancing. Inarticulate cries were sometimes uttered, and the face was so changed, the Ecstatic 'became another man.' Another factor is that the Ecstatic was insensible to pain.

Ecstatics often travelled in bands, and were very gregarious. This was partly because the ecstatic state was infectious. After leaving Samuel, Saul meets a

company of nebi'im and falls into an ecstasy as well, and henceforth he is subject to these violent seizures for the rest of his life. Saul's first battle is conducted in an ecstasy, because 'the breath of God rushed upon him' [I Samuel, 11, 6]. This is similar to Viking berserkers, who fought savagely in trance. Many hyper skilled activities, indeed so advanced and gifted that they are impossible in any ordinary state of mind, are conducted in the ecstatic, or trance, state.

There is a hint that the restless distress Saul suffered from in later years, and could only be calmed by David's music, was an ecstasy become frenzied, or somehow unhinged [I Samuel, 18, 10]. Does this suggest it is harder to root the ecstatic state in the divine than is the case for the visionary state? Does Yahweh prefer the Apolline to the Dionysic? Or is the fine line distinguishing divine madness and human psychosis easier to discern in calmness and seeing than in excitement and action? In his later years, Saul engaged in wild actions that today would be considered insane, such as stripping off all his clothes and lying naked for twenty four hours [I Samuel, 19, 24]. But maybe Saul, as a king, was not meant to be an Ecstatic. His story could be advising us that not everyone who can 'let go' and get into a condition akin to mania is really called by God to serve his purpose. Perhaps both the true Seer and the true Ecstatic have to be called to their prophetic role, and also have to do the homework, the difficult work on 'what has been spoiled' in oneself, to make them ready for it. Having a few visions or having a few fits do not qualify you as a prophet.

The Ecstatic was likely to be regarded a maniacal lunatic, while the schitzoid detached mind could more easily get away with seeming to be a Seer. Each gift of divine madness has its shadow of human psychosis, but in the former case this is more obvious, whilst in the latter case this is more obscured.

The ecstasy was usually spontaneous, but as in the Shamanic inducement of trance, could also be brought on by music, and drumming. Fixing the gaze on a particular object, and not wavering from the intense staring, was also a trigger.

Yet there is something openly, and nakedly, a little crazy about the Ecstatic even when serving God. An aura of the disreputable, the anarchic, the wild, the drunken, clung to these persons. Though popular with poor people, they were not welcome to the 'upholders of decorum.' Saul was looked at askance by 'decent society' for associating with these persons who were regarded as almost like wild animals. You could picture them as Shamanic shape shifters, possessed by the old animal spirits, or they have an ethos of the holy fools who tell uncomfortable truths to the high and mighty, or the sacred clowns who perform obscene gestures at the most sacred rituals; there is something of the wild desert dweller about them, the people living at the 'margins' where human moral and rational organisation breaks down, and a wilderness populated by untameable spiritual forces begins. The ikons of John the Baptist, and Ezekiel, showing fierce men with long, unchecked, dishevelled

hair, tattered and torn robes, burning eyes and unadorned faces, are echoes of the early nebi'im.

The Ecstatic therefore becomes a vehicle of Yahweh in several main respects. Their lack of human restraint, predictability, orderliness, is a state of abandonment to God; their wildness reflects the wildness of God. They were relied upon yet feared, because they are naked to God, with 'no frills', and therefore God 'rushes' through them, like a living breath of wind, and they pass that on directly to people. It was not the Seer, with the second sight and the second hearing, but the Ecstatic, who was the most direct mouthpiece of God.

But this has a more intense extension. The Ecstatic is also not only in-rushed by the breath of God, but also burns with the fire of God. This is more than knowledge, and becomes the love which can ignite even seemingly burnt out wood, or dead stone. If you were next to the burning of a nabi, then you got singed with the burning of God, and that told you how on fire with God's love, and the love of God, you actually were or were not. It is much more uncomfortable to ask if you are on fire 'with' God than to ask for knowledge 'from' God: you can receive the latter, be grateful and venerate it, yet still go back to your old life as it was, but if you are burned by the fire burning in the nabi, then it will flame up in you, and then your old life is over and you are launched into a life 'consumed' by God.

Whereas the Seer conveyed divine knowledge otherwise inaccessible, the Ecstatic's energy conveyed the presence of the divine, coming through with power, and seizing those near the Ecstatic by virtue of seizing him. He is affected by God, wholly, unreservedly, without escape, and thus get near him and let him affect you and you may very well be affected by God in the same passionate way. The nebi'im are the first 'passion bearers', the first 'Spirit bearers.' The Ecstatic warms you as the Seer cannot, but for this to happen, you have to be willing not only to feel the fire of God, but also to be kindled by its flames.

This also means that the Ecstatic does more than convey a message; even their wild gestures have a symbolic significance in revealing God's will for the world of human inter-actions, happenings, events. The Ecstatic conveys a God of energy, of spirit, of movement, of action. He warns people not to take the communications of God only in their head, or merely verbally, as formulae to be held on to like coins safely tucked away in our pocket, but to realise that God is igniting the human heart as the engine of action in and commitment to the world. Indeed, God is changing the human material, cold and dead and static, by sparking it and transforming its very substance. Holiness enters us violently, because we are so resistant to it, yet the heart is able to burn with the fire of Spirit once it gets going.

This new heart and new life, new heart and new spirit, is what the prophets of Yahweh are ultimately conveying to the Jews. The Ecstatic, though often disrespected, and avoided in 'polite company', is in a sense the corrective of the Seer. God's revelation to humanity is not a mere set of verbal messages,

just a set of teachings, just a set of instructions; God's revelation to humanity is-- Fire, and that we can actually burn with this Fire. The Fire is love, and thus its 'sufferings and raptures' are a result of its concern with the world that needs it.

The Fire seeks the heart because every heart must burn so that the world can be sparked.

3,

The Ecstatic seems not to have existed in Babylon, or in Arabia, though the modern Sufi whirling dervishes constitute a gentler version of it. Moreover, the Ecstatic seems not characteristic of the religion of the Jews in the nomadic period. Ecstasy in religion seems originally to have been confined to Asia Minor and Palestine, from where it spread to Greece. Plato's 'Divine Madness' is Asiatic.

Something significant happened in the early monarchal period, once the Jews are settled and oriented to living by agriculture. The early contrast between the Seer and Ecstatic disappeared, and this occurred because the Seer left the scene, or rather seems to have been absorbed entirely into the Ecstatic. The second sight and second hearing became a usual part of the nabi's possession by the breath and fire of God. This evolved Ecstatic is the ancestor of all the prophets, particularly the most fiery ones.

In this convergence, message and fire, Word and Spirit, are united. God delivers new insights and understandings, yet these are only alive to you if you read them as on fire.

Fundamentalists and rationalists have this strongly in common: both grab at the Logos, but exclude the Spirit, and hence the 'message' they are left with is puny, devoid of meaning, surface. You cannot reduce revelation to God 'speaking'; the revelation burns as it speaks. If you fix on the speaking, you lose the burning, and so the word deprived of any spirit is all you are left with in your grasping little palm.

The Ecstatic--Seer converging as the foundation of Jewish prophecy, with the Ecstatic assimilating the Seer, means that the craziness of the nebi'im plays a vital part in the prophetic voice and deed, for it implies that human structure has to be reversed, or overturned, to let in God. 'My Ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts.' This is not the gap supposedly separating God and humanity, but the disturbing reality that what is up to us is down to God, and so on. Much that we value is trash to God, and much that is trash to us is valued by God. God's big is small to us, our big is small to God. The wildness of the Ecstatic insinuates an atmosphere of paradox, of having to be turned upside down and inside out, to get close to God and become enflamed by God.

It is at the very point in time when the dangers of the settled way of life start to creep in that the Ecstatic rises up by the power of Yahweh, to stop the rot,

by bringing not just the heat of the desert, but the existentially 'moving' fire of God, to the Jews.

This inaugurates a new phase in the religion of the Jews. Getting softened up by commerce, trade, and the precursors of capitalism, is suddenly challenged by the most fiery prophecy.

The Ecstatic came to be recognised by the Jews as a human being in whom God dwelt, and through whom God spoke life, action, spirit.

The prophet was a 'man of God', and it was in his burning, not merely in his message, that he could show to the Jews what God was like. A God of love, a God of Righteousness, a God of Redemption, and finally, a Suffering God: a God suffering for love of humanity.

4,

The nabi, and all the nebi'im, for all their craziness in terms of the standards of worldliness -- safe from and secured against God -- were special persons who 'stood for God' in some radical way. They were enthusiasts for Yahweh, and gave up everything to surrender to Yahweh; they followed no human authority, in order to follow God's will.

These wild persons were naked before God and naked before the rest of humanity. No pretence, no barriers, no walls, between you and the truth which is not a verbal procession 'round and about' God, but 'is' God.

These persons of wild abandon fought for Yahweh, against false idols, false gods, false answers, false solutions. They opposed anything that came between the 'all or nothing' relationship between Yahweh and his people, his world, his story.

The prophet knew that all people, all the world, all the story, is 'his', belongs to Yahweh, so that only Yahweh is the ultimate hope.

You might on a sunny day think the gods and goddesses of fertility can 'take care of business', but on the day of trouble, you will discover who your real friends are, and on that day, you will need the Daemonic God in your corner. No other divinity will turn up in the extreme place of trouble. This is when you will know Yahweh is your God because he loves you, and will go to any lengths for you. All the others, human and divine, bail out before that point is reached.

The nabi was 'Yahweh's own' in a fundamental, extreme sense, and it fell to him to insist to all the Jews that they were Yahweh's own as well.

Only later would they learn that those who are Yahweh's are called to give most to those who are not Yahweh's. This is the supreme fire, the fire to come. Its first ecstatic music is sounded at the end of the Exile, as the Messianic Spirit dawns.

[II] The Pre-Exilic Prophets-- Righteousness

1,

The hallmark of the distinctively Jewish nabi was that he had ceased to operate in a group of the nebi'im, but stood alone, and as such, could speak out even if at odds with them. The Jewish nabi becomes a lone wolf. Micah would seem to be the first Jewish prophet to operate independently of the other prophetic persons widespread at that time [I Kings, 22, 5-28]. His story is instructive.

The two kings, Ahab and Jehoshaphat of Judah, want to make war against Damascus. The crowd of local prophets claim that they have been granted a vision of coming Jewish victory. The king of Judah has a funny inkling, and asks if there is any other prophet he can consult. He is told there is one, but his utterances are never what people want to hear.. None the less Micah is summoned, and his first reply to Ahab agrees with the other oracular persons. A victory is guaranteed. But Ahab senses this is not serious, and requires him to tell the truth. Micah then conveys an experience in which he had seen Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd. This could mean that Ahab was going to be defeated and killed. Micah further shocks the assembly by recounting his vision in full. He had seen Yahweh surrounded by attendant spirits, asking them who would go to enter the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, and by giving him a false promise, lure the king to his doom.

This story shows that Yahweh will sometimes use the prophetic spirit to deceive 'influential' people to their ruin. But this is not capricious. It is clear that Yahweh, God of Armies, does not support Ahab's motives for a war of conquest, and glory; war that does not serve justice, and hence has about it no grounding in Righteousness, is repudiated by the Daemonic God. The true fight is nothing like the nasty spats, and vicious hostilities, that humans routinely indulge in; nor is it anything to do with the use of force by one nation to dominate, and steal from, another [as modern Israel is guilty of in regard to Palestine]. An arrogant lack of moral shame for misusing warfare as bullying 'power over the other' always accompanies the wars that are invalid in Yahweh's eyes, heaping on them a double transgression: you do ill, and then you lie about it, to yourself as well as other people.

The Daemonic God fights, and is a warrior, but the gap between true warriorhood and thuggish soldiering is vast. It is the former that Yahweh will support, but the latter receives his anger.

The warrior spirit is rooted in 'anger for truth'; thus, coming from motives such as hatred of rivals, egoic ambition, lust for power, which justify imposing the will of a nation, or a person, on another nation, or another person, is a betrayal of warriorhood, and hence has nothing to do with Righteousness.

Isaiah, further down the road, has a vision in the temple of Yahweh with attending spirits who are 'winged serpents of blazing fire'; these are 'dragon'

beings who manifest the Daemonic God. The attempt to pervert the fighting spirit of the Daemonic for one's own small ends, however grand they may seem, is 'playing with fire' indeed.

2,

Another vital theme of this first run in with a Jewish prophet is Yahweh's harsh treatment of the big people with power and money.

These leaders come in for severe handling, because by their leadership and example, Righteousness stands or falls. The leaders who betray Yahweh betray his purpose for the people, and the world. They block the forward thrust of what Yahweh is doing in time, on the ground, historically and existentially. This is a very foolish stance for any human being to take up, and high status will be no shield against Yahweh who is 'no respecter of persons.' Consistently down the centuries Yahweh shows more sympathy, and forbearance, toward ordinary people than for those ruling over them by virtue of political status and financial clout. The 'top dogs' who wield much authority and are privileged by having much money are in the firing line. 'Wickedness in high places', as St Paul echoes the Jewish prophets, is the worst evil in the world, and far more of a problem than the sins which might be termed everyday. To those who are given more, from them more is required. To have advantage in this world, and use it for selfish benefit rather than as a means to serve one's brothers and sisters, is asking for trouble with the Daemonic God. The poor come in for special compassion, and are a constant rebuke to the pretensions of the high and mighty.

Micah's story is also warning that there are true prophets and false prophets. You can have prophetic gifts, yet somehow abuse them, to mislead those gullible enough to follow you. The 'discernment of spirits' is necessary, right at the beginning of 'spirit possession.' The purification, or cleansing, of the human vehicle of spiritual seeing and spiritual trance is necessary. Not everything that glitters is gold. A prophetic gift not offered to God, and shaped by God, can 'voice' false spirits, or unconscious forces, and not be recognised as such.

Today there is a lot of this non-discrimination. The visionary and ecstatic state has been cheapened.

Distinguishing true from false prophecy is no easy matter. Even Jeremiah is regarded a 'madman' by some of his contemporaries [Jeremiah, 29, 26]. Maybe like art, only time tells what is great and what is merely a temporary splash in the river of time. It is also probably the case that in any era where the people as a whole have little experience of the Spirit, they cannot judge the matter, whilst in an era where the people's relationship to Spirit is stronger, they can judge the matter. In short, maybe you need a good audience not only to arouse, but also be able to evaluate, a good singer.

The people have a responsibility toward their prophets, not just vice versa.

3,

Another feature of prophecy, as it gets going among the Jews, is that the only authority a prophet can fully accept is that which came to him through ecstatic experience. Neither the opinion of others, nor his own opinion, counted; and no worldly station, religious or secular, cowed him. The implication is that to try to impress your views on other people without divine inspiration behind it is presumption.

It is not hard to see why the prophet was a champion to the ordinary people who were under the heel of worldly station, religious and secular, all their lives. The prophetic voice was invariably nothing short of treason to those with vested interests who did not want the boat to be rocked. Only the respect in which the 'divine ecstasy' of the prophet was universally held saved many of them from being put to death [Jeremiah, 38, 1-13], though of course prophets were often heaped with opprobrium by the 'great and good' of their day. No one is so anti-authoritarian, and so little pressured by worldly status, as the prophet.

It is no wonder that the priests who think of themselves as necessary intercessors with an arbitrary divinity resented the unmediated 'hotline' the prophets have to God, for this undermines the priest's hierarchic power by rejecting the claim that only priestly mediation can connect people to God. With the prophet around, the priest loses power, and returns to the humbler role of running the ceremonies people attend, pastorally caring for them in their day to day existence, interpreting the scriptures, preserving the traditions.. This is basically a sacramental role, without any suggestion of the priest having to 'stand between' God and the people. Rather, the priest is chosen by the people, and thus 'stands in' for them, indeed 'stands as' them, in the inner sanctum, offering their soul, and life, including the soul, and life, of everything created which they handle in the everyday, 'back' to God, for God to cleanse, sanctify, bless. This is 'making sacred'; the divine rests on, indwells, and regenerates, people and ordinary existence. This Mystery works via the soul, and is incarnational in impetus and meaning; it enters the soul but passes into the body. The sacraments are ways God comes down to us in our embodied and enworlded situation, to renew our old sick ways of deadness into new healed ways of aliveness, and at the key moment in the ceremony, the priest must stand back, and acknowledge that it is the spiritual power of God, and God alone, who accepts the offering and transforms it. The priest is not a conduit, not a bridge, not a necessary link without which the people have no access to divine power. As their focus, indeed as their 'elder', he simply leads them in making the offering that calls down divine renewal. The offering is made by everyone gathered together and by everything gathered in, and the change of their gift into a healing balm, or healing food, comes to them all no different, and comes to them precisely in their 'unity within diversity.' This is like a conductor leading an orchestra which is playing the music. The priest facilitates this coming together of all people and all things to give their core self up to transformation by the Sacred, but the power of the Sacred does not flow 'through' him. By contrast, the prophet does have a direct line to God, and thus encourages people to

trust their own personal experience of God-- provided they accept the rigours involved in that. The Jews had spiritual leaders, guides, sages, but 'intercession' is a pagan idea rooted in superstitious fear of a dangerous divinity you could neither trust nor love, but needed a virtually magically skilled priest to cajole.

Equally, kings who betrayed their calling to serve and die for the people also resented prophets. King Jehoiakim killed the prophet Uriah [Jeremiah, 26, 23] and this event probably expresses how many kings whom Yahweh pronounced unjust and unrighteous must have felt about many prophets. Even Saul, originally appointed by the prophet Samuel, goes badly off the rails in later life, perhaps because his attitude to ecstasy is wrong; it may be he dabbles with it, not realising the cleansing and purification it requires. Or, it may be he loses his bearings in regard to the calling of kingship. Whatever happened to Saul, his leadership of the people became increasingly imperilled, and his ecstasies degenerated into states of psychotic mania. Something in his relationship to the ecstatic state is badly amiss, which is why he goes to the witch of Endor, and de facto betrays the prophetic meaning of the ecstasy entered by Yahweh. Doubtless this witch is the proponent of the old Middle Eastern Great Mother religion promoting mother-son incest; for a king, not only a prophet, this is a huge regressive step.

4,

Though prophets could foretell the future, their real calling was to understand the mysterious and unknown God in his dealings with his people and the whole world. What was he doing? What was he doing with the Jews? What was he doing with the wider world beyond them? Why had he called the Jews out from the world? Why was he later calling the Jews to return to the world? What was Israel's mission in that world?

The prophet was, like the God who inspired him, a reader of human hearts. He was the earliest psychologist and therapist, seeing and understanding the conflicts and twists, the struggles and distortions, raging in every human heart. The Buddha also saw this heart ground with clarity, but the Jewish prophet's concern was more existential, less ontological. Like Buddha, he taught people that there is a karma governing their deeds-- there is a connection between motive and action, and there is a cause and effect link between true actions and their consequences, just as there is such an unbreakable link between false actions and their consequences. If you act from good motives, the consequences of this will be good, for you and others, but if you act from bad motives, the consequences of this will be bad, for you and others. Indeed, from a more subtle spiritual perspective, crime and its penalty are not two things, with an accidental link, but one and the same thing: the crime you do that harms others harms you, whether you get away with it or not. The same is true for goodness and its felicity: the goodness you pour out to others pours back into you, whether you get thanked or not.

Unlike Buddha, the Jewish prophet pushed the need for differentiation of the heart's motives and actions, and their outcomes, in a direction that

emphasised the differing impacts a true heart or a false heart has upon the destiny of the world. This is not morality as a discipline which curbs me, so I can get into a better state of being; this is not morality as the social glue holding people together. It is a call to arms for the sake of the world.

Righteousness is twofold, in having an outer and an inner that cannot be divided: it fights against everybody and everything pushing the world toward the ruin of its possibility, and it struggles for a heart ground, and heart standing, in the truth only known to the heart. Righteousness is given over to the truth of the world and the truth of the heart, in their binding together.

Righteousness, both outwardly and inwardly, is the fight for nobility. As the expression of the warrior spirit, its more subtle meaning is 'chivalry.' It is a greater protecting and serving a lesser, not a greater exploiting a lesser. This is why the strong abusing the weak is ignoble, and condemned by Yahweh in every form in which it rears its ugly head, from the abandonment of the poor, to the cheating of a worker out of his wages, to the neglect of the widow and the orphan, and the suspicion toward the stranger. The greater does not pridefully 'condescend' to the lesser, as Nietzsche misunderstood it, but offers a genuine hand to them, and uses its strength to rouse the weak to courage, effort, and risk, so that they can become stronger.

Righteousness is the service by the heart towards the world that needs its sacrifice. Nobility is expressed in chivalry, bravery and generosity, and a self-control that knows the difference between bigness and smallness of heart, eschewing the latter to free the former. Such is the warrior spirit that Yahweh respects, and is commended by the prophets to the Jewish people.

The Righteous person is a 'stand up' heart, a pillar of fire, for the protection of the world. Righteousness is a warrior 'standing' in a human heart usually flat on its back, and unable to stand up or step up.

Equally crucial to conveying the meaning of Righteousness is understanding it is neither harsh nor lax on heart failings. It is realistic, not idealistic or romantic; its realism can be compassionate and merciful toward the heart even as it is uncompromising and urges the heart not to give in or give up. This realism is kind to our failings along the way, but it exhorts us not to abandon the hard road for the easy road which takes short cuts and evades everything difficult within and without, so that the heart slides down a slippery slope into a weakness so toxic, it cannot make any steps uphill.

Acknowledging one's failings of heart to God is part of the warrior way, as is being sorry for them. Thus sincerity, honesty, truth in the inward parts, are all crucial to Righteousness.

The false version is called 'Self Righteousness', and this is what every kind of fundamentalism is gripped by without knowing that is so. Self Righteousness is rooted in a false, and non-prophetic, teaching about 'individual rectitude' that has been pursued in Western Christian, and Protestant, tradition, but has

no basis in the Jewish existential and historical understanding that binds person and community, indeed person and world.

[1] Individual rectitude is always harsh and judgemental toward the sin of the other person, because it has no inner honesty about its own sin. This is clear-cut in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, where the former brags about his virtue to God and sneers at the vice of the latter, whilst the latter makes no judgement on anyone but himself, admitting his meanness and cheating to God with tears of genuine sorrow.

[2] Individual rectitude is always exclusionary, its mantra is 'I'm saved, and you're damned', because it feels relieved from its own unacknowledged guilt when condemning the other person. This is clear-cut in the story of the woman taken in adultery and about to be stoned by a morally outraged mob. Yeshua stops them in their tracks with 'let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'

Both these features signify the heart is not in the truth of Yahweh: a heart that becomes judgemental and exclusionary, moralistic and divisive, condemning and deciding who is in and who is out, is lying to Yahweh, itself, others, about its own non standing. There is no humility in this stance, no repentance; such is the conservative, the authoritarian, the fundamentalist. It is but a short step from this fundamental error to falling into the hands of Satan the Accuser.

The modern liberal has fled from Righteousness, the modern conservative has tried to appropriate it for evil ends, and thus has falsified it.

5,

The prophet could see where failures of heart would lead, for all involved, not just the single person. Every deed affects everything and everyone. If you see this ripple effect clearly, it is not so surprising that you can see where things will lead, and are very aware of how 'it will end in tears' when people act from what the Lakota call 'a bad heart.'

Yet this is not like the unconditional laws of science, which relentlessly tick over. Prophecy is conditional, in that it says, 'if you go down this road, there will be those consequences, but if you have a genuine change of heart, and go down a different road, there can be different consequences.' It is not fixed. This is the Semitic heart, not the Greek 'kardiza' which is the 'centre' of our being. The only point of that Greek metaphor is that it reminds us that 'everything passes through the heart', so the heart is central, the engine, of everything. But the Arabic metaphor is more in terms of which the heart can always 'turn over a new leaf.' The heart can change. This is also why it is stupid to be judgemental, or exclusive, about the heart; you cannot fix it in anything static, it is always on the move, and even when humanly stuck, divine help can get it moving again-- and no human can say when the divine will or won't intervene, because no human owns God, or has God's Spirit in their back pocket to dish out only where and when they see fit. Fundamentalists blaspheme, in talking as if they 'know' God, have God

pinned down and boxed in, just because they have misread some mere words of Scripture. No one knows what God is doing, and God does what he wants, with no apologies to humans who are surprised, or upset, because they were idiotic enough to believe they had God figured out. God constantly pulls the rug out from under the Jews, and wrong foots them, to keep them humble, and respectful of God's mysteriousness and unknowability.

A friend= "...the work of Rene Girard shows how the Jewish people are brought through the history of their relationship with God to an ever deeper understanding of the true nature of God.. It is a process, and in the course of this process much that is old and false must be discarded, even though it is enshrined in the earlier sacred texts."

6,

The prophets did not engage in philosophy, including metaphysical philosophy, like the Greeks. Nor did they have theology, mystical [like Eastern Christianity] or rationalistic [like Western Christianity]. They had yokes, too many for any poor human flesh to bear and to endure, as Deuteronomy makes only too evident, but even this has a special meaning. These are not yokes of asceticism, spiritual yogas, nor are they yokes of ethics, moral directives, though they can accrue those rationales along the way. Really, they are signs of loyalty to Yahweh, irrational commitments to an irrational God. They also were necessary in historical context, because early on the Jews were practising a mixed religion with many Canaanite -- Phoenician and Babylonian -- features mixed in with the features genuine to Yahweh. This mixture was tolerated by Yahweh over a very long span of time, from the very beginnings down to the time of Moses and beyond. The plethora of 'observances' with which a Jew is burdened constitutes a way of gradually putting clear blue water between the practices of the Baals and the practices of Yahweh. Quite late the prophets still say to Israel, 'you use the name of Yahweh only, because you worship him as you would a Baal.' Neglecting Yahweh's Righteousness is a major sign of this confusion of wheat and tares.

Neither philosopher nor theologian, the Jewish prophet was a psychological reader of God's heart in dynamic inter-action with the human heart, and the human heart in dynamic inter-action with the world. He revealed how this contention of divine and human hearts was fated to be crucial to the destiny of the contention in the world. The Jews had to be reconciled to God's heart, his intent, will, and passion, to become an instrument of his heart in the world. The Jewish prophet is a 'heart man' -- not a soul man, not a mind man -- and his task is to reveal the heart of God, the heart of humanity, the heart of the world, in their dramatic, agonised and anguished, tragic, and yet finally redemptive, three cornered inter-relation.

Yahweh is 'I'-- 'I am that I am', or 'He who is.' His personhood rests on nothing, and needs no grounding. Yet this personal God 'has a heart', and is passionate. The prophet's calling is to participate in, understanding it as it is forged, the story of God's heart and passion intersecting our heart and

passion in the world where our doings are decisive to what the world becomes.

A psychological reader of 'the heart of every matter', in its bearing on the embodied, concrete, changing, landscape of the here and now but moving from the past into the future-- such is the prophet. The prophet has no interest in Platonic theoria, but is closer to Aristotelian praxis.

God is Personal. God is Love. God is Spirit. These announcements are prophetic revelation. The prophet asks, who is God? What is the 'character' of God? This identity and character is not revealed to us abstractly, in some overview that hardly touches our living fibre, but merely strokes and tantalises the mind; no, it is revealed to us dynamically, as the moving force that has violently seized, and will not release, our dynamic.

Such is the Daemonic God.

He is not the God of philosophers, he is not the God of theologians. He is the breaking and remaking of the heart that returns us to the world, to fight for Righteousness.

He is the truth of all the agony and ecstasy, sorrow and hope, that afflicts the heart.

Throw away Yahweh and you throw away the heartache and restoration of the heart. Throw away Yahweh and you throw away the conundrum of our existence in this world, so vulnerable and so powerful in its affectedness.

7

The prophet's message, whatever its past rooting and future flowering, is addressed to the particular and couched in the circumstances at play there. Though imaginary idols cannot take the place of Yahweh's personalness, love, and spirit, the language of prophecy is radically metaphorical, symbolic, and analogical. The Psalms of David are songs, and many prophetic utterances are in ancient literary forms that are like poetry. There is thus much beauty, mystery, paradox, hidden meaning, subtle resonances, in the prophetic declarations. They are not simplistic commands of the nature 'do this, don't do that.' They are not computer print outs where everything has to be clearly defined, and nothing is left implicit. They are not explanations. They operate on several levels at once, historical, symbolic, existential, spiritual. Mainly they are stories. The prophets tell stories about deep things that cannot be voiced in any other way. They deal not in words, but in the music behind words.

Revelation affects the heart, moving it to tears, shaking its timbers and very foundation. The prophet can 'ponder' in the heart, but is not very reflective, nor speculative, in a Greek sense. The aim is to hit a nail on the head, and so once this is done, there is no logical elaborating, no logical argumentation, no logical analysis. The target is hit, job done, you move on. Your responsibility

is to use poetry to get the arrow that hit your heart to hit the heart of the people. You cannot do more. You are not trying to prove, to demonstrate, to tie up in a package, yet you are trying to communicate by passing on an influence that hit you so that it hits the people. If they cry and laugh, if they rip off their clothes, if they are silenced, they 'got' it. But once the event of communication is over, you do not go away and write its content down. If others want to record it, so be it. You agree with Heraclitus, who was more Asian than Greek, that the spoken logos has a father, while the written logos is -- unless a poet's care is taken -- without a father.

Truth is inductive, proceeding from the specific to the common, but not vice versa. Truth is emergent, over time. Truth is hard won, by the heart and its passion.

Righteousness is the first coming of truth, and as such, is an unfolding reality, locked into unfolding historical clashes and crises. Righteousness is not, however, the end of the story, but is only the means of getting there. A lot turns on this 'only.'

8,

Amos has been called a 'reformer', and this is so, to put it mildly. At his time, the north is more 'civilised' but still a Canaanite and Jewish mix, whilst the hot desert breath still sweeps through the pastoral south and east. The representative of this purer and simpler religion in the early days was Elijah [850 B.C.], who thundered against the ongoing worship of the Baals, as well as conveying Yahweh's insistence upon Righteousness. Though none of Elijah's contemporaries seems to have listened to him, his stand arguably is crucial in paving the way for Amos, who pushes the theme of Righteousness with fervour and vehemence. Amos came from the hills of the far south, and had never been exposed to the temptations of luxury and comfort that gripped the northern kingdom of Samaria, vitiating the land owner and town dweller.

Amos had lived in Nature, and so confronts the artificiality of the city with fresh eyes, not prepared to become complicit with its compromises, and penetrating below the surface. The society in which Amos found himself at Bethel was rotten, and he confronted this head on.

Though the north was growing rich on trade, this brought no relief to the poor, or the lower classes more generally. As usual, there was no 'trickle down' effect. Merchandise from Africa and Asia was flowing through Israel, and Israel was growing fat on taxing it; in this climate there began to flourish some evil plants: making money for its own sake and the profession of money lending both sprouted up. Avarice, greed, possessiveness, were on the rise. In earlier times, the possessor of money would never have profited from his neighbour's misfortunes, but this restraint no longer held, and thus the small farmer who failed to redeem his mortgage lost his land, and became a serf allowed to cultivate it by the new owner, paying a large part of the produce as rent. Land grabbing of this kind is strenuously denounced by Amos, and Isaiah. Amos is particularly scathing about taking the best part of the land's

crops as payment for rent [Amos, 5, 11]. As happens today all over the West, and America is the paradigm, the wealthy have the legal machinery on their side. Thus starts the corruption of justice by 'valid authority', which is no more and no less than the instrument of the rich. This is the crime against Righteousness that Yahweh hits hard, again and again, through Amos. Particularly hit is the venality of the judge who renders injustice 'respectable.' The legality that sanctions injustice is far from Righteousness, indeed is its main enemy. Amos is no friend of big money, nor of the rulers and judges who are in its pocket, doing its bidding, however much the laws and rules allow them to do so. These seemingly 'good and decent' persons in legal authority are the prototypical example of the 'whited sepulchres' whom Christ denounced. In Yahweh's eyes, they are criminals, and evil doers, though they regard themselves as the best, the most successful, the winners, islands of probity in a sea of inferior people who are the worst, the losers.

Hand in hand with the oppression of the poor by the powerful and wealthy went the shallowness of their 'life style.' Selfish and shameless women, ostentatious decoration of homes, jingoism and nationalistic conceit -- rally round the flag extreme patriotism, judging one's own country as superior to others -- are all blasted. By implication, military adventures rooted in blind patriotism are to be rejected. 'My country right or wrong' is incompatible with Righteousness.

Some of the fiercest condemnation that Amos delivers hot from Yahweh is directed at the religious worship which continues in the face of all these injustices, exerting no challenge to them. At one point Yahweh declares that the whole of Jewish worship displeases him. Amos, 5, 21-24= "I hate and despise your feast days, and the incense of your solemn assemblies stinks in my nostrils. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your music. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." Prayer, from the individual or from the congregation in the temple, that ignores and by implication condones a corrupt and tyrannical social structure is repudiated by Yahweh. Such human praying is not from the heart, and it does not touch God's heart; on the contrary, it adds to Yahweh's anger. People need to stop using the sacred temple, or the ascetic desert, as a shelter where they can escape from 'social sin'; instead, they need to rise up and confront it, and overturn it.

Abraham Heschel= "A mighty stream, expressive of the vehemence of a never ending, urging, fighting movement, as if obstacles had to be washed away for justice to be done.. Justice is not a mere norm, but a fighting challenge, a restless drive" [pp 271-272, 'The Prophets']. "...what is required is a power that will strike and change, heal and restore, like a mighty stream bringing life to the parched land. ...righteousness is God's power in the world, a torrent, an impetuous drive, full of grandeur and majesty. The surge is choked, the sweep is blocked. Yet the mighty stream will break all dikes" [p 272]. "God's concern for justice grows out of his compassion for man. The prophets do not speak of a divine relationship to an ..absolute idea.. called

justice. They are intoxicated with the awareness of God's relationship to his people and to all [humanity]" [p 276]. "Justice is not important for its own sake.. For justice is not an abstraction, an invariant principle. ..Justice exists in relation to a person and is something done by a person. An act of injustice is condemned, not because the law is broken, but because a person has been hurt.. 'You will not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will hear their cry.. If he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate' [Exodus, 22, 22-23; 27]."

9,

In America, as elsewhere in the Western capitalist world that so closely resembles the northern kingdom of Israel, an Amos would be considered not only a rebel, un-American, unpatriotic, but probably a terrorist as well. A modern Amos would be behind bars, or in the cemetery, in America. The insistence on communal fairness, in terms of financial dealings, would no doubt earn Amos the title of 'socialist, communist, Marxist' and similar nonsense.

As Micah will later say, burning with revolutionary ardour, in regard to Judah, the iniquitous rich must be overthrown for justice to be done.

As God's mouthpiece, the more subtle attack that comes through Amos, which links all the political, financial, legal, social, failings he audaciously targeted, is that people are putting outer masks of rightness over inner iniquity. In short, what things seem to be -- fine and dandy -- hides what they really are. Things are bad, but they are presented as if they were good. Outer show, without inner substance, is the norm, so it must be all right to go along with it. America is tyrannical and corrupt, a very model of injustice, in reality-- yet the image everyone pays homage to has America as the world's last hope, the light on the hill, the comfort of the poor and oppressed. America is the world's chief impediment to justice, there is a darkness in America beneath the surface that is tangible and weird, America spits on her poor and subjugates her oppressed. The 'land of the free and home of the brave' is a place of rampant conformity, and jittery nervousness. Sitting Bull said, 'Americans are great liars.' What would Amos make of a country that has genocidally murdered 12 million native inhabitants declaring itself a beacon to other nations?

A whole people lying to themselves about what they are up to, a corrosive social hypocrisy, and revisionist history, is what Amos, the warrior prophet of Yahweh, is attacking. Modern Israel, no less than ancient Israel, is in this exact position, as are so many 'advanced' countries. It is worse to say you are good and continue under that cloak to do evil; better to just admit you are a bully and a cheat, and get on with it.

In a nation such as Amos decries, nothing gets through to the conscience. No honest critic can get a hearing. Yahweh's passion for Righteousness is disregarded, and religion as a personal and spiritual relationship with the Holiness of God is lost.

The sin within, and the crime without, were hardly connected, nor were the disasters befalling Israel recognised as a consequence of the nation's sickness of spirit. Worse, Amos implied, was a kind of resulting spiritual starvation, by the atrophy of the people's spiritual faculty.

Nor was Amos demanding a return to an earlier nomadic and pastoral way of life that had passed, but he was arguing that Yahweh be involved in farming and trade. Yahweh had made the whole universe, the earth and the sky were alike the outcomes of his creativity, and all human history was his concern. He was not interested only in Israel, but also in other peoples and nations as well [Amos, 3, 2]. Yahweh upheld criteria of common humanity for all the different tribes of people. His special relationship to Israel meant not the right to do wrong, but the responsibility to do right. It was Israel which had to adapt to the universal humanness, not Yahweh who must be pre-occupied with the material advantage of Israel. If the Jews failed in this, then they would lose their only rationale for existing, and far from protecting them, Yahweh would himself destroy Israel.

In Amos it becomes clear that Israel has a mission to all the world, as the bearer of Yahweh's passion for Righteousness. Amos therefore is telling the Jews that they must embody this Righteousness in all walks of life, religious, political, social, financial-- or perish. In the absence of a change of heart, and reform of the entire community, the earth's forces would be marshalled by Yahweh to lay waste to Israel. Foreign enemies, and captivity, would complete the ruin of Israel.

The Day of Yahweh would reveal the God of Righteousness, not necessarily the God of Israel. Amos saw no hope for Israel, as the chance for reform was ignored. After Amos, things went from bad to worse.

10,

But a time comes when Righteousness is complicated by Redemption.

This is poetically and mysteriously laid out by the unknown prophet in the Book of Isaiah, operating at the time of the Jewish Exile in Babylon, in the 4 'Slave Songs of Yahweh.' In these strange oracles, the Messianic King is Reversed, Inverted, like the Sacred Clown or Holy Fool, or Hanged Man. He is abased, rejected, spat on; he is made to suffer for all the people, to redeem them. The Righteousness that stands for Truth also Sacrifices itself for Love. Thus in the Messianic King, truth and love are reconciled.

To rule, the king must serve.

To complete his mission to the afflicted, he must be afflicted with what afflicts them.

The Upright is undergirded and undermined by Depth.

This is a strange story: introducing into the old story of the fight for history, a new and unexpected wildcard in the deck.

The Sword and the Cross-- the necessary contradiction, of fighting for the people and dying for the people.

The calling of the 'royal heart and its bloody passion' to the protection, and redeeming, of the entire world.

HEALING AND REDEMPTION

Healing is part of Redemption, but Redemption is more than Healing.

Many modern people turn to healing as a secular substitute for redemption. In doing this, they reduce healing to one of several equally unsatisfactory options. You can fix the ego= this is CBT, RET, and similar. Or you can free and expand the self= this is Jungian, Rogerian, Humanistic= Individuation, Self Realisation, Self Actualisation. Though self is deeper than ego, it still falls short of heart, and strangles the soul.

The Old Testament prophet Hosea answers what healing is vis a vis redemption. Hosea understands it Daemonically.

This is one of the clearer statements of 'The Wound Inflicted By the Daemonic God.'

Hosea, 5, 9--6, 6=

"I pronounce certain doom for the house of Israel.
..I mean to pour my anger out on them like a flood.
Ephraim is an oppressor, he tramples on justice,
So set is he on his pursuit of nothingness.
Very well, I myself will be the moth of Ephraim,
The canker of the House of Judah.

Ephraim has seen how sick he is
And Judah the extent of his wound,
..I mean to be like a lion to Ephraim,
like a young lion to the House of Judah;
I, yes, I, will tear to pieces, then go my way,
I will carry off my prey, and no one can snatch it from me.

Yes, I am going to return to my dwelling place until they confess their guilt
and seek my face; they will search for me in their misery.

'Come, let us return to Yahweh. He has torn us to pieces, that he may heal
us;
he has struck us down, but he will bind us up;
after two days he will revive us,
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live in his presence.
Let us press on to know Yahweh;
that he will come is as certain as the dawn;
he will come to us as showers come,
like spring rains watering the earth.'

What am I to do with you, Ephraim?
What I am to do with you, Judah?

This love of yours is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that quickly disappears.
This is why I have torn them to pieces by the prophets,
why I slaughtered them with the words from my mouth,
since what I want is love, not priestly offerings;
knowledge of God, not priestly sacrifices.”

Our sickness is Daemonic in two senses= in worshipping false gods, we fall ill and enter the sickness unto death. But we reckon this state of little consequence= we think it can be cured, it can be fixed. God does us a big favour= he uses the affliction of woundedness to heal sickness, he uses the death of strickenness, of being torn to shreds, to heal deadening.

The wound God inflicts in sickness is to cure us of the false gods we seek. If we realise our sickness is the flood of God’s wrath sweeping over us, then we can make the turn-around in sickness= we use our woundedness, our death, to let go of the false gods we worship, and return to God.

By this, a wound heals sickness, a death heals deadness.

We are healed to return not only to God, but to take up again God’s summons to the fight for justice in the world. The foretaste of Christ is obvious= we are under God’s displeasure for 3 days, even as Christ was in the tomb for 3 days. Our resurrection is not to heaven, but to the Daemonic journey and battle for the earth.

This is what God blesses, like rain falling on parched ground.

The Thunder Being of the Lakota also, as with the Daemonic God, ‘comes fearfully, but brings the healing rain.’

HASIDISM AS MESSIANIC

From 'Judaism', I. Epstein, 1974

Safed Mysticism

Isaac Luria [1514-72], called the 'Ari' [the Lion], and the chief figure in the Safed school of mysticism, said that after the 'breaking of the vessels' -- a kind of cosmic Fall -- good and evil became mixed up in everybody; hence, there is no evil that does not contain an element of good, nor is there a good entirely free from evil.

This malaise of cosmic fragmentation and human confusion will not last, but will come to an end with the advent of the Messiah who will be sent by God to restore 'the original harmony', both to the souls of men and to the whole cosmos.

Concern for the redemption of self must be considered as only part of the greater concern for the redemption of the whole of the creation. Safed mystics, whilst seeking to attain self-perfection and to promote the salvation of their own individual souls, never lost sight of the great universal tasks set before them in relation to all humanity and all the creation; indeed, they saw individual progress in spirituality -- brought on by asceticism, study, prayer, devotional practices [yogas] -- as generating the greater spiritual power that would enable them to speed on the Messiah's coming. The Messianic universal redemption was the goal of the Safed mystics.

Faith in the final redemption to come, coupled with their conviction that their contribution to it was effective, filled them with joy.

The delight of God's splendor will heal the world; it will grow strong and rejoice everlastingly.

For the Safed mystics, the universe is a closely knit system in which all parts are interdependent upon each other. Thus, even a thought, and certainly a word, and most certainly a deed, affects the fabric in which all beings and things are joined together. Indeed, for the Hasids, human deeds of love and redemption affect the spiritual worlds, as well as the material plane of existence. Human beings have the power to kindle the sparks of divine flame hidden in everything.

Hasidism

Hasidism started in the middle of the 1700s, in the Ukraine, and spread to other parts of Eastern Europe, like Poland. Some see Hasidism -- the name comes from the Hebrew term *hasidut*, meaning 'allegiance' -- as a revolutionary break from the Rabbinical Judaism dominant since before the time of Christ. It built on Safed Mysticism and the Kabbala [which had such an impact on Christian mysticism from the Reformation onwards].

'God requires the heart' is the main Biblical teaching stressed by Hasidism. The founder was the Baal Shem Tov [1700-60], a legendary figure. Hasidism addressed the despair and degeneracy into which the ordinary Jewish people had sunk, by not putting the hope in redemption only in the future, but by stressing the redemptive power of God in the present, and in everyday life. Every moment is a moment of redemption. There is going on here and how a process of redemption, and no one needs any qualifications to participate in it. All you need is a heart willing to cleave to God and enter communion with him. Let each person follow these divine volitions of the heart and they will help bring about redemption, and via this, heal their own soul and their own body. Communion with God is prayer, but prayer recited in ecstatic fervour in which the person forgets self and concentrates all energies on God. Strong bodily movements, chanting, dancing, are used in ecstatic prayer. Hasidism rejected Luria's asceticism= eat, drink, be merry, live joyfully. Hasidism feared sadness – though some of its most famous leaders struggled in melancholy – as a sign of having lost contact with the light of God that penetrates everywhere and through everything. There are sparks of God everywhere and in everything. Physical matter itself is therefore a thing of great worth and value, to be enjoyed. The pleasures of life are manifestations of the divine, and to enjoy them as such requires us to reconnect them to God, to release the hidden sparks to ascend.. Serve God by earthly things, including all kinds of work, not just by spiritual activities like prayer and study of the Bible. TAKE JOY IN LIFE!

Evil, in Hasidic teaching, is relative, not absolute. It is a lower grade of the good, and in fact, without the Divine Energy that is Light and Fire, evil could not even exist. God gives evil its vitality, in the ultimate, because all things, beings, processes, lean on God and draw from God. Thus, there is no harshness toward human sin. On the contrary, there are always extenuating reasons for man's weakness in falling into sin. The sinner should never despair of transgression. This emphasis in Hassidism was in order to stress the nearness of God and God's redemptive activity as an ongoing power in the affairs of humans; and it was also to uplift the spirit of the people, living in conditions of demoralisation, raise their self-esteem, and inspire them in struggling for virtue, as well as encouraging them to act redemptively. Respect for God – the meaning of the Biblical term 'fear' – had to be conjoined with love of God, trust in God, joy in God. Trust in God's goodness- - and do not fear God as the Satanic Accuser of mankind, but mankind's Redeemer. "My redeemer liveth." Surrender to God's will-- and do not expect to be let down, betrayed, fooled. Remain unshaken, firm, constant, amidst all the griefs and tragedies of life.

The message of Hasidism was as much social-ethical as 'religious.' Great stress is placed on the love of mankind. All human beings, irrespective of their merits and qualities, must be loved. Even sinners and evil-doers must be loved, for they too have in them sparks of divinity; so must a personal enemy be loved, like the dearest friend. Love can only fulfill itself through humility, for "only the truly humble person in heart will not feel it a hardship to love one of the wicked." Other virtues flow from humble love-- usefulness, charity in

judgement, peaceableness, and especially truthfulness in word and deed, integrity, honesty, and sincerity in all dealings with fellow human beings.

The spiritual master was called 'zaddik', meaning 'the tested', the person fully 'checked out' by existence. The zaddik's main task was to redeem evil. Unlike the 'rabbi' distinguished by huge reading, vast knowledge, immense intellectual attainments, the zaddik had charismatic gifts and supernatural power. They did strange and startling things, like the heyoka or sacred clown, or holy fool. The zaddik took on himself the whole weight of the people's sorrows and anxieties; he would pray for them, strengthen them, fill them with new faith, courage, hope. Some of the prayers of the zaddiks manifest a daring intimacy with God. They told many teaching stories; this rich heritage of spiritual tales has been collected and commented upon by Martin Buber [1947, 1948], and has spread round the world [like the Zen stories, Sufi stories, Desert Stories, Indigenous stories, and so on]. Buber's books on Hassidism [1948; 1965] are almost as well known.

Each zaddik makes a specialty of a particular quality, or activity. These include -- fervent devotions; ecstatic visions; psychic powers; heavenly purity; miraculous works; intense humility; resolute trust in God; boundless charity; self-effacing love; compassion for sinners. Pinchas of Koritz [d. 1792] declared that we should love the evil-doer more in order to compensate for the lack of the power of love he himself has caused in his place in the world.

In worship this community expresses itself in fellow-feeling of common helpfulness and concern. The Hasids are like one family, ever ready to assist each other in their need, and sharing each other's misery as well as joy.

"The heart is the life of the world" [Nachman of Bratzslav, 1772-1811; see his story about the mountain, the fountain, and the world's heart.]

Some Hasids addressed God as 'Tatenyu'-- Darling Father.

The Jews were the Messianic people, and so on them was laid the task of working for social justice, human cooperation, universal brotherhood-- this vision was shared by Jewish Mystics and Hasids alike.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

1,

It is worth repeatedly emphasising the point, echoing William Blake, that the Western Christian doctrine of 'Atonement' -- rooted in Augustine of Hippo, Anselm, John Calvin -- is Satanic. The way in which Christ, as the son of God, is portrayed as 'atoning' for human sin to the angry father God, by taking the punishment humans deserve and which God has almost gleefully reserved for them, is so totally false, it is beyond repair. This doctrine misunderstands God, Christ, sin, and atonement itself.

Satan the Accuser is 'the case for the prosecution' against the human venture; his nit picking legalism, and his harsh judgementalism, are such as to render untellable the real story of Christ as the 'advocate for the human venture' whose sacrifice has regenerated us, giving us a second chance in a depth where the first chance ended in ruin. The Cross is a deed of love, and the drama it enacts is a drama of love. 'No greater love has any man than that he lay down his life for his friends.' Even Jewish Atonement does not fully plumb, or fathom, this ultimate mystery of dying for those we love.

Western Atonement, however, is far smaller than Jewish Atonement. It is false not just in its teaching, but more importantly, mean, narrow, hateful, in spirit.

It has to be acknowledged that not all Western Christians believe in the Western Christian Atonement in its most ugly form that occurs amongst the fundamentalists; some have tried to water it down; some have tried to ignore it. Hopefully the majority of Western Christians feel and intuit the drama of divine love for humanity that is implicit in the Cross, even if they have no language for talking about what they see with their inward eye. At stake is what it really means that Christ died on the Cross for humanity. What does his sacrifice mean? Is it only about human sin? Is there a divine retribution coming to humanity for our sin? Does Christ suffer this repayment for sin aimed at us, so we are let off the hook?

Or are all these traditional beliefs not just in error, but Satanic in William Blake's sense that they read into the greatest and deepest deed of love 'for' humanity a scenario marked by fear and mistrust verging on the superstitious, moralistic and judgemental condemnation, vengeance and hate thinly disguised as a legal and juridical necessity.

We have to go back to the ancient Jews to get a less twisted account of 'Atonement.' Then we have to go even deeper, to excavate, by digging and delving, the true meaning of what is new in the Cross of Christ that is not present even in the Jewish Atonement.

In the services of Passion Week, this is declared: "Mankind is not made for destruction."

Jewish Atonement is healthy, whilst the Western Christian doctrine of Atonement ostensibly raised on its base is sick.

2,

The Jewish Day of Atonement is a festival held on the tenth day of the seventh month. As everyone knows, in Hebrew it is called Yom Kippur. It is described as a day of soul searching and heart afflicting, a day of painful self-examination. The Jew on this day is made hyper conscious of the need to amend their life and deeds, in order to be reconciled to God and reconciled to the community. If we really confront our sin, all the glamour and rationalisation surrounding it falls away, and we see we are living a lie, and realise this lie divides us from God and divides us from the community, leaving us in a state of 'separation' rather than 'connection.' Being sorry about what has gone very sour engenders the impulse to want to rectify it. It is not that we want 'to get in the right' so as 'to get out of the wrong', rather, we want to make things right. To amend means, to free from faults, 'to restore to a sound, or healthy, state after decay, injury, or destruction', as one Jewish writer puts it. Amending things means a transformation of attitude, or stance, for the better. We call this, a 'revolution in soul', or 'a change of heart.' Its aim is to reform, to improve, not as any end in itself, but to return to relationship with God, and to return to relationship with the community. It means, to stop being part of the problem, and start being part of the solution.

The whole issue is not about how good or bad we are as an isolate individual, but what togetherness we have intentionally or unintentionally destroyed, by 'thought, word, or deed, wittingly or unwittingly', as the Eastern Orthodox Christian prayer just before Holy Communion puts it. Sin exerts its power of separation until we receive forgiveness from the people we have harmed, and grant forgiveness to the people who have harmed us. For the most loving ethos of this holy day is the acknowledgement that 'all have sinned', no one is without sin, and thus everyone is in the same position of needing to be forgiven and needing to forgive.

There is a tacit optimism in all this sorrowing over what has been spoiled. The impulse to want to reassemble the shattered fragments expresses faith that what has gone astray can be mended. This is not the fundamentalist view that regards sin as so powerful, only the most unilateral divine means can surgically remove it, with human willingness making no contribution to this removal. The Jewish view is that people can turn over a new leaf, and grow in love, righteousness, wisdom, despite being 'a great sinner.' The Old Testament provides countless examples of such a process of 'conversion.' Confessing our sin to Yahweh allows God to take the leading hand in overcoming it, but we play a part in this, and the outcome is we are helped to live with a renewed integrity.

Thus at the end of Yom Kippur, every Jew regards themselves as 'absolved' by God, returned, reconciled. They are able to start again. This is far from the

Satanic belief that we are so sunk in sin that no seed or spark of new growth in goodness remains alive in us.

People fast and pray on this day. It is a day of rest, no work is to be done. Wearing white clothing symbolises purity. In reality, the entire wrestling with sin is a process of purification. The day before, two feasts are held, and charity is given. The fruit of repenting and mending is a more forgiving, less condemning, attitude toward human failure: "May all the people of Israel be forgiven, including all the strangers who live in their midst, for all the people are in fault."

No one is spared being 'in fault', yet it is because all are in fault that all need forgiveness. Thus sin, with its exclusivity, is overturned by a new inclusivity. We are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution.

3,

To want to make amends, to seek to make reparation, for what one has done that is harmful, is the original and still valid meaning of 'the action of atoning.' Atoning follows from repentance. If you are genuinely able to perceive the harm you have done to people who matter to you, then you humanly want to 'make it better', because you want to restore the relationship with these people. Atoning in the one who has done harm can then be matched by forgiveness in the one who is harmed, and thus they can reconnect, and live in accord. Among the Jews, it is clear beyond dispute that the day set aside for repenting and atoning, and asking for forgiveness, was aimed at the restoration of communal 'sobornost', as the Russians call it. Sinful actions broke apart the community in its binding of human to God, and broke apart the community in its binding of human to human. Sin thereby threatened to tear to shreds the whole covenant of Israel with God. The key to the truer meaning of repentance, atonement, forgiveness, is that this spiritual trinity constitutes the means to preserve 'togetherness'-- the people's togetherness with God and the people's togetherness with one another. The primal meaning of sin among the Jews is that it is a way in which people lose togetherness with God and lose togetherness with each other, by lapsing into egoic, selfish, individualistic, modes of action that seek individual advantage at the cost of communal disadvantage. The injustice that Yahweh will not tolerate in any humans, but especially in his chosen people, is precisely that situation where the individual, or a small group of individuals with a vested interest, work against the togetherness that constitutes the very rationale of 'justice.'

Justice recognises that we live together, need to be able to depend upon each other, and thus everyone must carry their weight, and make their contribution. You carry burdens for my sake, I carry burdens for your sake; each of us, and all of us, pay for the benefit of living together. Sin means I put my burden down, and so you must carry it; or you put your burden down, and so I must carry it. But sin also means some people 'organise' this human interdependence such that they can hugely profit from it whilst others hugely lose out from it. This aspect of sin is betraying the neighbour, but in doing

that, we also betray God, for it is impossible in a more fundamental sense to love God and betray the neighbour, or to love the neighbour and betray God. Love of God and love of neighbour are flip sides of the same coin. Loving the neighbour is loving God, and loving God is loving the neighbour. A mysticism cut off from social concern is not Jewish. St Maximos briefly summarised this double necessity of love, suggesting that sin against God blocks union with him, by putting self-love in the place of love's ex-stasis, whilst sin against neighbour tyrannises over him, by putting self-will in the place of love's co-operativeness. However the heads and tails of love is expressed, the foundation of Jewish religion is that both the mystical and the social are bound together.

People are sorry for betraying togetherness in its double meaning toward God and toward neighbour, want to repair the torn threads, and ask for forgiveness, out of love. When the Western Christians start speaking of 'right and wrong', and God keeping accounts of our score in how many times we hit the target of right and how many times we press the bell of wrong, then you know you are in the territory of the Satanic Anti-Christ. In this sulphurous place there is no love-- no love for God, no love for neighbour, and instead of 'dealing with sin' to restore and hence increase love towards God and increase love towards neighbour, you get a sort of individualistic, and moralistic, race in which each individual is trying to amass gold stars, and avoid black marks, in their copy book. It becomes a competition, the aim being to outdo your fellows in how much rectitude you can attain, while they slide down the slippery slope of wrongfulness. 'Jesus loves me, and hates you' is the title of an actual Country and Western song from the fundamentalist parts of America.

But there is more to this high-jacking of Atonement by the worshippers of the Satanic Judge and Jury.

4,

It's when the Latin mentality confuses atoning with 'expiation' that the real trouble starts.

To expiate means 'to make satisfaction' in a legal sense. There is a wrong, and it creates an injury or offence, and so that injurious offence or offending injury, must be 'satisfied' by some kind of payment by the offending or injuring party. They must 'repay.' The repaying mollifies the injured or offended party, by 'making up' for the injury or offence. The repayment required from the injuring or offending party might be money or property of some kind-- to 'compensate' the harmed for the harm you did; or it might be punishment of some kind-- you hurt someone, so you must be hurt in return; or it might be loss of some kind-- you caused someone to lose something precious to them, so you must lose something precious to you. Tit for tat. The scales of legal justice are rebalanced. Order is restored.

Though this is normalised, and rationalised, as 'only fair' -- it is fair that if you do wrong, then you must be wronged in some similar way in order to put it

right -- it is in reality our human demand for vengeance. We resent the wrong doer, and so in demanding their wrong be put right, we want them to get hit just exactly as we got hit. This is merely 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' If that man violently attacked somebody, then he should be violently attacked-- or its equivalent. You hit me, I hit you back. Quid pro quo.

The restoring of relationships with God and with neighbour gets not even a look in. This 'demand for satisfaction' is retaliation, no more and no less. If such a demand breaks any chance of ever restoring relationships that have been broken and need to be restored, so what? The glee of getting satisfaction far outweighs the joy of restoring relationship.

This demand for school ground fairness can become excessive, and grisly-- we decide to hold the rapist down, and cut off bits of his anatomy, slowly and cruelly, making us in the end more sadistic and violent than the criminal was in their crime. 'Pay back' satisfies a primitive demand for parity, but if it goes overboard, we become no different to those we are punishing. Yet showing restraint in punishing them can mask the extent to which we would like to do to them what they did to us, or to someone we care about.

The demand for reward and punishment to be dished out to those who do right and those who do wrong is at best a four year old child's notion of justice, and at worst, it is an outer legal form that contains an inner revengeful substance. 'Judge not, lest you be judged' is dismissed. 'I came not to judge but to redeem the world' does not register. Legalism and judgementalism, answering the child's demand for fairness, are opposed to redemption, in process and spirit. It was legality and judgement which sent Christ to the Cross.

But worse is to come. Expiation also means 'to appease', 'to propitiate.' This tells the other part of the ugly Satanic story. Appeasing or propitiating takes the place of atoning, or putting it differently, atoning is distorted, twisted, degraded, into appeasing or propitiating God. This is fearing, rather than loving, God, and it precludes any genuine repentance or honest sorrow for one's harmful actions, on the one hand, and it precludes any authentic impulse to make redress or repair the damaged situation, on the other. All people who feel they must appease and propitiate their 'god' are in exactly the same dire spiritual and psychological state of superstitious terror as the Near Eastern pagans the Jews came out of through Abraham. You fear what your capricious and dangerous tribal deity will do to you, and so to keep them 'on side', you kow tow to them, and give them whatever they demand as recompense for you getting out of step with them, and rousing their ire. This is a 'transaction', virtually a trade-off-- I will do X [whatever you demand, ritual or moral], if you will do Y [spare me from your retribution]. There is no personal relationship to God when he must be appeased and propitiated; there is no love for God, no trust in God, no faith that God 'chastises those he loves.' He warns them not to continue down a road that, however superficially attractive, is deeply toxic; he also shapes up those he roughs up, as the Cretan novelist Nikos Kazantzakis realised, when saying that he liked the times in his life of suffering, trouble, trials, because they showed that God had

faith he could pull through, and was seeking to strengthen him. Tough love toughens our sloppy and lazy ways with all the relationships that matter -- to God, to others, even to ourself -- and readies us for our calling to the wider world.

Consequently, whenever the language of expiation replaces atonement, and instead of making reparation to restore relationship, we appease and propitiate, kow towing to an authoritarian, non-personal and non-loving, tin pot dictator masquerading as 'god', then Satan has arrived, and Christ is far away.

5,

The very worst is when the priest acquires 'unique expiatory power' to intercede for the people with the deity threatening to tear them apart for the things they have done to stir up his anger. This makes the priest a special figure, above the people, with authority over them, and high status in a religious hierarchy of power.

Such a priesthood is rooted in fear of a deity that cannot be related to personally and lovingly; the relation to the deity is not reverent yet trusting, rather, it is suspicious and basically superstitious. I fear what I don't know, and fear what the unknown will do to me. Only if there is someone who knows the necessary rituals, objects, charms, that can fend off what could happen will I be safe. This someone is the priest. Only he can perform the rigmarole for keeping the unknown sweet. So, I will do whatever he says; after all without him I, and everyone, would be exposed to who knows what divine terrors.

This is precisely how the pagan priesthood of the Near East operated. The priest is the only one who has the magical skills necessary to appease and propitiate the unpredictably angry deity upon whom the tribe depends for protection, fertility, and other tangible benefits of day to day existence. Thus only he can 'intercede' for the people with this local god. Should a priest refuse to be the necessary 'go between', the common people might very well end up getting the full blast of divine disapproval.

Hence, just as expiating is not atoning, equally false is the claim that any priest has the unique power to atone for people. Without his intervention on their behalf, the people would be rejected by deity.

Certain words become so perverted, they cease to be useable; 'intercession' is such a word. It has acquired all the superstitious and magical baggage of pagan priesthood. It means that the priest is necessary, because without his intercession, there can be no getting the people off the hook. They cannot get themselves off the hook. Only the priest can intercede on their behalf, so they do not have to pay an outrageous price for whatever wrong they have done to an unapproachable supernatural being.

No Jewish priest intercedes in this sense. Nor does the Eastern Orthodox Christian priest. Rather, he 'stands in' for the people, representing them in all ritual action conducted in the sacred ceremonies. If the people do not attend the ritual, the ceremonial action cannot go ahead. The priest has only three roles: a sacramental role, a teaching role, a pastoral role. To impute anything else to any priest is error.

Even the Jewish High Priest -- Kohen Gadol -- who goes into the sanctuary of the temple only once a year -- the Holy of Holies -- is not 'interceding' in the usual Western Christian sense. It is true no one else can enter the holiest place, and he must ritually cleanse himself to do this. But this is a mark of respect, of awe, for the place where Holiness dwells. It once dwelt on a mountain, now it dwells in the temple's inner most sanctum, symbolising the invisible world of heaven and spirits, while the outer part of the building symbolises the visible world of materiality and humans. The temple is being purified, at its mysterious core, to make it a fit vehicle of the coming, or showing forth, of the heavenly king and all his hosts of spiritual beings. The High Priest receives this vision, and it makes his face shine, like Moses' countenance shone coming down from the meeting with God on Mount Sinai. Even the confessing of sins, privately by the congregation, and publically by the priest, is not only 'returning to God', but is a cleansing of all the people so that they too can share in the vision of God enthroned in heaven, and surrounded by his kingdom.

This vision of the heavenly and spiritual realm above, invited to dwell in the human and material realm below, so that any breach between them is overcome, is the real point of Yom Kippur, and there are, according to the investigations of Margaret Barker [2007], a number of Biblical passages where the light of God that is disclosed to the High Priest and all the people he represents, has transformative, even transfiguring, effects on those who behold it. This light from above raises what is below; it heals; it beautifies; it enlivens; it bestows mystical knowledge; it 'saves.' "Yahweh is my light and my salvation" [Psalms, 27, 1]. "In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favour is like the clouds that bring the spring rain" [Proverbs, 16, 15]. "Let us walk in the light of Yahweh" [Isaiah, 2, 5]. "Lift up the light of thy face upon us, O Yahweh" [Psalms, 4, 6]. "Yahweh will be your everlasting light" [Isaiah, 60, 20]. "Send out thy light.., and let [it] lead me, let [it] bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling" [Psalms, 43, 3]. David describes seeing the beauty of Yahweh, and seeking his face; the radiance, and glory, of the light is the face of God which shines on all those who see it. The same link between life and light is made by St John as regards Christ= "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" [John, 1, 4]. St Paul echoes the same theme= "And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another" [2 Corinthians, 3, 18]. The one who sees light reflects it, becoming a mirror in which it can be seen by others.

Yom Kippur recognises that the people's collective sin blocks off the light of God from living in their community, and throws them all into a darkness without life, beauty, healing, mystical knowledge. In short, people must be fit

to receive this presence of the divine, and if they are sinful, then they are 'not in place' where it can get through to them. Isaiah reiterates this point in a number of ways; through him Yahweh declares: "They seek me daily.. as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God [that calls them to do righteousness]" [Isaiah, 8, 2]; "Your sins have hid his face from you" [Isaiah, 59, 2]; "We look for light, and behold darkness" [Isaiah, 59, 9]. Yet Isaiah also expresses the hope that the light, and the glory, of Yahweh will return to the restored city [Isaiah, 60, 1-2].

David sums up this mystery of the Holy of Holies at the core of the temple= "Let thy face shine, that we may be saved" [Psalms, 80, 3]. There is a double meaning in this. On the one hand, the light is obscured by sin, yet on the other hand, the light also delivers us from sin. An equation exists here, which is Eros, the right hand of God: Vision—Life—Light—Beauty—Knowledge—Salvation. This light protects against the human experience of 'darkness' [absence of divine illumination] wherein there is blindness, sickness, distortion, ignorance, and unrecognised and unopposed demonic power playing on human fallibility to guide it into ever more pronounced 'wickedness.' We stagger around in this darkness, 'not knowing what we do', as Christ said of all of us who crucified him; we bump into things, with hardly a glimpse of 'what is what', becoming constantly victim to 'what is not what.' We live in fantasy, and are asleep; we are in denial about and unawake toward reality. The coming of divine light -- the light that enlightens every person who enters this world, says St John in the fourth gospel, implying the accuracy of the Buddhist teaching that we are inherently enlightened, but lose this over the course of our life -- dispels the human experience of confusion, illusion, and deception; this light has the power to suddenly, and immediately, overcome any darkness we are caught up in-- yet without repentance, atonement, and forgiveness, there is no vehicle in us, as in the temple, to retain the light as not merely a wondrous visitation, but a permanent and unfolding indwelling.

It would seem that repenting of sin, wanting to make amends for it, forgiving those who have sinned against us and being forgiven by those we have sinned against, are the real 'mirror' that reflects the radiance of the divine light in the human being; this human bravery and generosity about our most diminished and shameful level of being is what opens us to the eternal. The logic is paradoxical= the lowest will be made high. If we had more courage about facing up to our sin, we would discover what the holy day of Yom Kippur secretly teaches-- that this facing up is what restores God's bright countenance to our face. This process gives us peace, calm, repose, and helps us reach that stillness and silence of the inner being that 'waits upon God', like the wise virgins awaiting the bridegroom coming in the night with their lamps well-oiled so they can be lit at the moment of his approach.

This is what is really at stake in acknowledging our sins, against God and against the neighbour: whilst dedicated to sin, being unwilling to curb it, struggle with it, battle to shed it as much as is possible given our limited human strength, we make our body and soul an 'unpurified temple' where the light as God's presence cannot dwell. To the extent that 'my sin is constantly

before me', as David puts it, and I admit its seriousness as blocking out the light, so I allow a process wherein the whole human being is becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit. But the very word 'purity' can be twisted, and come to carry multiple Satanic meanings, such as 'all sex is impure', or 'all aggression is impure', or 'the body is impure and the soul is pure.' We should sweep all such pollutions aside, and understand that impurity is simply like a pipe becoming so clogged up, living waters can no longer rush through it. When God indwells us, as light, life, beauty, knowledge, salvation, then the true function of sex as vehicle of the divine, the true function of aggression as the vehicle of the divine, and the same with everything, is revealed.

The worship of the temple, and the priestly function that co-ordinates it, is to do with bringing people back to the divine light, through dis-attachment to their sin, and re-attachment to the light in its 'accessible' presence. This process of returning to God, through the overcoming of sin, is 'salvation.' This is the positive meaning of 'God saves.' In being saved, we are dragged out of what is dragging us down; we are pulled out of human and demonic darkness into the light of God. We are yanked out of deadness and returned to life; we are placed in a transformative, and developing process, wherein our sickness is being healed, our distortion is being beautified, our folly is being made wise. Ignorance of the spiritual is being converted into spiritual knowledge. The self-inflicted suffering, which Buddhism describes so perceptively, is being transmuted into simple happiness, and overflowing joy. Our former viciousness, malice, nastiness, has become kindness, gentleness, compassion. Where before, as a child of darkness, we were toxic to everyone and everything we touched, now as a child of the light, we are benign. Having been vindictive, we cease to do hurt.

We are saved from what is destroying us, and returned to the source that gives us all the gifts and glories of our existence when we are enlightened, sound, whole, firing on all cylinders, 'safe and secure' in being grounded in reality, not chasing unreality.

Psalms, 25, 8= "My children, what do I require of you? Seek me and live."
Wisdom, 11, 23= "You have mercy upon all; you condone the sins of men in order that they should amend."

6,

At no point is there any hint in all this that the High Priest is uniquely and magically skilled in mollifying Yahweh, who is all too ready to turn against his people because he can no more 'tolerate their sins.' The Jewish High Priest atones with the Jewish people in bringing to Yahweh their sincere sorrow for destroying relationships, their surviving hope in the repair of relationships, their humble request for forgiveness for the damage done to all and sundry by the harming of relationships. These things are so crucial, because they bring down, and bring back, the light, and they also move human beings towards the light, raising them and returning them to where they will be in a position to mystically enter the light's living presence, and be radically altered by this.

The High Priest is a lightning rod, for collecting the light and the people in oneness around it, but the aim is not to forever huddle in the temple, enjoying its sacredness as the symbolic and physical vehicle of God [the soul and body that houses the Spirit]; on the contrary, the aim is to take the light back to the community, to plant it there, so it can infiltrate all walks of life, all everyday activities, all human deeds that deal with the 'pragmata' of existence, the things we must be concerned with all the time. This is why it is vital to come to the temple, to relight the light, yet equally vital to leave the temple, so the light can be spread through-out the community. We leave the world to enter the temple, we leave the temple to return to the world. This is the necessary two-way rhythm of breathing in and breathing out that governs worship.

There is no implication that a one-day ritual absolves us from struggling with these matters for the rest of the year, and indeed, for the rest of our life. Yet in reality, sin is cleared out of the way so Yahweh can be re-enthroned, in his presence, his glory, his light, in the soul of the temple. Sin drives the presence of God away, whilst repenting, atoning, forgiving, brings the presence of God back.

This is the main concern of Jewish Atonement.

In fact, some commentators claim it is the sin of worshipping the Golden Calf, whilst Moses was away on the mountain, that is the real transgression of the Jewish people in their entirety that is being pardoned on the Day of Atonement. Perhaps all sin stems from two sources, in a Jewish context= violating communal solidarity, and idolising 'false gods' that are more reassuring instead of having faith in the mysterious God whose light comes and goes, waxes and wanes, as we are nearer or farther from it. Later, a third source of sin arises, and is existential. However, whatever the source, all sin blocks Yahweh's 'coming with power.'

7,

Sacrifice plays a basic role not in removing sin entirely, but in reducing its pervasive impact, in order to allow Yahweh's hidden presence to be revealed.

The High Priest performs a ritual symbolising the sacrifice involved in making effective the spiritually necessary trinity of repentance, atonement, forgiveness, by which we draw closer to the light. Letting go sin is letting go jewels precious to us which we falsely cling to, as well as smashing idols important to us which we falsely worship. For us, in our human limitation, this is a definite and real sacrifice. It is hard to do, it costs us sweat and tears. The animal blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies by the High Priest shows our commitment to making amends -- in Jewish ritual, the animal symbolises humans, while the human symbolises spirits -- and our willingness to undergo the 'death' that loss of sin puts us through, that we may know rebirth in the light. The sacrifice we make is agreeing with the protracted process of losing things we thought were the very definition of abundance, fulfilment, satisfaction, victory, and allowing all these to be inverted, so that what we

thought was life proves to be death, and what we thought was death proves to be life. This whole inversion of our normal being is a considerable sacrifice, a kind of dying, a real letting go. The clenched fist, trying to grab onto so much, becomes an open hand.

The High Priest is not doing this sacrifice 'for' us in the sense of doing it instead of us, absolving us from doing it, but is rather doing the sacrifice 'as' us, with us, and in that very different sense, the priestly role is to 'offer' our cry to God, our crying for what we have done to separate ourselves from God, and our cry to God to come back, not abandon us, but return to dwell in our midst, becoming the light by which we see God and see each other. David: "In thy light do we see light" [Psalms, 36, 9]. We are asking God not to allow our rejection of him to become his tit for tat rejection of us; we are asking God, be bigger than us, and giving God permission to break the cause-effect chains that close us in. And because we love God, have faith in God, have trust in God, so we know that God will not retaliate, giving ill for ill, and neither will God keep score, and remember our sins, insisting on punishing us for error. Metropolitan Anthony once said, if your child is run over in the street, you don't go out there and kick him because he disobeyed you, you tenderly pick him up and minister to his injuries.

Thus, odd as it sounds to us in our normal condition, the blood of sacrifice is like a medicine, curing the root of sin, in its self-love and self-will.

The High Priest does not intercede with God for the rest of the people; rather, he offers our crying, which contains our yes and no, our half in and half out, to God. Sacrifice, in the priestly or temple context, is self-offering. The animal blood symbolises the life we offer to the process of weaning life from death, which feels to us like surrendering life to death. We offer our self to the self-transcending that gives away, or sacrifices, self-love, yet seems like losing all ecstaticness in love; we offer our self to the self-disempowering that gives away, or sacrifices, self-will, yet seems like losing all sovereignty in love.

The High Priest cannot make this sacrifice instead of us; there is no magic in what he does in the ritual that would absolve us from doing the same in our entire life. He is 'appointed' to stand in for us in the ritual, and as such to ritually symbolise the sacrifice involved in our returning to Yahweh and sharing Yahweh in the community. None the less, in so far as he cannot do this sacrifice for us, so it follows that his ritual action on its own has no point, or efficacy, if the rest of the people are not struggling to live the 'sacrificial offering' in their own lives. This means that the High Priest and the ordinary people are interchangeable. Since he is representing all of them in the Holy of Holies, he is not more holy than them. If the High Priest suddenly died before the ritual was completed, any member of the assembly of people could step into the breach, to replace him. He is one of the people, and there is nothing that separates the High Priest from the people in their absolute ordinariness.

In Flamenco, the singer cries what the audience watching him are 'really' crying in their own existence. Because of this, they encourage the singer, by shouts of ole and hand clapping in rhythm to his feet pounding the earth. He

carries something of them to God, but he can only do this because he is one of them, not different to them. Yes, he has talents and training needed for his job that the audience may lack. But they could learn these, and if he were suddenly absent and the performance of the singing had to go on, anyone truly represented by him could step into his place, and do what he does.

This is true of the High Priest in the temple.

It might seem obvious that the High Priest, admitted into the sacred and innermost core of the temple where no one else can go, must be more purified than the ordinary people, but again, this is only true ritually and not true existentially. Outside the ritual, the High Priest is a sinner like everyone else, and if he only makes sacrifice ritually and not in his actual manner of living, then he may end up a greater sinner than everyone else, due to deception.

But that is not the point. The point is, if the High Priest were elevated above the people, then we might describe him as not only intercessor for them with God -- as if God will not listen to his people, and will only listen to his priest -- but also a mediator between God and them in a very literal sense. This is untrue as well. 'Mediator' is a more corrupted term than 'intercessor.' All its connotations are misleading. It also bestows uniquely special authority and power on the priestly function that it does not, and should not, possess. From intercessor you get a hierarchic priesthood, and from mediator you get popes, chief ministers, and the like, including Orthodox patriarchs. You might as well regard the persons fulfilling these grand roles as 'angelic lords' in our midst. The wrong doctrine of priesthood, including that of the High Priest in the temple, robs priests of their human grounding, and recasts them virtually as angels. 'Angelizing' is a heretical tendency encouraged by misunderstanding what priests can, and cannot, do.

The gravitas attached to these intercessors and mediators impedes and obscures the priestly calling, rather than clarifying and facilitating it.

A priest is a more homely figure, and this is his virtue. What he is offering, as the representative of the people, is the people's sacrifice. Again, only love illumines what is going on. It is like this. I am your friend, and I know you love God but your prayer to God is blocked, so I go to God and plead for you. I know this guy, I say to God, he is one of yours, and he is also one of us, therefore 'remember him in your kingdom.' If the priest is anointed and consecrated for his role, and in it does something that the people cannot, this is simply to cry to God day in and day out, even when the people lose their voice, and their crying becomes blocked in their throat. The priest is no angel who has deus ex machina descended from God, to lord it over us for our own good; rather, he is exactly like us, in all respects, except that through his anointing, through his consecration, God has helped and empowered him to speak up for us in the heavenly kingdom, God has enabled him to be our advocate, pleading for us, and crying day and night when things are so hard for us, we cannot even cry any more.

The priest is like those children who, already at the age of 3 and 4, are liked the best by the group of other children because they look after everyone more, show more empathy and understanding for their fellows. The rest turn to this particular child, knowing they will get a hearing. In a similar way, the people turn to the priest, knowing they will get a hearing with him, and that he will go before God insisting they all get a hearing from God. A priest who really loves the people can go to God, and refuse to take any No from God, insisting on a Yes, for all of them. This is the real meaning of 'what you loose on earth and bind on earth will be loosed and will be bound in heaven.' The priest inspired by this kind of love, says to God, if any one of these people goes down, I go down with them, because I will not let any of them be lost in finality. A priest can even fight with us, when we have given up on ourself, refusing to give up on us. This love is what priesthood is really all about, and it clarifies why the sacramental, the teaching, and the pastoral aspects of the priest's work all fit together organically. A single purpose undergirds all of these things.

It could be countered that if the people could always cry to God, plead to God, speak to God, for themselves, the priest would not be necessary. However, realistically, it is part and parcel of our long battle with sin, and the sacrifice it asks from us, that we are often without voice, cannot pray, cannot ask for help. Given the power by God to do his job, the priest always, at least in the ritual if not always in his life beyond the ritual, raises a voice, can pray, can ask for help. And will God not listen? God withdraws sometimes to give more space for us to grow in the very love he is trying to seed in us. However, when the priest offers sacrifice, and prays, with the people, as the people, God sits up and takes notice.

A good priest is worth his weight in gold. He symbolises, and activates, that love of God which motivates us humans to love other humans, to a point not only of repenting, atoning, forgiving, among ourselves, but even to the further point of sticking together through thick and thin, and loving each other inclusively, without exclusion, such that if one human gets in bad trouble, another human steps up to pray for them, plead for them, minister to their illness, and if necessary, carry them until they can stand on their own feet again-- or should they be permanently crippled, then carry them as long as they live. The priest is the communal love, the Eros for one and all, that keeps us all together in God.

God does not play fast and loose with us. When we love like this, he is impressed, and adds to our smallest step for love a thousand giant strides, to give impetus to our intention and honour our effort.

Priests who think themselves 'commissioned' by God to be specially and uniquely elevated angels condescending to ordinary humanity, to lift the poor dears above their lowly station, are scoundrels who need to be exposed in their arrogance. Ironically, these are the ones who will always be the first to sell out to the bourgeois spirit that destroys the Eros of community in God. From Angelizing theology to pig whose snout is first to the feed, is a short, and natural step.

What unites priests and people most radically is that, at a certain point, God says to the Jews, stop making the sacrificial offering in ritual; what I require from you is not this symbolic ritual, however powerful its impact, but an existentially real 'broken and contrite heart.' God says this to David, to underscore what the ritual 'really' is for all humans. When our heart is broken, and it is contrite, we have ceased trying to run our life by our own lights, and at last surrendered our being to God.

When our heart is broken, and it is contrite, we have -- all of us, personally and communally -- completed the Day of Atonement.

In this sense, once outside the ritual, everyone is a priest, men, women, children, no different. The priestly function is a basic calling from God to all of us, without exception, and with no one favoured over anyone else in executing it [1 Peter, 2, 9].

8,

The Day of Atonement is complex, inherently. It has many aspects, which are never the less all of a piece. Yom Kippur is a kind of condensation of the key points at work in our 'being saved' by God. David's brief statement that 'God's light is our salvation' is a shorthand for all these necessary elements.

The light is in actuality Yahweh, the king of heaven, and his heavenly kingdom, coming down to us in order to raise us up, by lifting us out of the doldrums in which we are drowning; we co-operate with this process by what we give up, but this sacrifice pales into insignificance compared with what God gives to us. It is 'grace' because it is gracious and gratuitous, a free gift, a free offering, with no strings attached, no hidden penalty clauses, no reservations, no conditions. Ultimately, all we really have to 'do' is want the light that enlightens us, which means giving ourselves over to it, offering our life to it. This mutual self-giving and self-offering is the mysterious dynamic at the centre of temple worship, and the mystical high point of the Day of Atonement.

The priest's 'sacrifice' in the ritual of worship is sacrificing our sins, to offer the people to what God is offering the people.

Thus, Yom Kippur is not just moral and ascetical, it is also sacramental and sacrificial, symbolic and metaphorical, visionary and mystical. Its aim, and process, is 'salvation.' This is not just saving us 'from' sin, but saving us 'for' a new life in which we die to human deadness and are reborn in the aliveness of the Spirit.

We are saved from sin in order to be saved for God's kingdom.

It is Luciferian to under do sin, like religious liberals, and Satanic to over do sin, like religious conservatives. It is certainly misleading, and dangerous, to stress only what we are saved from, and ignore what we are saved for. What

we are saved for is a more wonderful and awesome reality than the unreality we are saved from. People who get too caught in the bewailing and bemoaning of sin focus on the 'saved from' and lose the 'saved for.' They are too heavy and guilty. This is unhelpful. Equally off the mark are people who think access to the light can bypass grasping the nettle of human resistance. They are too light and guiltless. They believe they can just float up to the light; or doing a few yogic exercises will get them up the ladder of ascent to the divine. This is equally unhelpful.

None the less, what we are saved for exceeds in significance, by far, what we are saved from, and preoccupation with the latter should not become what blots out the former. From a repenting heart we move into the joy of God. A light weight joy is not real, but unremitting doom and gloom is stuck.

9,

Saving, or salvation, in old Gaelic carries the same connotations as it does in Greek and Latin, with some very illuminating nuances. Salvation is 'slanu' and saving is 'sainmhinui.' The saved condition means 'soundness, completeness, wholesomeness, health.' Indeed, overcoming sin is more a 'healing' than merely a moral correction. Saved also means 'free, released, delivered'; and at least one Gaelic term has the explicit double meaning that to be let out of the prison of sin is to be 'united' with God. This is Yom Kippur in a nutshell. Salvation is also related to the act of 'glorifying', or appreciating the 'renown' of the saving agent; non saving agents fall in our esteem as the saving agent rises in respect. Salvation is a state of continuous conversion from prison to glory, an ongoing 'seeking' or 'pursuit.' Salvation implies 'freedom from care'; its opposite is 'suspicion and mistrust.' Salvation is for 'the benefit of our friends' souls', it implies friendliness between saving and saved. Salvation is 'offered', it is gift; no one can earn it by their effort alone, though to receive the gift may well ask an effort from the receiver. We cannot demand a gift, or presume we have a right to it. The spirit of salvation is Give Away, as an act of love, concern, outreaching friendliness. Salvation is also seen as God's protection encircling the world, like the arms of a lover embracing the beloved, firm as a 'chain.'

"Thy reproach of us can never be so high that the tree of our salvation will not be higher still."

This is the full equation of the Eros that saves us from our unloved and unloving condition: light—life—beauty—joy—knowledge. All these are the Tree of Salvation, 'the tree of lights', as one writer has called it. The tree shines in human and demonic darkness, and the darkness cannot extinguish it.

OLAM= the Jewish Emphasis on Time

1,

Eros religion 'orients' [harmoniously locates] itself in space, while Daemonic religion is 'thrown' [unceremoniously dumped] in time.

Eros religion is hostile to time, and seeks to 'spatialise' time. Both circle and line as pictorial representations of time are equally spatialised, because they seek to assimilate time to space, and regard time as merely a 'succession' of points moving around in space. Hence, it makes no real difference whether time is seen as ultimately circular, as in the ancient 'Myth of the Eternal Return' [Mircea Eliade, 'Cosmos and History', 1959]; or time 'revolves' in cycles [tracing repeating circular transits of space, as in the four seasons]; or, time 'proceeds' in a linear fashion, with past, present, future, laid out like points on a straight line, as in the modern 'Myth of [unstoppable] Progress.' All these spatial images misrepresent and basically falsify time, because they miss its key feature, which is not any succession of points in space, but what Henri Bergson ['Time and Free Will', 1910] termed 'duration.' Time is like a mighty river rolling head-long in a certain direction, with no disruptions, no pit stops, no pauses for reflection; and you cannot go back, you are going forward, like it or not, ready or not..

As space is inherently static [stable], so time is inherently dynamic [labile]= it is moving everything along, and the movement cannot be interrupted at any point. Nor can time itself ever be pictorially represented. We do not 'see', nor can we 'visualize', the actual 'en-during' that time accomplishes, linking each moment to the one that came before and to the one that will come next. The actual and very peculiar 'unceasing' of time, its relentless forward push, is inherently mysterious. We are thrust into this dynamic 'ongoing stream of events', and because we are not proof against time, so for us to endure through time is an accomplishment. To go with time, to be swept along by time, yet not be swept away by time, takes courage, and strength, and requires energy. We speak of bearing and enduring, of patiently waiting, of fortitude, persistence, resoluteness, because time, not space, is the main dimension of human existence in this world.

For the Jews, the only reliable measure of 'repeating' time is not astronomical, sought out in terrific cosmic spaces where cold and distant round orbs migrate, but to be found within the living warmth, in the pulsing heart-beat.

The heart lives in time.

Passion journeys and battles through time.

Everything important for the Jews, as for the Celts, is in 3s. Eros religions are binary, and go from 2 to 4, to 8, and further multiples.

In Shamanism, 3 signifies 'danger.'

The Daemonic brings danger, and risks danger.

Time is the Reversal of the sacred geometry of Eros religions. We can only 'belong' to that sacred geometry, finding ourself 'a part of it', if we evade, suppress, escape, time. We must down play time to 'maintain' our experience of, and belief in, the harmony, the beauty, the luminous coherence and architectural wholeness, of sacred space.

Greeks= ontological; we contemplate being in knowledge.

Jews= existential; we trust the unknown in action.

Eros religions are always spatial in their approach to divinity, and the 'inherent connection' of divinity to humans and all things. Divinity is a marvelous place, and 'everything that has being' is another and distinct place, yet the two can be, and really are, 'as one'; or, the two places are more differentiated, to signify they are inter-connected and inter-dependent, but not merged, rather in some kind of 'friendly mutuality.' Whether more totally fused, or more contrasted yet still unified, all these varying religious stand-points within Eros can be 'personified' in symbolic imagery that is essentially spatial. Thus: Void and Form [Buddhism, etc]; the Mandala or Cosmic Wheel [Hinduism, etc]; the Centre and Periphery of the Sacred Circle [Shamanism, etc]; Higher Realm of the Source and Lower Realm of Generation [Platonism]; Heaven Above and Earth Below [Christianity, etc]. Or, there is a space where divinity and humanity initially overlap, and humanity is no longer in the right place, but has gone out of it into a place of Exile where degeneration is inevitable [Judaism, etc].

The heart-beat in time is 3= it rises, it falls, it rises again; it is coming, it has arrived, it is gone= this is the real existential thrust of past, present, future. The heart must acknowledge each moment, let it pass, and then revive to meet the next moment.

Every significant process in time is three-fold. The dying, the tomb, the rebirth, is also 3.

The earliest trinity in the religion of the Jews is God, humanity, world. This trinity is held together by time, is ventured through time, is only fulfilled in time.

The innocent Beginning [Paradise], the fraught Middle [the Fallen world], the climactic End [the New Jerusalem and Sacred Garden, the Parousia, or, the world ends not with a bang but a whimper].

Daemonic religion is focused upon the 'passible' heart of humanity, in its calling to the 'passible' heart of the world. God, in relating to humanity and the world, works through the passible. The passible is a chance, but it must be seized hold of in time, not allowed to pass us by due to losing the time, to distraction, folly, evil. The chance= to pass through the passing to the far shore= to arrive at the destination, over the span of time, for all time.

We are not saved from time's passing. We are called to redeem the time= to not let it pass without making the action that changes its passing, by changing the direction, and impetus, of its movement..

One of the phrases central to Hasidism is, 'tikkun olam'= repair of the world; rectifying the world. Repair the time; rectify the time. The time, in Hebrew, implies the world. The world is where time is always passing.. The time is passing= the time you have to commit to the world, and do what only you can do to redeem the world 'in time', before the time to change it has passed, and the chance to change it is squandered.

The Daemonic blow sharply reminds us of urgency; focus so our action ceases being too late, and finally gets 'on time.'

2,

'Olam' is Hebrew for time. It can mean a former time, as in 'it was like this in the old time', it used to happen in the 'olden days'.. It can mean from 'age to age', and when applied to God, it means 'from age to age without beginning and without end.' No Greek philosopher would ascribe unending duration within time to God, rather, eternity as beyond time, contrary to time, transcending time, unsullied by the corrosive bite of time, would be ascribed to the ultimate divinity. Such eternity secured against time is not the 'everlastingness' of God revealed to the Jews. Translations of 'olam' that suggest God never changes, because of being above and outside the rigours of existential existence in time, are Greek, not Jewish, in ethos. The passion of God changes the heart of humanity, in time, and the passion of humanity changes the heart of God, in time.

'El Olam' is one of the most mysterious names of God, according to Jewish tradition. Indeed, it is virtually the secret name for God. The scholars who wrote this name on parchment for their students used to misspell it intentionally, by writing 'alam' instead of 'olam.' This is the Hebrew term meaning 'the hidden', or 'to conceal.' Such a mistake is not only saying God is mysterious, inscrutable, beyond human grasp, it is also saying, more subtly, that God is hidden in time, concealed in time, and must be searched out and found in time to redeem the very open-endedness of time which the Greeks feared so much that it had to be banished from the very notion of divinity. No genuine divinity can be, in any way, subject to the passing of time, or vulnerable to the variable outcomes of time.

El Olam is first used in the story of Abraham [Genesis, 21, 33]. Up until this point in time, several names for God had been revealed, including= Elohim, which among many meanings implies 'my Creator', or 'the strong Creator', the Power who has many powers in nature; El Elyon, which means 'most high God', or 'sovereign over all'; El Shaddai, which means 'mighty God'; and El Roi, which means 'God who sees.' El Olam means not that 'God is timeless', as Hellenism or a Hellenising Christianity, would prefer it, but God is dynamically present in time, and indeed, is not only the meaning or purpose, but the actual thrust, the spiritual impetus, for the movement of time, the changing of the times. This links time and the Ruach, the moving power of God's Spirit. The Spirit moves times in their truest directionality, against demonic and human forces against this directionality, and the prophet reads the times, 'how it is going', and 'where it will go', inspired by the Spirit.

The Jewish El Olam= Everlasting God. But not 'Eternal God', not 'the Unchangeable God.' The Jewish El Olam= God of all time, from the ages to the ages, from before the beginning and going on and on endlessly after the end. Not so much 'the God of Perpetuity', whose dictates and plans cannot be altered, but the God without beginning and end, whose unendingness is in time, to change us and change time. Thus, El Olam is the God who is our only 'help' in confronting this world, and wrestling with this world, for an outcome 'against the run of play.'

El Olam is the God of history. God of time= God of the world only lost or gained in time. It means the onward rush of time in which we are swept away or driven forward, matters more than any eternity preserved from what is 'going on', what is done moment after moment here and now. It also means God intervenes in time in his unknown manner [Isaiah, 40, 28], yet his commitment to time is for all time. Thus, his covenant with the Jews, and through them with the entirety of humanity, is 'forever.' It does not wax or wane, it is not forgotten in time, it is not a fair-weather friend to stick when things are going well and flee when things are unravelling. El Olam means God is in it for the long haul, God will see it through to the end.

Thus with Abraham God establishes the first covenant. Genesis, 17, 7= "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you through-out their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

El Olam means God 'remembers.' He will remember his vow of commitment, from his unwavering passionateness of heart, to our wavering heart, whose vow of commitment struggles to meet God's gamble and sacrifice with its own gamble and sacrifice. God does not back off, God does not weary, God remains staked to the ground of human existence, where our sweat, tears, and blood, stain the earth from which we were made. He was always staked, and he will always be staked, through all the ages of humanity, from ages to ages, olam to olam.

Indeed, the first covenant, the 'natural covenant', is with the creation itself. Genesis, 9, 16= "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

El Olam means God will forget what sundered us from him and sent us adrift in time, not just in the wrong space, an exile from the primal garden where we were initially placed, but 'lost in time', no moorings, a prisoner to evil forces, a slave to our own armouring against God so that 'the divine force' of passion in us loses its spark and intent, and is tempted into ways that use up the time and at the end of our life, take us nowhere and accomplish nothing, for the world.

El Olam is tacitly implied even when Moses received the personal name of God, for the mystery of divine existing revealed by Yahweh was not confined to the now, not even limited to 'the eternal now', but was 'I am' and 'I will be.' God has no beginning and no end, God continues. This 'continuing' through time, not having to 'get out of time' or be destroyed by its passingness, is the real power of God. This power is at work in time, and its everlasting continuing will arise wherever God goes, and will be passed on to us who lean on God for our existence. An old theological formula declares that we will acquire by grace what God is by nature. This is happening in time, long before time ends; it is by no means some deus ex machina that will 'rescue us' after our time runs out. Already, in this world, in this existence, redemption forges changes in us and changes in the world that are everlasting.

El Olam is particularly emphasized when David's kingship is established as the ancestor, the root, of the coming Messiah. In 2 Samuel, 7, 16, Yahweh promises David= "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever [olam]; your throne shall be established forever." This is really referring to the Messianic Kingdom -- not some Jewish dominance over the totality of the globe -- that will redeem all humanity.

Psalms, 111, 9= "He has sent redemption to his people; he has ordained his covenant forever [olam]. Holy and awesome is his name, everlasting God [olam]."

Psalms, 90, 1- 4= "Yahweh, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or you had ever formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. You turn humanity from destruction, and declare, return.. For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it has passed by, or like the watch in the night."

Yahweh is not a dwelling space, a location, but God's relentless continuing in time is what sustains us in our faltering continuing. We are like grass, flourishing in the morning, cut down and withered in the evening. Even our strength, which prolongs our life, is 'labour and sorrow', effort and pain. Soon it is cut off, and we fly away; really, we slip away, lost to time..

We should be aware of our limited time, and apply our hearts to the getting of wisdom.

Yet time will unsettle us to the last, because time is always running out, and there is not enough time to do what the heart urges we must do.

Yet, the news is not all bad, and the good news is unburied right in the midst of the worst case scenario.

Lamentations of Jeremiah, 3, 22-23= "Yahweh's loving kindnesses never cease, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Yahweh's faithfulness."

The secret of time, hidden in time, is cryptically, evocatively, tersely, alluded to by the wise king Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, 3, 10-11=

"I have seen the travail which God has given to mankind to be exercised in it. He has made everything beautiful in his time: also he has set time in mankind's heart, to ponder its whole sweep, but mankind cannot comprehend the work of God from beginning to end."

Olam is set in humanity's heart= time is set in humanity's heart, the world is set in humanity's heart, the mysterious everlastingness is set in humanity's heart. This combustible trinity of forces holds the key= let them ignite, from within their tensions, and you will drive ahead.

THE THRONE—CHARIOT OF GOD IN JEWISH TRADITION

PRELUDE

The vision of God seated upon a throne occurs in Ezekiel [Ezekiel, 1], Micah [1 Kings, 22, 19], Isaiah [Isaiah, 6], Daniel [Daniel, 7, 9] and in the Revelations [Apocalypse] of St John [Revelations, 4, 6-7]. Some scholars have claimed that St Paul's mystical experience of ascent into the 'multiple heavens' is on the throne pattern, though this might be a variant on it..

It is easy to misread this kind of visionary experience, because of 'the nightmare of history' having too often shown us 'monarchal power' as despotic, cruel, unapproachable, arbitrary, violent, oppressive. This throne revelation is not about any of that human abuse. It actually rejects, in a subtle yet very clear sense, any notion of Divine Authority rooted in sheer Divine Power. The throne – kisse in Hebrew – signifies the 'worthiness' of God, and of humanity made in God's 'likeness.' This is a very different matter. There is a revelation in this vision of what makes God worthy of love, gratitude, respect, loyalty, from humans, and by implication, this is also a revelation of what makes humanity worthy of love, gratitude, respect, loyalty, from God. There is nothing here of a show of force, an assertion of authority by the fist of power, a veiled threat to obey or else.. There is nothing of Might makes Right.

Ezekiel's vision moves from the Glory of God to the Daemonic Heart of God, dark, fiery, glowing before its coming..

1,

What is this Glory?

It is like a sunrise where the dark sky suddenly becomes filled with shooting arms of fire which, in turn, give off a marvellous shine, a kind of multi-coloured magnificence which vibrates, pulses, dances. The Glory is an outgoing emanation, from an unknown and mysterious source, and fills everything. It does not remain confined to its originating source, nor hidden in the innermost core, but 'radiates out' in an explosion of wonderful things, an abundance of goodness, multiple intelligences and gifts, creative powers.. Glory is inherently generous, sharing itself with anyone and everyone who beholds it, feels it, tastes it; we bathe in it, we bask in it. It opens us up, and transforms us, even as we enjoy it.. It has healing properties as it impacts us. It re-energises us. Witnesses to its dance, we want to join in, and so we dance with it.. Glory excites us, raises us, gets us going with a sense of new possibilities opening up on a horizon not ever farther away but coming closer.

We are at a loss for words when we witness the Glory of a sunrise, so by a small leap of imaginative empathy, consider what Ezekiel experienced when confronting the Glory of the Creator of all that is..

This Glory is from God, and is spread through-out all of nature, inanimate and animate, sentient and intelligent. The creation is built out of, or built in, “an irradiation of God” [Martin Buber, ‘The Way of Man’, 1965, p vi], and therefore the whole cosmos, as well as the earth, “is full of his Glory” [ibid, p 33]. For the Jews, Glory reveals God without ceasing to conceal the Divine Mystery that no creature, no human, can ever penetrate, grasp, know.

Another example would be more human. A heroic human being, who does deeds of great heartedness, also has a shine; a powerful glow emanates from their person. This is the basis for the ‘halo’ in Christian or Buddhist ikons. Everybody, including the animals, perceives this glow, it is unarguable, non-speculative, a matter of direct seeing, if the perceiver’s spiritual eyes are open, and especially if they struggle honestly in the heart. Only people of bad heart fail to see the radiance of heroic, and holy, people that just flows out of them; indeed, in such bad hearted people their vanity is often affronted, and thus they go out of their way to denigrate, disrespect, debunk, the person. They try to convince others, by gossip and behind the back manoeuvres, that the person is really as low down, as without shine, as everyone else..

In human life, Glory gets confused with Reputation, and then we quickly find ourselves far down a deluded road.. Reputation gets confused with Honour, and Honour is confused with an entirely false glory, a kind of Immortality sought by Greek warriors and modern Western celebrities no different. Glory is eternal, but it is only ‘forever’ because it manifests out of something worthy. You cannot sing a mediocre pop song, call it fantastic, in the devalued parlance of the day, and imagine you are rendered ‘one of the Immortals.’ Similarly, you cannot become a pseudo warrior who, divorced from any and all issues of what is worthy in heart, kills thousands of enemies and simply by virtue of that skill, talent, charisma, enters the Legendary Realm above mere ‘mundane’ human beings. What the glory hound, in ancient Greece or the modern West, most fears is being ordinary..

Nothing is more falsified in human life than Glory; its false version drives our pride, vanity, immodesty and self-importance, prickly hostility to criticism, power-mania and power-lust, arrogance, and it creates in every sphere of human culture, be it church, politics, education, or anything else, false hierarchies of empty status and phoney worth: worth rooted in nothing but selfish ambition [the ‘drive to succeed’ so praised in America].

In the Psalms, David calls Glory ‘the Light of God’s Countenance.’ Light, Face, Presence, are all closely linked in David’s Temple mysticism; we go to the Temple, where the Glory resides, to be enlightened by its Light which dispels our profound ignorance; to be healed by its loving kindness poured from the Light as Living Waters; and to know God face to face, personally, to come into God’s presence, experientially. No remote ‘god’, feared and propitiated, can dwell in the real Glory that is of God. The Glory purifies, and

cleanses us, of all our fears and phantasies generated by false gods; Glory washes away all our idols and idolatrous wishes..

The Glory dwells in the Temple with special intensity, and untrammelled clarity, because the Temple is the 'sanctuary' dedicated to it; the Temple is the Sacred place where the Glory can be 'at home', not falsified by the spiritual, psychological, social, political, economic, cultural, distortions and lies of human beings. Obviously, as human error creeps more and more into the Temple, so it ceases to be a Sacred Enclave, a Refuge Set Apart for Glory, where it can be directly encountered. This is why 'purifying and cleansing' the Temple is such a vital theme in Jewish religious history. More primitive, and more Satanic, religious corruptions have to be, constantly, purged from the Jewish Temple, if the Glory is really to shine out and enter into each and every person who comes to it in need of its help, in need of its generosity. In Jewish tradition, Sanctuary and Heaven are virtually equated.

But the Glory of God shown to Ezekiel is more specific, it is in a certain form and has a certain purpose, both in regard to its own time and context, and in regard to any time and context which is similar. It comes in a day of trouble, and is not just a metaphysical or philosophical showing forth, or epiphany, of the divine nature. It has a more focused aim than that. Though the Glory certainly shows the being of God, and depicts the nature of God, this 'likeness', this 'appearance' [as Ezekiel calls it], is more existential in its 'point.'

None the less, there is no doubt that, as one writer puts it, the prophet who had been expecting to become a priest is shown a 'form magnificent in character, resplendent with light, which is called the Glory of the Lord.' And, it is also undeniable that it is this 'form' that Daniel describes in his vision, whilst the overwhelming similarities with St John's vision on Patmos in the Revelations is obvious and significant-- though there are key differences as well.. Seven hundred years separates these prophetic experiences of Jewish and Christian prophets. Yet they converge on the same theme.

What is this theme?

There is certainly a blatant revelation of the Glory of God, but perhaps the underlying dynamic of many Daemonic elements points to a more complicated conclusion.. It shows that this Glory emanates from a Core which is Daemonic-- and this is what is really at issue.

In a sense, Ezekiel's vision reveals the Glory of God, reflected in the Sanctuary of Heaven, and mirrored in the Temple of the Earth. But that is static. A much more dynamic meaning, which is Daemonic, inheres this encounter..

This vision is to do with what makes God worthy to humanity, and what makes humanity worthy to God. This is not Glory. It is the Daemonic heart of God, and the heart wounded and rendered Daemonic in humanity, that is worthy. The Glory radiates that Worthiness of heart.

Glory reveals the hidden fatherhood of God, showing his 'heart' towards humanity, and his heart in humanity that we lose and regain.

2,

The vision itself needs to be briefly sketched. It is complicated, and not easy to picture in precise detail, though countless illustrations of it have been made by artists down the centuries. Religious commentaries on it abound, including books and books just devoted to the vision's complex, and rich, symbolism. [The 4-foldness of the created realm, and the 7-foldness of the spirit realm, are among many symbolic meanings inhering in the vision's fabulous sacred architecture.]

The vision comes in a Whirlwind from the north. The prophet receiving it is in the south.

Then there is 'a great cloud', with 'a fire infolding itself' within the cloud, and the cloud is lit up, 'there was a brightness about it.' The fire within the cloud is the colour of amber -- a colour that mixes red fire and brown earth with a golden glistening -- and 'out of the midst of the fire' come 'the likeness of 4 living creatures'.. These 4 strange creatures, which are 4 spirits, are not initially named by Ezekiel but later he recognises them as 4 Cherubim [Ezekiel, 10, 20]. These spirit beings are 4-fold, with 4 faces and 4 wings. The 4 faces of each angel are those of a man, an ox [bull], an eagle, a lion. The four faces 'face' in the 4 directions of the 4 quadrants of the creation: the man facing south, the ox [bull] facing west, the eagle facing north, the lion facing east. The 4 quadrants, as in the Sacred Circle of Shamanism, have a host of further analogous correspondences: man is south, water, summer and mid-day; ox [bull] is west, earth, autumn and evening; eagle is north, air, winter and night; lion is east, fire, spring and dawn.

The 4 Cherubim are inter-woven as one, 'for their wings were joined one to another' [Ezekiel, 1, 9]. They are four, but this four-foldness admits no fragmentation, no separation, no division, because it is a unity in diversity.

A Spirit animates the 4 Cherubim, going 'up and down the living creatures' like a Rushing Wind. The 4 spirits are torches of fire ['burning coals' that become 'bright lamps'], and the lightning continues to flash, and thunder rolls, from out of the fire.. The prophet hears a 'great noise' -- which always accompanies the momentous revelations of God -- and this rolling thunder is the Voice of God, the speaking of God [Ezekiel, I, 24]. But the prophet also hears in the moving of the 4 creatures' wings 'the noise of many waters'-- the many human voices of the prophets conveying what God declares, and the many human witnesses to the stream of revelation, like a powerful river running underground and occasionally breaking out to crash through artificial human dams, boundaries, and restrictions.

Beneath the 4 Cherubim, or perhaps more accurately next to them, or even interwoven with them, are whirling circular wheels, 'wheels within wheels', all

in motion, turning, revolving. The wheels make the 4 Cherubim move over the earth, and through the world. There are many eyes on the wheels. They see where they are going, and how they are going.

One writer speaks of the wheels as like the reverberations of a bell, pealing to summon all those who want to know God.

Above the 4 Cherubim is a 'firmament' made of transparent crystal; in St John's Revelations, this crystal seen beneath the throne of God is a 'sea of glass.'

Upon the firmament is a throne made of blue sapphire.

Jewish tradition identifies the firmament's transparent crystal more with the sky that forms a containing vault over the earth, while the throne's blue sapphire is identified more with the mysterious domain of shooting stars and darker reaches of far space; in effect, the deep blue almost black is the Heaven above and beyond the sky.

Seated upon the 'likeness' of the throne is the 'likeness' of a man. From the waist up, he is golden; from the waist down, he is fire. Brilliant light shines from him, he radiates a 'brilliant magnificence.' Many lights and many colours, as in a rainbow, shine forth from him.

For Ezekiel, this is "the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of Yahweh" [Ezekiel, 1, 28]. For Jews, this likeness to a man is either Yahweh himself, or his Glory; both interpretations co-exist in Jewish tradition. Ezekiel makes no comment on why the Glory should be 'like' a human being.

Yahweh enthroned over the Cherubim is similar to the 'Mercy Seat', flanked by two Cherubim, from which Yahweh speaks to Moses. But this means that this vision portrays the 'form' in which God gives his word, the throne is not about Divine Majesty giving orders but is about Divine Humanity making vows.

For Jews, the likeness to a man enthroned upon the Cherubim is Yahweh, the God of the promise. For Christians, it is Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the fulfilment of the promise.

As with the 4 Cherubim below him, the 'brightness' of the man enthroned on them comes from 'fire.' There is no doubt that the Glory – kavod in Hebrew – is the energetic radiance of the Daemonic. But the Daemonic does not radiate simply because it is powerful. It radiates from its Heart, because the Daemonic Heart is worthy; worthy of the greatness and depth of God, worthy of the greatness and depth of humanity.

In the whirlwind, and the cloud, is the Holy Fire of God's Heart, and indwelling it are burning coals that are lamps: in reality, it is a 'glowing torch' that the prophet will take back to his people to encourage and renew them in their captivity.

3,

It is interesting that Lucifer, the primary evil spirit, began as a 4-fold Cherubim; he was the chief of all the 4-fold spirits, a being of beauty and wisdom who once 'walked among the coals of holy fire' before he was cast down from heaven. As he falls, he becomes a shooting star, confused with real Glory yet fizzing out. Then, once he crashes to earth, he becomes Satan, the Accuser of humanity.

Lucifer and Satan are really like heads and tails of the same coin, or could be seen more straightforwardly as akin to twin brothers in crime, each 'handling' the opposite end of the total human situation.

Lucifer 'the morning star' is the very paradigm of the false glory on which humans get hooked. He had been created to be the chief protector of the earth. All the Cherubim are protective of the earthly, the created, yet Lucifer betrays this role as beneath his dignity, it is too lowly for his exalted being. Lesser creatures are to look up at him, admire his perfectly rounded completeness, learn from his nature [imitation is the sincerest form of flattery], but putting himself out for another, losing any of his riches for the other's gain, is an insult. He is a 'cold star', disdaining all upon whom he shines. They should be grateful for any reflected glory..

'Lucifer' means Light Bringer: he is the false sage who inspires false enlightenment, and infects even true enlightenment [as the Buddhists are well aware]. Among humans, he sows rivalry, comparison, dissension, jealousy, envy, which destroys any possibility of communal solidarity and pulling together. His game is to flatter to deceive, to flatter to seduce. He insinuates his spirit into creative and intelligent people, especially, as the dull clods of ordinary humanity hold no interest for a being so 'rich.' Lucifer promotes monetary and cultural richness, in order to favour a sparkling few and dismiss the 'mass' of mundane people. He insinuates his spirit into talent and giftedness, cleverness and intelligence.

His 'higher spirituality' -- only for the rare souls exalted enough to become who and what they were always intended to be -- is 'spiritual narcissism'; he pollutes the true Eros, which makes both identity and sexual experience 'ecstatic', overflowing, self-transcending. He makes humans self-loving, and so in his grip we use other people, consume them, spit them out. Fidelity in sexual, financial, artistic, intellectual, dealings is impossible to the Lucifer spirit.. We devour the riches of existence, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual, monetary and cultural, to infinitely expand the selfhood. This 'Self' is like a cold and empty diamond that never bleeds for another being, person, creature..

Martin Buber= "...love without dialogic, without real outgoing to the other, and accompanying with the other, the love remaining with itself-- this is Lucifer" ['Between Man and Man', p 24].

Lucifer was 'thrown into the sea' after his rocket fizzled out in the sky; thus, even when he is expelled from the sky of visionary mysticism, he sneaks off and turns up somewhere else even more effective: the unconscious, the soul, is where he lurks, ready to spoil the ecstatic Eros at its root, and infect it with the poison of infinite 'polishing' of the treasure buried in the psychic deeps.

The psyche, and its imagery, is Lucifer's last refuge. This is why Martin Buber was right to say it is dangerously in error to 'divinise the soul without first sanctifying it.'

There is a treasure buried inside humanity, but Lucifer's way of seeking it twists and ruins it.

As the matrix of spiritual evil comes from the Cherubim, we might conclude evil has 4 faces, and this seems to be so: Lucifer [delusive spiritual inflation], Satan [self-righteous religious accusation], Mephistopheles [dehumanised mental abstraction], Mammon [the love of money that is the root of all human sins].

4,

When Ezekiel receives the vision that comes to him whirling out of the north, he throws himself to the ground, face down. He is simply totally overcome by the Glory of God. You cannot stand in its living presence because this reveals to you it is and you are not. But, a voice tells Ezekiel to stand up. The Spirit of God enters him, raising him to his feet. One commentator says that in being helped by God to 'stand before' this fullness, abundance, of Being, Ezekiel is really preparing to 'stand for' God in the world.

To stand up for God, we have to stand on God. The creature's 'basic' non-being needs to be upheld by God's Abyss of Being, for us to risk our life for love, truth, justice, mercy, redemption..

Jewish tradition more usually regards the throne as a Chariot – merkavah in Hebrew -- because of the fact that the throne is not above and beyond the creation, nor is it in repose and static. Though coming from above and beyond all that exists, it is descending below, moving over the earth, and entering human affairs, history, time, matter and space, thanks to the 4 angels and the many wheels on which they are rolling ahead. In effect, this Mysterious Reality is headed for all the 4 directions of the Sacred Circle, south, west, north, east. The throne is 'supported' by the chariot, it might be said; but more accurately, the throne 'rides' the chariot into the creation, to effect changes. Glorious things are coming to the world, this vision really says. Though much tribulation will precede this event.

God calls Ezekiel 'Son of Man' nearly 100 times. Jesus Christ calls himself 'The Son of Man' 88 times in the Gospels. This vision, whatever it means, is addressed to humanity in a time of peril and heartbreak, and tells them not to give up or give in, and that the Real God, in his Glorious Manifestation, is on the move, is rolling. Get ready for the ride!

The Highest God, higher than the heavens, is coming down, and entering in.

This is Good News..

5,

Rivka G. Horwitz [in the Encyclopaedia Judaica], points out that Maimonides [in chapter 9 of the first part of his 'Guide For The Perplexed'] gives the throne two meanings:

[1] According to the first interpretation, the 'throne' in Biblical usage refers to the sanctuary or the heavens, which are called throne because the grandeur of God manifested itself in these places, and His light and glory descended there. The Biblical verse "the heaven is my throne" is interpreted by Maimonides as "the heaven indicates my existence, grandeur, and power": just as a throne indicates the greatness of the individual who is considered worthy of it, so the heavens indicate the existence and grandeur of God.

In another similar passage, Maimonides identifies the throne with *the aravot upon which God is said to ride. The aravot, according to him, are identical with the all-encompassing celestial sphere, and God's 'riding' upon it is interpreted to mean that He exists beyond it and in separation from it [Guide, 1:70]. Maimonides ..does not relate the throne to the essence of God, but places the visionary chariot on the level of the separate [angelic, or spiritual] intelligences.*

Thus Ezekiel's vision, according to Maimonides, is *an apprehension of the Glory of God [not of God Himself], of the angels, and the separate intelligences – "the chariot and not the rider."*

[2] According to the second interpretation, the throne is an allusion to God Himself. For example, when Moses swore "Hand upon the throne of the Lord" [Exodus, 17:16], he swore by God Himself. Pointing out that the throne should not be imagined as a thing outside God's essence or as a created being, Maimonides maintains that the throne signifies God's essence.

Two rabbis, three opinions..

6,

[1] First Commentary

The heavens are above the sky realm, though in another sense, they are an extension of it, its higher reaches. The sky, or celestial realm, is more akin to the firmament of crystal, the sea of glass. The throne reveals there is a spiritual domain above the sky, above the celestial. The celestial stands in necessary binary coupling with the terrestrial: sky and earth are a primary pair, a primal father and mother [like air and water; or like sun and moon]. But, the heavens

that directly 'reflect' the Glory of God are still higher. The sky is a transition point, a portal, into the heavenly.

Jewish Tradition often describes the heavens as themselves 7 fold, meaning 7 domains as you ascend, each one higher than the previous because of coming ever closer to God. Each domain has 'many mansions', its own inherent variety and diversity and complex design. Higher than the heavens, yet near to them, is God qua God, the Divine Mystery in and of itself, at source. Many mystics assert that God is the Divine Darkness, because the Reality of God cannot be captured in any created form, nor even fully exhausted in its own magnificent manifestation. This was articulated among the Greek Fathers of Eastern Christianity in their teaching that nothing created can ever know the Uncreated Creator, in and of its own being; thus they distinguish between the Essence of God, beyond form or no form, and the Energies of God which disclose and pour out the Divine Reality by an ecstatic movement whereby the divine moves 'out' of itself towards the creature and the creation, revealing both parties to one another [no revelation is of God alone, all revelation is of humanity as well].

Since God creates everything in, and by, the Energies, everything is made 'user friendly' to the Energies. We are transparent, open, permeable, to their in-coming. Shamanism demonstrates that plentifully, on many levels.

Thus, the throne as chariot is at the centre of the Divine Energies, their central nexus, their point of orchestration and point of intention.

The first interpretation of Ezekiel's vision in Jewish Tradition seems to suggest that 'heaven', or the 'heavenly', is to be associated with the Glory of God, the brilliant 'gleaming' of the Divine Mystery which is beyond it, yet out of which it comes. Heaven, as the 'sanctuary' of the Glory, is thus the place where we are wholly immersed in the Energies that overflow out of God.

The key to differentiating the throne as such from God is understood in its real meaning by Maimonides when he says, "the heaven indicates [God's] existence, grandeur, and power: just as a throne indicates the greatness of the [person] who is considered worthy of it, so the heavens indicate the existence and grandeur of God."

The 'Glory as throne' indicates not simply the kingship, but the worthiness, of the heart that rules everything. That heart, even if only symbolically indicated by the throne, is present. It is symbolised more fully by the 'man' seated upon the throne of God. This is the real mysteriousness in this vision.

Who is worthy? That is mysterious, but even more surprising is: What is worthy?

[2] Second Commentary

The first interpretation of Ezekiel's vision in Jewish Tradition is 'apophatic', drawing a line between God and his Throne-Chariot, refusing to equate the Rider and his Rolling Vehicle.

The second interpretation blurs that line, in order to place the Rider in his Chariot. This is important. The apophatic approach is necessary, to stop people thinking they can take hold of God, know him, and the next minute, appropriate him to their limited and destructive aims.

However, even at the risk of theological error, there is something of the Essence 'in' the Energies. What is this? God's Heart. God is Love, not just: God is loving. Thus, the Energies are loving because the Essence is Love. God has a heart, and though we cannot capture it in its own mysterious reality, never the less, it is what comes out of the Divine Transcendence as the Imminence that meets us. It is God's heart that is the Rider in the Chariot. He does not rule over us, remotely and statically; he seeks to rule our heart, intimately and dynamically.

There is a sense in which Ezekiel did not just see the Chariot, without the Rider. He saw the Vehicle and the Rider moving it. He saw what moves the dynamism entering the world, entering the human heart. He saw the heart of God, golden in worth in the upper half of the body, and driven and animated by fire in the lower half of the body.

He saw that God's heart is, inexplicably, in the likeness of, or like the human.

It is not given in the vision exactly who this 'likeness to a man' actually is. He could be taken, even in purely Jewish terms, as the coming Messiah. For Christians he prefigures the Messiah who has come in Yeshua. Thus he is, if we can look back to the Old Testament from the New Testament, Jesus Christ. The Greek Fathers always claimed that, the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament, while the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.

Yet the mystery remains. Why would God's worthiness of heart be 'like a man', like a human being? Must not God be far above humanity? He is too exalted for us, as heaven is exalted beyond the earth and the sky.. Yet, there is another side to this mystery. In the heart of God is humanity. Why is this? How can it be?

7,

Identifying the seated figure on the throne with any exactitude is missing the whole point.

He is a likeness to a man because, precisely as God, he is human, humane, God is the model of the human.

If we lose our likeness to God, we cease being human.

But this also means, it is God who is like humanity.

This is the great and deep mystery: God is more human than we are; when we depart from God, we become sub human, inhumane, anti-human, in all we are and all we do.

Thus, coming at an epic low moment in Jewish history, this vision depicts God's promise to restore the human image to its God-likeness.

This restoration is key to the New Covenant arising during the Babylonian Exile: a new heart is coming, a new relationship with the Spirit in that heart, is coming, through the Messiah.

This is why the highest in Ezekiel's vision, enthroned above everything yet with its chariot of wheels, rushing on the wind with torches of fire and flashes of lightning, moving into everything, is in the likeness of a man. Not God per se, but the divine-human mystery of God's heart planted and kindled in the human heart, is enthroned as the most worthy, and is given an engine of wind, fire, thunder, to carry it into the suffering heart of the world.

Berdyaev says that in this world "love admits no careful ordering: it is subject to no norms." Love is tragic: "Love means failure in this world rather than the well-ordered life" [DA Lowrie, 1965, p 94]. The throne-chariot bears, carries, the only Love Supreme that can engage our human tragedy of love.

8,

The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor confirms the Daemonic significance of the throne that is really a chariot.

Christ takes Peter, James, and John, up the mountain to pray [Luke, 9, 28-36]. "And as he prayed, ..his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." The Glory of God bursts out of Christ, revealing the divinity latent in his humanity. Moses and Elijah appear in this Glory with Christ, and speak of his coming death in Jerusalem. The disciples had been asleep as Christ began to pray, but waking up, they see the Glory, and the two Jewish prophets, and they throw themselves face down in the dust, as Ezekiel had done.

When the Glory departs, Peter suggests to Christ they should build three tabernacles in this place, one for Moses, one for Elijah, one for him. As Peter is speaking, a cloud overshadows the small group and silences him, for he is making a huge mistake without realising it.. Out of the cloud comes a voice, declaring, 'This is my beloved son, hear him.'

Christ rejects Peter's pious instinct to turn this place where the Glory of God has appeared into yet another sanctuary, still another temple. Such a reaction misunderstands this mysterious event, fundamentally.

That Moses and Elijah speak of Christ's imminent 'ultimate sacrifice' in Jerusalem is Daemonic.

Equally Daemonic is the significance of just these two prophets joining Christ in the Glory.

Moses represents the more static and temple oriented meaning of Glory, for the Law was given to him in the context of creating a Temple to house it. Moses is facilitating a crucial transition wherein the Glory comes down from the mountain, and dwells in the temple among the people. Henceforth, the Glory will be in the very midst of the people, not high above them.

But Elijah, who did not die the usual human death and was taken up in a fiery chariot, arguably the first human to become 'all fire', signifies the more dynamic and world oriented meaning of Glory as the Sign that the throne-chariot is 'on the move' for the sake of a desolate and imprisoned humanity.

For, when Christ says No to the building of any religious shrine to mark his Transfiguration, he is unequivocally making clear that this showing forth of divinity is not to be linked back to Moses and the creation of a sanctuary for Glory.

Rather, it is to be linked back to Elijah and the coming ordeal and battle to kindle Fire in the world.

9,

The Daemonic God is holy and terrible, innocent and undefended, at once. He is Tyger and Lamb, Father and Child, at once; he is the Monster of the Spirit whose heart-beat is the pulse, the roaring voice, the rolling wave, underneath everything, yet he is the Childlike Exuberance whose unguarded eyes with nothing behind them look straight out on everything created and smile, finding it good, beholding its beauty, won by its fragility. Somehow, in a manner for which there are no adequate words, his own heart is the prototype of the human heart. At our most 'human', we contain the paradox of God.

This is why we cannot be complete on our own, without God. We fall apart, unable to sustain the paradox of our humanity. We lose our humanity.

God loves our humanity, it is a likeness to him, not so he can know himself, for that is unnecessary, but so he can have a partner in the paradox, a beloved who shares its contradiction.

This is also why God favours very struggling, turbulent, tortured, people, more than the self-disciplined people. Yes, he had to give us a Limit, a Law, to contain our excesses, before they get transmuted and transformed, but God loves those who try to love, even if -- as is inevitable -- they fail. These struggling lovers are closer to the heart in which God and humanity mysteriously coinhere.

God says David is "a man after his own heart" [1 Samuel, 13, 14; Acts, 13, 33]. David is a serious sinner, but he is also one of those who 'love much and are forgiven much', hence his heart is closer to God's heart than Moses' rigidly

lawful uprightness, whose impatience with anyone who falls from that high standard reveals it does not look into the heart. Only two kings -- in the whole two thousand year history of the Jews before they were expelled from Palestine by the Romans -- were 'anointed' by God's Spirit: David, and the Messiah.

David should be studied, and delved, for what in his heart God finds pliable, and can be worked with: another Tyger reversed by a Lamb, another Lamb reversed by a Tyger. Another lover who is just and merciful, fierce and tender, at once.

For those who can take a hint, this should be sufficient. For those who need a word of advice, it can be spelled out: approach God through the heart. Learn what that means, and does not mean. Make your stand on that.

Humanity was created to bear and carry a heart like God's; but God, strangely, and terrifyingly, already has a heart like ours, a heart human, humane, full of 'humanity' for the suffering of the world.

When we realise this, it is not so shocking that, when asked about Yahweh, Yeshua said, 'if you look at me you will see him.'

Be like God, and 'look at the heart.'

In humanity, look at the heart of God. In God, look at the heart of humanity. In every person you meet, whatever the Blakean 'marks of weakness, marks of woe', look for and find the heart hidden beneath that. Look deeper..

The ontological distinction between Uncreated and created is perfectly true. But God takes the initiative and goes beyond it, making his heart the furnace, and anvil, upon which he forges the heart of humanity.

The terrible and holy fire weeps and bleeds. It understands what it asks from us, and willingly it gives what we need to trust this.

10,

The Glory of God hints at completion, what can be enjoyed by all when all the travail is done.

Yet, by revealing the Beautiful and Brilliant Light as itself the emanation of a Golden Fire, with the Daemonic power of the rushing, the burning, the thundering, that carries it downward and into the very thick of things, this vision actually reveals that without the 'intervention' of the Daemonic, with the strife and striving, the grief and grieving, the change and movement, it brings, the Glory would remain inaccessible to us.

The golden and fiery heart of God, coming to the broken heart of humanity, is more ultimate than the Divine Glory everyone wants to bask and bathe in.

Only through the former coming to us will we humans come to the latter.

For in human existence, and especially in its depth, the Daemonic has no Glory.

Only the height has Glory. To enter the depth, God must be stripped and deprived of the Glorious and Marvellous and Radiant.

God enters, naked, the abyss, to find us where we are naked, raw, ugly.

This mystery of God's ultimate descent, having to lose what we have lost to restore it to us, is what is prefigured in Ezekiel's vision.

This is what is enthroned as worthy, and this is what is in a living chariot, driven by wheels of eyes, not 'coming to a theatre near you soon', but crashing right into your existence, to drag you down to where you are broken, by itself accepting breaking.

In the highest heavens, the golden and fiery heart of the Daemonic has Glory. Its worth is 'self-evident', and experienced by all who meet it face to face, and come into its presence.

In the depth, in the abyss, there is only the golden and fiery heart, stripped of all Glory, fighting raw, naked, ugly. It has to become like that, it has to fight like that, to reach us, and restore us, where we are utterly ruined, and inglorious in our end.

It is the end to us.

The Daemonic, stripped of everything except its heart, shares our inglorious end to give us a second chance, and raise us to a new Glory, shared with God and us, as both the divine and human hearts are 'vindicated' in the end.

This is what St John's vision in the Revelations shows, that Ezekiel's vision does not.

Ezekiel: where the second chance starts. St John: where the second roll of the rushing wind, the burning, the lightning, the thundering, culminates.

In St John's vision, the Lamb Slain Before the World Began is on the throne, and he alone is worthy to open the seven sealed scrolls that herald the final journey, the last fight, that will bring victory in the end.

Who or what is worthy? God is not worthy because of having the Ultimate Power. So what? God is worthy because of how he abases that power for the sake of humanity.

God is worthy because he has a heart, a heart like ours, a human heart, passionate and vulnerable at once, full of tears and on fire at once.

It is so. Let it be so..

THE MESSIAH IN JEWISH TRADITION

1,

The word 'Messiah' in Hebrew is variably rendered as: Mashiah, Moshiah, Mashiach, or Moshiach. It means 'the anointed one', 'the chosen one', 'the righteous one.'

Both priests and kings were anointed with 'holy oil' in the Jewish Bible, but no priest had the significance attached to the king. You could say the king was the central backbone, while priest and prophet were right and left hands. Thus the Messiah is appointed by God as the anointed, chosen, righteous, king who will redeem Israel and the world. Neither any priest nor any prophet was called 'anointed, chosen, righteous' in the Messianic sense. The Messiah is the king anointed in order to redeem, chosen in order to redeem, righteous in order to redeem. A Russian Orthodox choir master once said to me, "we have no pope in the Eastern Church, but if we had a single overall leader it would be the king." In the ancient world, and among many ancient peoples, the king is a more sacred calling than priest or prophet. The three are not equal.

The Book of Isaiah never praises priest nor prophet, but repeatedly extols the stupendous meaning and spiritual efficacy of the king: "A king reigns by integrity, ..[he is] like a shelter from the wind, a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in dry places, like the shade of a great rock in a thirsty land. The eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, the ears of those who hear will be alert, the heart of the hasty will learn to judge, the tongue of stammerers will speak clearly, the fool will no more be called noble, nor the villain be styled honourable" [Isaiah, 32,1-5].

The king's heart 'in' the world manifests God's heart 'for' the world.

It is unthinkable in the religion of the Jews that the Messiah could be anything other than a king, even if additional roles attach to his kingship, to amplify its main thrust.

Consequently, the Messiah is often referred to in Hebrew as Melekh ha-Mashia, literally meaning 'the anointed king', but this phrase is understood to mean, 'the king who will redeem his people and all humanity.' Priest and prophet can contribute to redemption, but neither can 'make it happen'; the king is the absolutely crucial linchpin for bringing about the process of redemption, setting it in motion, driving it forward, energizing its dynamics. Without the Messianic king, there is no redeemer and no redemption.

Given all the prophets who foretell the coming Messiah, there is only one -- and he comes after the Babylonian Exile when the wave of fire that inspired earlier prophecy has all but receded -- who speaks of the Messiah not as a king, but as a 'messenger' who is a terrible and almost divine person [Malachi, 3, 1-4]. The Book of Daniel reaffirms the kingly tradition yet portrays

the coming Messiah as an 'apocalyptic' figure, rooted in the end times which are prior to the actual 'Messianic Age.' Indeed, Daniel, 7, 9-10, 13-14, virtually suggests the Messiah is both divine and human [in some ill-defined sense].

Jewish commentators in the Talmud, and elsewhere, also affirm the kingship of the Messiah. However, Hasidism nuances the Jewish religion in its own very distinctive way. For the Hasids the Messiah is often associated with their religious leaders, given the title of 'zaddik', meaning someone tested or proven, literally 'checked out.' The zaddik combines several roles in relation to his followers: kingly guide, prophetic sage and spiritual teacher, with the power to do miracles, and leader of the rousing services in the synagogue. He has echoes of the 'spiritual master' of many traditions—guru, staretz, geron, shaman—combined with a kingly position of bearing on his shoulders heavy responsibility for the fate of his people. This combined role has some strong parallels with Jesus Christ; the zaddik is, in some important senses, Christ-like.

2,

The Messiah is the main figure of Jewish 'eschatology.' He is a future Jewish king in the line of David [which renders the clues about the Messiah in the Psalms very significant]. Indeed, so strong is the link between David and Messiah, they are called in Jewish tradition, 'the two anointed kings' [Numbers, 24, 17-18]. This not only affirms some powerful spiritual connection running directly from the Davidic kingship to the Messianic kingship, but also it affirms that, as kings, David and Messiah are unique in all of Jewish history. In fact, David is Messianic in his kingship, like the actual Messianic kingship. The former is the symbol, the latter is the reality, of Messianic kingship. Or put it differently, one is the forerunner, the other is the realisation. Consequently, we should study who David was and what he did to get a sense of who the Messiah will be and what he will do. David's heroic deeds and actions, his tribal wars and battles, his personal struggles and crises, his prophetic poetry and prayers in the Psalms, his entire story, is very revealing of the true spirit, and deeper meaning, of the Messiah who will follow after him, exceeding him, but a flowering from his root.

Since David dates from 1000 BC [though many of the Psalms date from 450 BC], it can be affirmed that some kind of Messianic consciousness goes that far back in Jewish history. The story of Moses, dating from 1250 BC, would not seem to be pointing to any Messianic future. Nor is there any such vision of the outcome to all the tribulations and travels of the Jews dating from the earlier time when Abraham arrived among the Canaanites in 2000-1850 BC. For the whole period that the Jewish patriarchs were in Egypt, from 1700 BC to 1250 BC, nothing Messianic emerges, nor does it emerge after the time of Moses when Joshua invades Palestine in 1220 BC. Not even in the time of Samuel, dating from 1040 BC, nor Saul, dating from 1030-1010 BC, is the Messiah even hinted at—or if there are hints, they are so faint only those looking backward in retrospect might see them. To an extent, the tradition that regards David as the ground for and beginning of Messianic kingship is certainly retrospective [Isaiah, 11,1-9]. Yet, if you look at David's life and his

Psalms, then you can see quite visibly and tangibly the first sprouting of the Tree of Redemption, as distinct from the Tree of Salvation. The prophet can move between both trees, as the Spirit takes him, and the priest is very much part of the Salvational Tree [I Chronicles, 22, 5-11], but the king is staked to the Redemptive Tree. Indeed, according to the Post Exilic parts of the Book of Isaiah, the king will also be killed on this tree-- not just staked to it but nailed on it to die.

Not only is the Messiah in the line of David, with only David and he occupying the profoundest meaning of kingship as Messianic in nature, but the Messiah will rule 'in God's name', called, blessed, empowered, by the Holy Spirit: "...on him the Spirit of Yahweh rests, a Spirit of wisdom and insight, a Spirit of counsel and power, a Spirit of knowledge and of the respect of Yahweh" [Isaiah, 11, 2]. It is this Spirit of God who will enable the Messianic king to fulfil his role as redeemer by completing the task of redemption. In Hebrew, 'go-el' is redeemer, and 'geulah' is redemption. Tradition says, "his reign shall be from sea to sea" [Zachariah, 9,10]; the Messiah's reign will be universal because it is in fact God's reign that is established through him. The Messianic king is the 'representative' of the divine king— and there are no other such representatives, even if a whole crowd of pretenders claim to be this one and only true representative.

The Messianic kingship, representing God's kingship, and implementing God's Spirit, will have special features that no human ruler, whether 'good' [righteous] or 'bad' [wicked, tyrannical, unjust], could ever attain. For example, any rulership of the world that does not genuinely unite it in fraternity, not crushing but welcoming its diversity, cannot be from God. In a subtle sense, then, the Messiah is the only valid king, the only Godly king, who will ever occupy the throne of earth. Other occupants of this throne, kings and chiefs down the ages, can approximate to the Messianic king, explicitly or implicitly, but none can do what he does to establish what he establishes. Godly is as Godly does, as far as kingship is concerned. Any leader could be inspired by the Messianic Spirit, and this will be the most creative, and loving, helpful and self-sacrificing, kind of leader; but there is only one leader of leaders, king of kings, and that is the Messiah. Many kings, like the vast majority in European history, and elsewhere across the globe, pale into insignificance when placed next to the Messianic king. They appear false kings, simply not up to the job, when compared with the true king.

The Lakota vision of the 'chief' is strikingly Messianic in its comprehension of what a leader does, and does not, do. The chief is the living embodiment of uprightness of heart, and the readiness of the heart to pour out its blood for those it shelters in its care.

The king is the main figure of 'passion of heart', when the heart is both deep and great.

Kings who oppress and exploit the people, who have no concern for them, and abandon them to the worst fate whilst securing the best fate for themselves, are far from the Messianic Spirit.

It is hinted at as early as the time of Samuel, the prophet who anointed Saul as king, and near the time of David, that the special mission of the Messianic king is to “the afflicted people” [II Samuel, 22, 28]. Bringing people through affliction to the other side is Messianic; adding to people’s afflictions—spiritually, morally, psychologically, politically, socially, physically—so that it becomes harder to move through them, but in fact makes it more likely the people will remain stuck in them, is anti-Messianic. Christ echoes this when saying, ‘I came to redeem, not judge, the world.’ Judging the world, as well as organising it non-equitably, is the anti-Christ.

3,

What are the special features of the singular, and genuine, Messianic rulership, according to Jewish tradition? They characterise the Messianic Age that the Messianic king inaugurates.

[1] The world’s peoples “will hammer their swords into plowshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war” [Isaiah, 2, 4; Ezekiel, 39, 9]. The constant warfare that has been a defining mark of human history will be abolished for all peoples in the world.

[2] Justice balanced by Compassion will be axiomatic realities governing everyday life for all peoples in the world.

[3] A new time will be ushered in where evil and tyranny will not be able to stand against the Messiah, and the wretched and poor will at last be released from oppression: “He does not judge by appearances.. but judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of the land; his word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentences bring death to the wicked. Integrity is the loincloth around his waist, faithfulness the belt around his hips” [Isaiah, 11, 4].

Once the Messiah is recognised king and his kingdom established, leaders of other nations will look to him for guidance [Isaiah, 2, 4]. He will rally all the nations to his cause, and will be attractive [Isaiah, 11, 10] for all peoples in the world.

[4] Justice, Peace, Truth, are pervasive spiritual realities for all peoples in the world.

[5] God’s sovereignty will be established [Isaiah, 2, 2-4] for all peoples in the world.

[6] The existential exactions of existence will cease. There will be no more hunger or illness, and death will be swallowed up forever [Isaiah, 25, 8]. All of the dead will rise again [Isaiah, 26, 19]. All desires of soul and inclinations of heart worthy of humanity will be granted [Psalms, 37, 4], bringing the happiness of fulfilment for all the peoples in the world.

[7] There will be a revolution in the very nature of all things, because of God's indwelling of everything: "The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together.. The infant plays over the cobra's hole; into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand, they do no hurt.. for the land shall be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh" [Isaiah, 11, 6-9]. Knowledge of God, as a directly experienced, breathed in and breathed out, reality will fill all the peoples in the world.

[8] This experiential spiritual knowing of God as 'all in all' will be through the heart, it will be written in the heart, communicated to the heart, and therefore - according to Jeremiah -- it will end any need for sacred books, written scriptures, Bibles, Korans, Diamond Sutras, for all peoples in the world.

[9] After putting aside his anger at the continuing unrighteousness of the Jews and other nations in rivalry with them, God will show mercy, and this mercifulness will be all-inclusive, with no exclusions, for all peoples in the world.

This last point is conveyed by the Book of Jonah, read in its entirety on the Day of Atonement. God asks the prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh, one of Israel's oldest and most savage enemies, in order by his fiery words to call all the inhabitants of the city to repentance. Jonah knows what this means: God will not destroy Israel's enemies, but will include them in his universal mercy towards, and pardon of, all mankind. Humanly, Jonah is furious with Yahweh, and refuses the job he has been asked to do. He wants 'the foes of God' punished, whilst only the friends of God should be rewarded. This judgementalism is repudiated by God. Jonah, in fleeing from God, gets thrown off a ship when the weather turns violent and the sea starts to boil. Instead of drowning, as he morally 'deserves' for being the cause of the harm attacking the 'innocent' ship, Jonah is swallowed by a whale, in whose belly he spends three days—like the three days between Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. Jonah undergoes a huge transformation in this strange depth that has engulfed him, and when he emerges on dry land, he does what he had been asked by God originally. Jonah preaches to the people of Nineveh, they too have a deep change of heart, and God forgives them. Yet even after this marvellous outcome, Jonah is still smoldering. He tells Yahweh, "I knew you were a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, relenting from evil." [Jonah, 4, 1-4] as explanation for why he ran away. Jonah knew God was going to redeem 'the bad people', rather than punish them for their badness, and so he tried to block this 'good ending for bad people' by refusing to be an instrument of the redemptive process. Yahweh is almost pleading with the prophet's fit of moral indignation, in its demand for a final and irrevocable division of sheep from goats, "Am I not to feel sorry for Nineveh?" [Jonah, 4, 11]. Yahweh admits to the condemnatory Jonah that the inhabitants of Nineveh don't know their left hand from their right hand, they are morally confused, and nothing like righteous, yet there are too many people populating the 'great city' just to throw them all away. Jonah has a lesson to learn that accusatory people such as the

fundamentalists, and other persons caught up in legal and moral dualism, have still not learned.

God is 'rich in forgiveness', because of a more ultimate compassion, mercy, tenderness, that he exercises toward humanity, rather than favouring the upright and rejecting the fallen down.

This is true Messianic Judaism-- and Christ on the Cross builds on it and merely takes its truth of love further, as far as it can go.

Even in Judaism, where God's anger at the unjust, the unrighteous, the wicked, is so hot, tenderness tempers anger, and has the last say on the last day. 'Tenderness'—such as a loving parent would show to a very ill child—is a word especially powerful in this context. It does not suggest God is simply letting sin off the hook, or pretending sin is fine and dandy. It does suggest a more 'human, kindly, understanding', stance toward our failings. We are not just lacking in integrity, we are sick; we need healing from God, and we need patience from God toward the difficulties of integrity we must work through. Sin does not define who and what we are; we are more, and God's tenderness has greater effectiveness in releasing this 'more' than any divine wrath that 'once and forever' closes accounts on us.

4,

But the Jews are not only haunted by an 'acidic moralism' in their own hearts which they try to project into the heart of God, but also there are times when they lapse into a parochial and narrow national self-importance and arrogance. Whether the four specifically Jewish marks of the Messianic Age are down to that, or have a less obvious symbolic and mystical meaning, it is hard to say.

[1] The Messiah will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and restore the old temple worship.

[2] The Messiah will gather together all the scattered Jews, and bring them back to Israel.

[3] The Messiah will restore the Davidic kingdom to all of Israel.

[4] The Messiah will restore Israel's ancient judges and counsellors; Jerusalem will become a centre, or hub, of righteousness, the 'Faithful City' [Isaiah, 1, 26], and the peoples of the world will turn to the Jews for spiritual guidance [Zechariah, 8, 23]. Moreover, the nations will acknowledge the wrongs they did to Israel in the past [Isaiah, 52, 13; 53, 5].

These four points are clearly less impressive than the previous nine points, for non Jews. However, a prophet from the time of Jeremiah [627 BC] implies the deeper significance of these rather confined Jewish requirements of the Messianic king, in saying he will 'mend the entire world to worship Yahweh together' [Zephaniah, 3, 9]. Zachariah, a hundred years later [520 BC],

conveys something similar: “They shall be my people and I will be their God” [Zachariah, 8, 1-17, 20-23]; interestingly to any Christian, this prophet sees the Messianic king modestly seated on a very uncharismatic animal: “[He is] humble and riding on a donkey” [Zachariah, 8, 9].

5,

The Messianic time is a kind of Golden Age at the end of time, echoing in some ways the Paradise at the beginning of time, but also bringing to a victorious climax many of the sorrows, struggles, hurts, potentialities, disasters, of ‘being in the world’ over the whole span of history between Beginning and End.

Thus, the Messianic Age is a Holy City, but in it is flourishing the Sacred Garden, so in a real sense it is both Beginning and End in a paradoxical integration. The turbulent Middle has been resolved, and thus is not in evidence, but is ‘represented’ by the beauty of the Sacred Garden before everything went to pot and the peace of the Holy City after everything is fulfilled. The entire process, from first to last, is redemption, and redemption as a process is effectively set in motion, and secured, by the redeemer.

This is why the Messiah is enthroned at the heart of the Holy City and Sacred Garden, as their king. Only he can connect the sacredness of the beginning and the holiness of the end by his deeds of redemption in the storm tossed Middle, where the beauty of the start place is lost and the peace of the finish place seems far off. The Middle is a Desert, a trackless waste, that has to be crossed. The world process can be destroyed on the way.

The Messiah contends with the world, humanity, history, in a hard and protracted moment when the good latent at the beginning is ‘forgotten in the mists of time’ and the love triumphant at the end is ‘obscured in the haziness of some distant time impossible to imagine.’

Jewish eschatology also is populated with symbolic, and semi mythical, but certainly visionary and peculiar, stories of ‘apocalypse’ where the end is near, and so the ‘last times’ intensify all the woes of world, humanity, history, and throw underlying clashes of Love versus its Adversary out into the light, where the two sides are seen more clearly and become violently accentuated. Calamities in the natural and political spheres punctuate the heroic battles of redemption against ruination of the whole human venture. Moreover, supernatural events, epiphanies, interventions, mark the last days as well. It is important to realise that right up to the Exile to Babylon [596--582 BC] and beyond, when Yahweh wanted to oppose either Israel or her national enemies he used no supernatural eruptions at all, but rather, deployed ‘ordinary’ natural and political upheavals to convey his grasp on what was going on. It is therefore unique to Jewish eschatology that weird and strange things break into the everyday functioning of nature and history; this only happens in those times which feel like the last days before some big end, if not the end. The Christian Bible concludes with a Jewish style eschatological

vision in the 'Apocalypse' attributed to St John of the Fourth Gospel, when he was an old man living on the Greek island of Patmos.

Given the absence of any party line that enforces a single viewpoint, the religion of the Jews contains many competing, and opposed, interpretations of the Messiah, who he is, what he does, and what the Messianic Age will be like. These varying accounts are spread over not only the prophets, but also the Jewish commentators.

6,

The Talmud details the advent of the Messiah and describes the Messianic Age as a time of freedom and peace, a period of 'ultimate goodness', as one Jewish writer puts it, not only for the Jews but also for mankind as a whole. Everything and everyone has reached a happy conclusion, together.

More striking is the claim that the Messiah will come precisely when all hope for him is dwindling. A Jewish commentator describes this: "When thou seest a generation overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him; [for] when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh shall lift up a standard against him; and the Redeemer shall come to Zion."

To put it differently, you send on your best player when your team is down 1 nil, and full time is approaching, but you sense the opposing team are about to go on a scoring rampage, because your team is in tatters. The wall is about to crumble, the waters will burst through, sweeping away whatever is in their path. But the new player steadies your team's nerves, and they hold; they are not overwhelmed, and in the dying seconds, the man reserved for the most dangerous moment scores twice, and your team snatches victory, 2 goals to 1. God loves letting things go to the edge, before taking any decisive action.

Interestingly, the same commentator suggests that the Messiah will come only in a generation that is either totally righteous, or totally wicked. If the former, then the Messiah comes to confirm the people's 'inheritance' of the land they will live in; if the latter, then the Messiah comes as 'intercessor', in the sense that 'for the sake of my own will I do it.' In the former case, the Messiah comes to affirm people are on track, and bless what they are doing. It is already Messianic. In the latter case, the Messiah is the one who never gives up on humanity because we are all 'his own', and he will 'do it' precisely because we are in such dire straits.

So, to those living the way of redemption, the Messiah takes a light hand, letting them get on with it; whilst, to those sunk in iniquity and the deepest existential malaise, he does more. Both reactions of his, the lighter and the deeper, arise from love for 'his' people. 'For the sake of those who are mine', he does whatever has to be done to bring redemption to one and all, with no one left beyond the pale forever.

Interceding has the connotation, in this context, of doing for another what they cannot do for themselves. You step into the breach, and do the action for

your own that they cannot do. If they can do it, you don't rob them of that dignity, and hence you step back and respect their doing, but when the going gets really impossible for your own, at their point of annihilation if no one steps in for them, you step up and carry them through. You take their trouble on you, and you do what they cannot do, to face and wrestle with it. They then may, through your encouragement and strength, be able to do it at last.

The Talmud tells many stories of rabbis receiving visits from Elijah and the Messiah. On one such occasion the rabbi asks Elijah when the Messiah will come, and the prophet called 'the herald of the Messiah' replies, 'go ask him yourself.' The rabbi then sees the Messiah sitting at the entrance of a tomb, bandaging and healing 'poor lepers.' The rabbi goes to the Messiah and greets him as Master and Teacher, asking the question about when he will come. 'Today' is the answer. The rabbi goes back to Elijah who enquires what the Messiah said. The rabbi conveys the whole cryptic answer. Elijah interprets it by saying the Messiah has assured the rabbi and his ancestors a portion of the world to come; they will be in the future redemption. The rabbi is disturbed, however, and says, 'He spoke falsely to me, stating that he would come today, but has not.' Elijah answers that the Messiah said he would come 'today, if ye listen to his voice.'

Perhaps we are insensible to the coming of the Messiah, and so for us he has not come today, because we have not been listening to his voice. This means a great deal more than just studying any sacred text. Not hearing his voice means we have been closed to the whole Messianic dimension of existence. It is right in front of us, but we miss it; we look at it all the time but do not see it. We listen to it all the time but do not hear it. The Talmudic story exemplifies what the 'Messianic dimension' of existence is in the lepers, the most diseased and impoverished of all mankind, and the most forsaken by everybody. Had we, in any degree in our life, perceived with our eyes and understood with our heart who the 'afflicted people' were, we might have not been left hanging by the Messiah who should have turned up today.

The afflicted people, and the afflicting mystery of existence, is the Messiah's real calling. This is what he has to deal with. This is what he has to change, by letting the affliction afflict him as it afflicts those under its hammer blows. The Messiah is no Superman, riding to the Rescue, to supernaturally and magically whisk the affliction out of existence [or the people out of existence and up to heaven]. As Jeremiah said to the Jews of his time sent into Babylonian Exile, and hoping for an unusually powerful intervention by God that would supernaturally and magically, and instantly, lift them out of their worst nightmare, 'there is no Exit.' The Messiah is not going to provide any Great Escape from existential and historical contingencies which we must 'pass through' in this world. However, the affliction that is destroying us, on many levels, is what the Messiah will suffer for our sake, and by his suffering, help us suffer it in a new way that proves totally transfiguring.

Jews who believe the Messiah has not come never the less have not given up on the Messianic Spirit, nor hope in its eventual transformation of us and our situation. For Orthodox Jews, 'awaiting the Messiah' is number 12 of 13

beliefs defining the Jewish religion as set forth by Maimonides. For Hasidic Jews, the Messiah is almost heart stoppingly imminent. For Conservative Jews, 'the Messiah teaches every human being to live as if he or she, personally, has the responsibility to bring about the Messianic Age' and 'though he may tarry, yet do we wait for him each day' [Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles]. For Reform Jews, though feeling the Messianic Age is far off, given the horrors of the modern era, still they renew their hope for it when they assert that the Shabbat is its pretaste and prefigurement, and anticipate it in many other practices.

7,

Not all Jewish prophets uttered any prophecy concerning the Messiah. One view, doubtless over simplified, is that before the Exile, the prophets focused on Righteousness, whilst it was the calamitous disaster of the Exile that really catalysed the crystallisation of the Messianic figure, with his irrational, 'hope against hope' for Israel, and by extension, the entire world. In the Exile, the main focus turns towards Redemption.

None the less, perhaps there remains some truth in this impression, because the single most wondrous outpouring about the nature, deed, effect, of the Messiah comes in chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah which are from an unknown prophet of the Exile [or Post Exile]. It may be that the Jews did not become all that conscious of the Messiah, even if he was already vaguely present, until the severest affliction they had ever gone through as a people finally overtook them. Early prophets like Amos, dating from 783 to 743 BC, had warned the Jews they were heading up a blind alley, and it could only end in tears. This warning keeps getting reiterated by subsequent prophets over the 200 years leading up to the Exile. There is a prophetic feeling that terrible, and dreadful, defeat and destruction for Israel is coming.

Though nothing like as long lasting as the Egyptian captivity 600 years earlier, in fact lasting only three generations from the fall of the north in 596 BC and the fall of Jerusalem in the south in 582 BC, until Babylon was overthrown by Cyrus, the Persian king, in 538 BC, to most Jews of that horrendous moment, including Jeremiah, going into slavery in far off Babylon spelled both the end of Israel as a nation, politically, and the end of Israel as a people of Yahweh, religiously. It really seemed absolutely The End.

Tradition has it that Jeremiah was stoned to death by Jews in Egypt who had returned to the religion of the Great Mother. His heart was already broken, his death merely a confirmation of abject despair.

"If you must forsake Yahweh, you must. But this means the utter end of the old covenant. You can be no more his people, and he can be no more your God" [Jeremiah, 44, 28].

Existentially, Exile is not unique to the Jews. Many persons have tasted the humiliation that wrecks all further venturing. The train has hit the buffers, and is at a complete stop, never to roll on again. This hurts beyond any remedy.

'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept' has become a litany of sorrow for many human beings. Vine de Loria Jr, a well-known Dakota scholar, argued that Indigenous peoples are currently in a kind of Babylonian Exile, and like the Jews, can only emerge from it if they use its furnace to forge a new spiritual consciousness that will change their religion and way of life.

Can any prophetic lineage in the anticipation of the Messiah confidently be traced, then? The impression of many commentators is that the growing awareness of the Messiah rumbles down centuries, in starts and stops, in hints and clues, in allusions and analogies, sometimes more clear and sometimes more vague. Still, perhaps a sequence of sorts can be unearthed.

[1] If so, the founder and ancestor of all prophetic foretelling of the coming Messiah is David, especially in certain Psalms. Tracking the Messiah all the way back to 1010-970 BC may be how the Jews saw it looking back, with the hindsight of centuries, but the Messianic hope starts with the king and prophet, poet and lover, warrior and man of tumult and trouble, David.

Is there any pre-Davidic prophecy of the Messiah? Maybe yes, maybe no..

There is such prophecy if you accept Peter's assertion [Acts, 10, 43] that 'all the prophets' witness to the Messiah. Perhaps only Jesus Christ could decode all these prophets, going back to Moses, in such a way as to reveal in them prefigurements of himself as the Messiah [John, 5, 39; 46]. But to less acute eyes, there are only the most vague prophecies that might, at a stretch, be regarded as Messianic before David. One recent writer, a Jewish convert to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, is surely right to suggest that, in regard to the figure of the Messiah in the Old Testament, there is "a progression from the first books, which contain embryonic prophecies, to later books, which contain more detailed and fuller predictions. As a seed sprouts and grows, so do the prophecies" [Bernstein, 2008, p 64].

According to Bernstein, there are two pre-David passages commented upon in Jewish tradition which might be regarded as referring to a coming Messiah. In English they do not really point to this, but perhaps in Hebrew they resonate differently. The first candidate is the passage [Genesis, 49, 10] where Jacob is on his death-bed, and tells his sons 'what lies before you', and one of his sayings is: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah.. until Shiloh comes; and to him will be the obedience of the people." Some Jewish commentators equate 'Shiloh' with the Messiah. If this is the earliest Messianic reference, it suggests he will be a king, winning the loyalty of his people, but little else. Bernstein thinks it means the Messiah must arrive before the kingdom of Judah is destroyed and the Jews dispersed.

The second candidate is the passage [Deuteronomy, 18, 15-19] where Moses tells the Jews that Yahweh has agreed to their request for a prophet who will speak to them gently, because the voice and fire of Yahweh on Mount Horeb terrified them, making them feel they would die in its fierce presence. They are asking for the Daemonic to come, not like the fearful storm that shakes

the earth, but more akin to the healing rain that follows it. Why this prophet should be regarded as in any sense a Messiah is not clear from the context.

With the best will in the world, neither of these passages seem even faintly Messianic.

Hence, it can really be concluded that David is the first anticipation of the Messiah in any incontestable way. David is central to all the prophecy concerned with the Messiah. Not only is the Messiah a king in the Davidic sense, spiritually, but physically they are of the same lineage, and even born in the same place, Ephrath, an outskirts of Bethlehem, according to Micah: "But you Bethlehem, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel" [Micah, 5, 2]. Jeremiah also prophesies that the Messiah will be a "virtuous branch [from] David, who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land.. And this is the name he will be called: Yahweh-our-righteousness" [Jeremiah, 23, 5-6]. Isaiah repeats the theme of David as the ancestor of the Messiah: "There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse [David's father], and a branch shall grow out of his roots, the Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him" [Isaiah, 11, 1].

Despite his many and glaring failings as a human being -- or rather precisely because of them -- David's kingship is 'true', and it is upon such truth that the Messianic kingship builds, and which it fulfils. Yet David is a man of royal heart not only because of the way the heart's lies are overcome by truthfulness of heart, but also because he is a man of depth of heart, who cries out of his deeps to God's deeps. Through David, the depth of humanity and the depth of God become players in the drama of redemption. Hence, the coming redeemer will also have to be deep, not just upright, in heart. Psalm 63 in the Septuagint declares of the Messiah, "a man is coming whose heart is deep."

The Messianic Spirit complicates the upright with the deep.

[2] Hosea, from 750 to 721 BC, is the next Messianic prophet. He is not explicitly talking about redemption, yet implicitly he is. Redemption is like a husband who will not give up on a faithless, whoring wife. Righteousness might dictate she should be divorced, or even put to death, but Hosea loves her, despite her infidelities, and will not give up on her.

This image of redemption is articulated in terms of marriage: you don't throw away the faithless partner in whom you invested so much, you suffer pain for them, as part of recalling them from the destitution and shame they have entered. Love over-rides justice. 'If God counted all our sins, and held us to strict account, who could survive it?', David had cried, facing up to his own infidelities and betrayals. Righteousness is important, but not as an end in itself, distinct from love. Thus love introduces a new ingredient, a dynamic factor, that can change even the inevitable.

And this love is operative through pain, the deep pain in the heart, shared by Yahweh and humanity.

Doom is coming to the Jews, as a consequence of their own resistance to Righteousness. Yet, and at this point it is no more than an indication, love can, if it suffers enough and suffers in a certain way, even recall doom. Even in hell, with love it is not over until it is over, and it is still everything to play for.

Doom will come, but so will a second chance, brought by love.

But through pain, at cost, to love.

Hosea's concluding image of redemption, also related to broken marriage, is shocking. Though the child perish in the womb and come still-born into the world, Yahweh could and will give it life [Hosea, 8, 13].

Yahweh's secret name is Love. Love will be victorious over justice, and even death.

[3] Isaiah, who was called in 740 BC, about the same time as his contemporary Micah, is the third Messianic prophet because scattered over chapters 1-39 of the book bearing his name, there are glimpses of the redeemer and his universal, existential and ontological, redemption. The 'virtuous king' who is coming to Israel is not named as the Messiah, but his effects are certainly Messianic. There is, however, another reason why Isaiah's prophecy is Messianic: the traditional demand for righteousness is placed in a larger context that starts to anticipate redemption.

A man of wide interests, Isaiah saw Israel as a player on the world stage of evolving human history, alongside other great powers of the time, such as Assyria and Egypt, though he always was clear that the meaning of the drama in which all the nations were playing their part emanated from Yahweh. Isaiah is aware, like Amos, that Yahweh is concerned with the destiny of the whole human race, not merely with what happens to Israel. Thus the historical dimension of the religion of the Jews strongly comes to the fore in him. All events in history are part of God's purpose for the world process in its entirety. Even empires that think themselves free to do whatever they like are in reality instruments of Yahweh.

Hence Isaiah comments on the political and military events of his day, and the Book of Kings has him as an advisor to the Jewish king in matters relating to Assyria, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Egyptian intrigues markedly roused his antipathy-- he foretells the fall of the Egyptian Pharaohs at length. In all these situations, however, Isaiah is really counselling the Jewish king that Israel's only defender is Yahweh. The sheer weight of the empires arrayed against Israel should not be daunting, because calculating from worldly power alone ignores the hand of Yahweh upon events. It is clear that the God of Israel is involved in the world, in the dissensions of politics, and is not disinterested in the wheels of history. On the contrary, Yahweh is the real power turning those wheels, whether anyone involved realises this or not. Hence Yahweh should

be consulted on all matters pertaining to life in the world, even and especially the most 'worldly.'

Clearly, this emphasis found in Isaiah is significant for redemption, because redemption deals in the world, not shying away from the political and military realities that constitute history as the nightmare from which we cannot wake up, yet which can also become grist for the slowly grinding mill of Yahweh. This makes 'faith' not something ethereal, other worldly, geared to heaven after death, transcendent, but something involved in 'what happens.' Faith is existential, and as such, is Kierkegaard's leap of passion into the unknown as it unfolds in the absurdity of events. Will you risk your life to this? If you have faith you will. Isaiah stresses in particular that even if you are surrounded on all sides by enemies willing you harm, and are outgunned by them, your faith in God is shown by refusing to be intimidated by these threats, refusing to make deals with them that will compromise your integrity just for a bit of security, and instead trusting that God is your only protector in life—not because he will guarantee you win, and your enemies lose, but because if you trust him, then however he disposes of you in the world, it is ultimately good. There is no other refuge than Yahweh.

Isaiah too, like Amos, reveals the fall of Israel to come, due to the nation's unfaithfulness to Yahweh. This is shown not only in how the nation is run, but also in how the nation tries to secure itself among the nations of the world that endanger it. David stood up to Goliath, and with God's help brought him down. But Israel has lost that passion, and won't stand up to intimidation, through faith in Yahweh. The preference is for treaties and machinations that will not secure anything or anyone. At one point the king listens to Isaiah when the Assyrians lay siege to Jerusalem. Isaiah tells him not to accept their demand for surrender, despite overwhelming odds stacked against the city. The Jews hold out, and the Assyrian forces suddenly give up, and depart.

Also Messianic in Isaiah is the realisation that righteousness is rooted in faith; righteousness is not 'my' rectitude, achieved by 'my' strength in resisting temptation, and 'my' effort in keeping the ordinances. Rather, it is my faith in Yahweh, and my faithfulness to that faith over time through ups and downs, that enables me to be upright, keeping to goodness, and eschewing wickedness, however much I have to struggle. Yahweh is my strength, my power, my guide, in what to do. Righteousness is his, not mine; by leaning on his righteousness, it becomes mine in the sense of what I respect, what I honour, what I follow. It is never mine in the sense that I own it, deserve it, generate it. The latter is self-righteousness, and this perversion is worse than laxity. At least in laxity I have no pretensions to virtue. In self-righteousness, I think I am virtuous off my own back, and am very pleased I am not weak like other people. I sneer at the struggles in the heart between virtue and vice, because I am beyond that. I am a tough hombre, I stand tall and do not bend, as lesser mortals always do. Look how great I am. In fact, you had better bow down and worship me, or at the very least, you better kow tow to me, because I really am superior to you, and more worthy to run the show.

Isaiah declares Yahweh's opposition to the tyranny that arises out of a false estimation of how 'good' we are. At one point, there is a taunt directed at the king of Babylon [Isaiah, 14, 1-22]. The Babylonian king is, in fact, Lucifer son of the morning, who has fallen far, and in the world has become the Satanic Accuser. The cool Luciferian shine and the hot Satanic boiling are flip sides of the same coin of spiritual evil.

Isaiah provides many descriptions of the ideal, non tyrannical, king, faithful to Yahweh and faithful to the people, but whether all these should be taken as blatantly Messianic is an open question. At least some are. And it can be argued that the kind of true king, or true leader, portrayed in Isaiah must be inspired by the Messianic Spirit.

Certainly Messianic is Isaiah's vision that, even when Israel does inevitably fall, a remnant of Jews will rebuild Israel 'under a future descendent of David.' This is the redeemer, bringing redemption.

Paradoxically, no prophet is as aware of God's Holiness, yet this stamps in Isaiah a certain tone of optimism missing from many Pre-Exilic prophets who see Israel headed for the rocks. Holiness is understandably regarded as set apart from the world, given its purity, but there is something else in Isaiah's experience of 'the Holy of Israel' that reveals it differently. Holiness summons Israel back to God, rather than casting Israel out, forever [Isaiah, 17, 7, 8; 10, 20-22].

Passing 'through' righteousness, but moving 'toward' redemption, is the dynamic that is conveyed through Isaiah. Is this not the secret of the religion of the Jews? His sense of the future of Israel is not as miserable and hopeless as that of his predecessors and contemporaries. To restore Israel is the real manifestation of Yahweh's Holiness.

This means we are created to become bearers of Holiness, coals of Holy Fire.

[4] Jeremiah, who was called in 627 BC, is the fourth Messianic prophet. He was a man who liked quietness, nature's daily round, and family life. He lost all this in surrendering to the prophetic fire that pushed him to warn his people that they were slowly but surely drifting away from Yahweh. He had to watch, from the time of king Josiah's death, Judah tottering closer and closer to the terrible edge from which it would finally fall. His warnings invariably made everyone angry with him, and were in any event disregarded.

Jeremiah disliked the refusal to face facts, and denounced the people who "healed the broken limbs of the daughter of my people lightly, saying Peace, Peace, when there is no peace" [Jeremiah, 6, 14; 8, 11]. He was realistic, not pessimistic. His faith was that, somehow, and even if it meant the disappearing of Israel, God's word would 'stand.'

Because it took thirty years before his prophecies eventuated, many people felt his words of foreboding had not come true, and so he was treated as one

of those false prophets whom Yahweh had 'enticed.' He was jeered at as one duped and rejected by Yahweh.

Jeremiah stands alone with Yahweh.

This is tacitly Messianic. The Messiah is not necessarily believed nor trusted, lauded nor respected, when he appears in the midst of the people, but as the Post-Exilic Isaiah affirms even more starkly, the people may mock, and even turn against, the Messiah. Later they may realise their mistake, but there can be a time when everyone and everything is not inclined toward the Messiah but actively against him. Certainly Jeremiah's lonely stand apart from the community he was actually trying to preserve has a flavour of the paradox that the Messiah will likely not come garlanded and in glory, but will come to widespread enmity. After all, if people are humanly distracted and spiritually addicted to falsity, the Messiah will end their outcast state. To the extent they are invested in it and do not want it to end, the one ending it will become the Outcast. He must be Outcast, for the sake of the Outcast.

Also Messianic is Jeremiah's assertion that the Jews need a 'New Covenant.' A written Scripture is exposed to the tampering of the scribes [Jeremiah, 8, 8], and in any case, the Old Covenant had failed because of being an external thing, written down in a book, and imposed on people by kings or priests. The relationship between God and humanity cannot be 'ordered' by any book; the only valid authority comes from God, but must be organically planted and organically growing in the soil of the human being that is their inner nature. The covenant between God and humanity likely to reach fulfilment is the one which grips a person's interior core. If the covenant is living inside people, then it can constantly drive that inwardness forward. Deuteronomy is just a 'scrap of paper'; the New Covenant will work because it will be written on people's hearts [Jeremiah, 32, 37-42].

This last is crucial, because the Messiah is the royal heart -- in his human heart can be felt and seen the stirrings of the heart of God -- and the change that is Messianic is really, in sum, that human beings will have a new heart for existence.

[5] Ezekiel, who worked from 593 to 571 BC, is the Exilic prophet par excellence, according to the commentators. This priest who became a prophet is brutally realistic, if you want to put it like that, or if you want to put it differently, is excessively harsh: a lamp that needs trimming. He reverts to a scenario of strict reward for righteousness and strict punishment for wickedness, a rigidly dualistic regime challenged by Psalms 37, 49, and 73, and the Book of Job. Where Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah manifest a desperate love for Israel even when exposing the transgressions that will finally bring the nation down, Ezekiel comes over as feelingless. He has no empathy for the sinning people, they just get what is deservedly coming to them. Righteousness degenerates into an almost mechanical law, good for good, ill for ill, that would please any behaviourist or fundamentalist. The human heart as the seat of ambivalence, conflict, wrestling with good and bad that are both inherent to its life, does not get a look in. It is as if Ezekiel is

reasserting an earlier stage in the understanding of righteousness, a black and white that admits of no prevarication-- though bizarrely maybe this is exactly what the Jews in Exile needed to hear, to make sense of their fate. In a funny way it declares, Yahweh is still with you, the universe is not run by accident, but by Yahweh's implacable will toward righteousness.

You know what you have to do to win over, or lose, Yahweh. Thus Ezekiel gives the Jews a clear explanation for why they were sent into captivity [Ezekiel, 39, 22-29].

At one point in Ezekiel, Yahweh says he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner-- but the Yahweh of compassion, mercy, and tenderness, does not speak in Ezekiel. The prophet's severe personality has filtered out any nuancing of the message he receives. All the spontaneity and verve of earlier prophets is gone from him.

Yet Ezekiel is a powerful visionary. As one commentator puts it, there are four violently imaginative visions that stand out. There is also a fifth vision-- a remarkable revelation of Lucifer embodied in the king of Babylon. Babylon is a Luciferian kingdom, and all the later uses of 'Babylon' in popular culture to symbolise being imprisoned in a fabulous but corrupt state of affairs stems from what Ezekiel was given to see. His depiction of the Luciferian kingdom is very similar to Isaiah's taunt song from 150 years earlier [Isaiah, 14, 1-22].

Not all of this visionary material addresses redemption, because the main task taken on by Ezekiel is to recall the Jews to a stricter adherence to righteousness, but some of it does. All of it reveals the mysteriousness of Yahweh's workings among human beings. The very fact that Yahweh does work among human events, as was the case with Isaiah, points towards redemption.

There is the vision of the Chariot of Yahweh [Ezekiel, 1, 4-28] which portrays the kind of divine power standing behind and backing up the Messianic king.

There is the vision of the Scroll [Ezekiel, 2, 1-15] which is not obviously redemptive.

There is the vision of the Dry Bones scattered over a forsaken wasteland of deadness [Ezekiel, 37, 1-14], which is redemptive. Yahweh tells the prophet he will reassemble the bones, return flesh to them, and so make the bones live again. This is referring to the restoration of Israel, explicitly, but implicitly it depicts how God can redeem even the most extreme decay and degeneration. Nothing in human experience is beyond recall. Redemption goes to the place of extreme dereliction, and works with it, to change it, not just suppress or eliminate it. This "work on what has been spoiled", as the Chinese book the 'I Ching' puts it, is strongly redemptive. It poetically anticipates even 'resurrection' from death.

There is the vision of the River of Life flowing out of the temple [Ezekiel, 47, 1-12], which is redemptive. Like the dry bones, this is a depiction of universal

redemption. The sacred 'waters of life' reach out from the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and flow to the sea. This water is enlivening and heals, it is teeming with living creatures, the trees it feeds come into fruit every month, and the leaves of the trees are medicine. Redemption brings things back to life, heals them, makes them fruitful, gives them the power to cure all their ills. This water of life gushes out from Israel but is extended to all and sundry.

The vision of the king of Tyre who is Luciferian in spirit and function is without doubt redemptive, in that it portrays one of the most powerful spiritual blocks on the redemptive process at work in history [Ezekiel, 28,1-19]. Just as the spirit of Satanic Accusation is incompatible with redemption [as it is said in Gaelic, you can accuse or redeem, but you cannot do both], similarly the spirit of Luciferian Flattery is also an enemy of redemption. When St Paul says the Cross of Christ is a stumbling block to Jews, it is because of their repeated lapses into the self-righteousness that invites Satanic Accusation, but when St Paul says the Cross of Christ is foolishness to Greeks, it is because of their repeated tendency toward the self-elevating that invites Luciferian False Divinisation. As Satan distorts moral life, so Lucifer distorts mystical life. Puritanism is the sign of the former, Gnosticism is the sign of the latter. Satan is a sadist, Lucifer is a narcissus.

The account of the Babylonian king veers between the historical person and the primal evil spirit whose name in Latin means 'light bringer.' False dawn: false glory: false attractiveness. This is the spirit of 'self divinisation.'

"Being swollen with pride, you have said: I am a god, I am sitting on the throne of God, surrounded by the seas. Though you are a man and not a god, you consider yourself the equal of God. You are wiser now than Daniel: there is no sage as wise as you. By your wisdom and intelligence you have amassed great wealth.. Such is your skill in trading, your wealth has continued to increase, and with this your heart has grown more arrogant... You were once an exemplar of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty: you were in Eden, the garden of God. A thousand gems formed your mantle.. All were prepared on the day of your creation. I had provided you with a guardian cherub; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked amid red-hot coals. Your action was exemplary from the day of your creation until the day when evil was first found in you. Your busy trading has filled you with violence and sin. I have thrown you down from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub has destroyed you from amid the coals. Your heart has grown swollen with pride on account of your beauty. You have corrupted your wisdom owing to your splendour. ..By the immense number of your sins, by the dishonesty of your trading, you have defiled your sanctuaries. I have brought fire out of you to consume you."

This picture of Luciferian 'self-stroking' shows a human, in the grip of this evil spirit, whose life is dedicated to polishing the diamond of selfhood until it glistens and gleams brighter than anything in all of creation. But this cold diamond is not the heart that will break, and give its blood, for the love of others. The combining of evil spirit and dazzling human king refers to the kind, and quality, of spirituality that is 'sovereign' in us.

Lucifer is richly gifted, but such richness has turned his head, making him regard his very self as a god, and superior to mere mortals. Lucifer is created a being of many gifts, charismatic in the extreme, and is given vast wisdom and hyper intelligence, but his pride and arrogance have corrupted these powers of soul and mind. He uses his wiliness and cleverness to amass worldly goods and worldly wealth. But as he is always self-regarding, so in trading he is adept at cheating less calculating people out of their sustenance; he makes more and more money by 'dishonest trading', like big business, and increasingly lives a life dedicated to violence [he must get his way] and sin [luxury and meaningless indulgence]. As he gets richer, so his beauty, splendour, 'celebrity', corrupt his native wisdom still further. His dishonest trading multiples his sins -- it is almost impossible to be a business man and a Christian, a friend once said -- and in the end the sanctuary of his soul is defiled. There is no wellspring of life in him. He is a vampire, living off the life of others. Most mysteriously, Lucifer once walked amid the red coals of fire in heaven, but a [four-fold] cherubim spirit like him, his guardian, has kicked him out from this primal grounding in holy fire. He can no longer walk in holy fire without being burned up. A different fire of hellish selfishness, Lucifer's corruption of holiness, is consuming him all the time. It will, over time, reduce his pretensions to ashes. He will fall, like a shooting star that burns up in the sky and crashes to earth. People will marvel that once upon a time they were seduced by this false vision of exaltedness, now revealed as hollow.

As in Isaiah, the fall of worldly channels and vehicles of spiritual evil, whether Satanic or Luciferian, and particularly in their kingly domination of the world, is a major agenda of Yahweh in redeeming the world.

But the most redemptive verse in Ezekiel is brief, and might easily slip by, escaping notice. Thus, Yahweh declares to Ezekiel his intention to give the Jews, and us, a different 'heart and spirit.' "I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit in them. I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh" [Ezekiel, 11, 18-20].

This is one of the most extraordinary, and profound, statements in all the prophets. It is more crucial to redemption than almost anything else revealed in the prophetic oracles over centuries.

Redemption is ultimately about changing the human heart radically, and fundamentally, at its point of origin in the depth. With a new heart, we can stand up for the world and insist it is to live by an upstanding heart. The mystery of redemption, its climax, its engine, its rationale, is that human beings will acquire a 'singular' heart, and a 'new' spirit. The singular heart is no longer conflicted, divided, compromised, by greater and lesser impulses. The new spirit is passion purged of madness, evil, obsessive attachment to sound and fury signifying nothing. This passion burns with God's love, and has a fervour and ardour that makes it willing to go to the maximum, no matter what happens; as such, it is dangerous to worldliness, because it cannot be intimidated, nor bought off [the gun and the wad of money-- how

America marches through the world]. The singular heart, because it is unified, can house the holy fire.

Fallen humanity has a 'heart of stone'; redeemed humanity will have a 'heart of flesh.' According to certain parts of Jewish tradition, God created mankind with two hearts, the stony and the fleshy [the two trees in the garden, in effect]. As time has gone on, in some ways the stone has hardened, and the flesh melted away.

Stone is a powerful metaphor for what is amiss in our heart, and 'set in stone', fixed, frozen, resisting any and all change. This is sometimes called, carrying a host of implications, 'hard hearted.' A heart that is hardened cannot cry, except in self-pity; is hard on others, and even on itself; cannot give anything up or let anything go; is like a closed hand often screwed into a fist; cannot be 'softened' by mercy, compassion, tenderness; cannot repent, which would be to enter the mystery of holy sorrow or 'spiritual tears'; cannot want to make amends for anything it has done, but engages in endless justifications and rationalisations excusing its actions; cannot relent from the stance of me against you, and I won't be your victim, but I am willing to make you my victim.

This stone heart has to be Daemonically 'broken' by God and by existence, or it would be lost. Its judgements are cruel and unfair, its instincts are bullying and given to 'power over the other.' Its religion is, as I once heard a lunatic raving in a church to the assembled people, 'I am right and you gotta be wrong.' But humour redeemed him, because he thought for a second, and his face lit up. 'But if you're right, I gotta be wrong.' A standoff -- mutually assured destruction -- is all we can expect from the clashing of different stone hearts.

Flesh is a powerful metaphor for what is fallible yet redeemable in our heart. This is sometimes called, again with many implications, 'open hearted.' A heart that is opened is reachable, and can take on board the voices from life, God, other people, suggesting it reconsider, or think again. This heart has weaknesses aplenty, and still struggles, sometimes well, sometimes not so well, but in being reachable, it is also capable of changing. It is honest, and truthful, and so can grow through trials and troubles towards an unexpected strength. However strong it gets, it never forgets its weakness, and so never puts down others for being less mighty than itself. On the contrary, a chivalrous impulse is born, of wanting to help, to protect, to be a good brother or good sister to everyone, and particularly those in most need. Laugh with those who laugh, cry with those who cry, is the ultimate of the flesh heart.

This flesh heart has to grow, has to travel far and fight many battles, shed much excess weight as it goes, to come to the dignity God wants to confer on it. By working at it, by working with God and other people, and the events of our existence in the world, this heart 'goes from strength to strength.' It is a learner, and both humble and modest enough to acknowledge it needs to learn a lot more. Such a heart can be transformed, and transfigured, by God.

There is an even profounder mystery in the cryptic words of Yahweh conveyed by Ezekiel.

The flesh heart is the heart that is affectable, influenceable, malleable, bendable. This is the source of our temptation to go with evil, or it opens us to getting savagely damaged. None the less, this 'passible' heart is the ground of passion, and therefore means we cannot get rid of the passionate, but must rely on it to 'pass through' many things. Certain kinds of morality are like a stiff shell, helping us avoid existence. We use right behaviour to never get involved in anything or anyone. But passion, precisely because of its passible condition, always dives in, gets in over its head, but must 'come through' or perish. This means, however, there is no avoiding the variable things that could go either way, because to get through we must search out their deeps. The heart, and its passion, cannot be spared from life, but must go far, and plunge deep, to get to the ground of what is what, and overcome what is not what. This is risky, yet it reveals the hidden meanings of all we contend with as nothing else can. The Biblical injunction, 'be not afraid', is telling us not to resist baptism into life, and to trust we must pass through waters and pass through fires. We will be drowned and we will be burnt, but we will also learn how to swim at all levels of the water and how to stand in all intensities of the fire. The flesh heart is, and spiritually must be, wave tossed and fire singed.

For example, we cannot flee to love, in order to avoid hate. We must go through hate, and find in that difficult process the love which truthfully answers hate's question, and authentically grapples with hate's challenge.

Paradoxically, the stone heart contains the deepest mystery of all, and because of this, it must be reunited with the flesh heart in a new single heart. Stone is a metaphor for something we all experience, without being able to explain its meaning at all literally. Thus, there is a stone deep in the heart like a pain no one can bear, like a burden no one can carry, like a cost no one can pay, like a fate no one can endure. It is a huge rock rolled against the tomb of our heart in its deepest despair. Long ago, right at the beginning, all of humanity put down this weight. No one, since then, has lifted it. The Messiah will reveal himself, and reveal his uniqueness in its difference from all 'good people', from all Sages and Healers, from all Miracle Doers, from all Buddhas, from all Shamans, from all Masters and Teachers, by this one thing.

The Messiah will lift the weight no one ever has, because no one can.

The chief reason I cleave to Yeshua as Mashiach is because I see him lifting the weight never shifted in the depth. Yeshua does not meet many of the most specifically Jewish requirements of the Messiah, nor does he meet in full even the universal requirements. But this does not disqualify him.

Lifting the unliftable weight is not the end of the redemptive process, but its beginning-- but its crucial, and necessary, beginning. Through Yeshua the Mashiach, we can shoulder this weight too, and hence complete redemption. There is one Messiah, but after him, many redeemers. He gets us through the

place where we are stuck, so we can get everyone and everything through the 'sticking point.'

This is the ultimate singular heart, this is the ultimate new spirit. This is heart deep, and passion great.

The united and deep heart, the en-spirited and great passion, is the 'chariot' ridden in by God's Heart and God's Spirit.

Without passion of heart there is no holiness.

In conclusion, then, Ezekiel seems to be one thing, but delved more, he becomes more. Maybe this too is redemptive and applies equally to all of us: we have hidden layers of increasing profundity.

[6] The Exilic, or Post-Exilic, author of chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah is the sixth Messianic prophet, and arguably the most important. This person presents the most remarkable statements about the Messiah, and the Messianic Age, of any prophet. We see the Messianic king and his reversal as 'Yahweh's Slave' laid bare. However, we do not know this prophet's name.

In fact many of the Post Exile prophets are not known to us. Scholars say large chunks of the Isaiah corpus date from the Exile. Probably Exilic are chapters 13 and 14-- oracles against Babylon; chapters 24 through 27-- an apocalypse [an early forerunner of the Jewish apocalyptic style that comes into its own in the Book of Daniel]; and chapters 33 through 35-- poems.

Either at the end of the Exile, or early on in the Return, comes chapters 40 through 55, which have been named 'The Book of the Consolation of Israel.' This consolation is redemptive in the extreme, for redemption deals in what seems beyond recall, yet can be recalled if the measures taken are radical enough. Thus redemption is comfort for those with no comfort; salvation is hope for those capable of hope, redemption is hope for those incapable of hope. Only redemption speaks to those aware of the despair that, deeper down, grips every human being, cutting them off from both God and their own heart. Redemption recalls the heart.

Embedded in this Consolation to Israel, and to all of us, are the 4 Songs of Yahweh's Slave, or as Christian tradition has it, the Suffering Servant. These songs are shocking, because they seem to overturn the kingship of the Messiah, reducing him to the lowest of the low, a slave or servant, and a despised slave and derided servant at that. None the less, what emerges from placing these 4 Songs next to the Messianic kingship is that they turn out to be heads and tails of the same coin, and more powerfully still, it turns out that the powerless, mocked earthly king is necessary to embody the heavenly king.

There is more to say on this. We need to hear it in the unknown prophet's words. They are incomparably moving, piercing the heart where we do not

live, and know ourselves to be dead. Yet this very blow, so penetrating, is what gives us the first faint assurance that though dead, we will live.

The wife of youth will not be put away. The still-born child will not be thrown on the rubbish dump. The wife will be married again. The child will grow again.

A new heart and new spirit, the final passion, is coming.

8,

The Post-Exilic Book of Consolation prophesises from a new depth-- a new depth revealed in God and a new depth revealed in humanity. The former rouses the latter.

Though the Messiah will suffer for the people in some extreme and upside down manner, never previously suffered either by God or by humanity, the outcome is a complete existential and ontological change where all humanity's tears will be wiped away, and there will begin an 'eternal joy and gladness' [Isaiah, 51, 11], and the wasteland that human greed, lust to possess, ambition, vanity, envy, pride, hostility, has made of the fertile field of existence will disappear: the Messiah will take the 'barren land' and make it 'abundant' and 'fruitful' [Isaiah, 51, 3; Ezekiel, 36, 29-30].

Is the pain of suffering and humiliation of the upside down worth it, then? It is, and so worthwhile it is, anyone just lightly touched by the Messianic Spirit would go to any extreme, any lengths, even to redeem a sewer rat. Redemption is, in Shakespeare's words, 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.'

Yet, the pain, the cost, the load, is daunting. It moves us, and shocks us, to hear about it. How much more difficult to assume it ourselves, walking in the footsteps pioneered by the Messiah? In fact, impossible without his lead. You and I are not 'the' Messiah; we can become Messianic in relying on his Example and his Spirit, his story and his power.

Not surprisingly, and very much in the ethos of chapters 1-39 of the Book of Isaiah, the Post-Exilic prophet whose name is unknown presents Cyrus, the Persian king and liberator of the Jews, as his first candidate for the Messiah! This is not as odd as it might seem. After all, it conforms to very old Jewish practice: in essentials, the king is simply always the Messianic figure, and so any king who lives up to his calling could be the awaited Messiah. If Cyrus is not the one and only Messiah, he is certainly 'a' Messiah to Israel.

It is not hard to imagine with what wonder, gratitude, and some human 'I told you so' and 'good riddance', the Jews greeted the victory of the Persians, and the fall of the empire of Babylon. The 60 years in captivity must have felt unending, as is often the case with us when we are trapped in sorrow or incapacity, and there is no conceivable way out. Suddenly, from left field, the prison walls crumble, the chains come off, and freedom beckons. It is beyond

belief. Obviously this has the flavour of some sort of redemption, or the start of it, and so why wouldn't Cyrus, the Persian king, be a first glimpse of the Messiah? He is identified as such at the end of chapter 44 and the start of chapter 45.

Both the destruction of Babylon and the liberation of the Jews were regarded as acts of Yahweh, through Cyrus [Isaiah, 45, 1-6; Isaiah, 48, 14-16]. The Persian king did not have to let the Jews return to their homeland; once having seized Babylon he could have kept them as his slaves. But he seems to have been well disposed to the Jews, for he said to them all, 'stay in the East or go to the West, the choice is yours.' He was happy to have them in his kingdom, or happy if they understandably wanted to go back to their own kingdom. Perhaps Cyrus and the Jews were united by having a common enemy in the lush empire of Babylon. Both parties laughed when the Babylonian king made no fight of it, but abandoned the imperial city, with a few idols of the Babylonian gods knocking together on pack animals. The Jews were a receptive audience to Cyrus' heroics in bringing down their oldest and worst enemy.

The unknown prophet speaks in terms of redemption when he urges the Jews, at the end of chapter 48, to brave the perilous journey across the deserts to get back to their ancestral home, for 'Yahweh has ransomed his servant Jacob.' The fall of Babylon should be taken as an assurance of Yahweh's universality and supremacy, the unknown prophet is urging. It is an immense encouragement to 'take heart', rejoin the fray, keep trucking. No more giving in and giving up.

"But now, thus says Yahweh.. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, ..the flames will not burn you" [Isaiah, 43, 1-2].

A new theme is being articulated as the Jews return home. 'Ransoming' means freeing a captive, or paying off their debt, and this is redeeming. In saving, the saving one gives generously from their storehouse of gifts; in redeeming, the redeeming one pays dearly from their very life-blood. To save you, I give of myself; to redeem you, I sacrifice myself. In the past, Yahweh has been Israel's saviour, but henceforth he has become their redeemer. This requires a more radical love from Yahweh, but it creates a more unbreakable bond between Yahweh and Israel: he calls his people by 'name', treating them as a friend and confidant, entering a close dialogue with them, rather than regarding them as like a distant servant who is not in the know; moreover, his people are 'his' in some more binding sense than ever before. No one has done for them what the redeemer does, and so no one cares for them as he does. They belong to him only because he will go to such lengths for them. He has earned this position: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people.' For, whatever profound problem existence throws them into, he will be with them in it, helping them get through. A redeemer does not throw away, or abandon, those he redeems. Even if 99 are fine, he goes back for the 1 that is still lost.

Indeed, Yahweh implies that however hard it has been for the Jews to shoulder Yahweh's yoke, in reality Yahweh has been more yoked to the Jews [Isaiah, 43, 22-28]. It is Israel who has loaded God, inflicting never ending toil on him, and this has positively enslaved him. He cannot walk away from his commitment, but it is costing him, because he carries the burden in the heart and he accepts to be troubled in the heart. "You have burdened me with your sins, troubled me with your iniquities. It is I.. who must blot out everything and not remember your sins" [Isaiah, 43, 24-25].

This passage is the crucial turning point. It is more than a Jewish mother complaining that her children will be the death of her. It is in fact preparing for the new depth of the Slave of Yahweh, or Suffering Servant. For in this brief and enigmatic declaration Yahweh reveals it is God, not frail and fallible humanity, who will have to bear the greater burden, go through the greater trouble, carry the heaviest load, for redemption to be accomplished. God, not humanity, suffers the most to bring humanity through the narrow straits where we are imprisoned, and failing.

This is the first indication, since Hosea, of the God who will suffer for the humanity he loves. On one level, this suffering of God is because of the iniquities of humanity, but on a profounder level, it is something different. Love suffers for those it loves, full stop. This is of God. This is God. To be like God, this is us. Whatever love requires, give it. When love requires the lover decrease so that the beloved can increase, let it be so. In drama, there comes a point where the good king must lose, must die, must let himself diminish, that others can take the torch forward.

Even suffering because of human iniquities is love. This is not some 'legally appointed' judge, demanding perfection in behaviour, and outraged when his exacting, and high, standard is defied. That scenario belongs to, and comes from, Satan the Accuser. God sorrows over the way we hurt ourself and hurt one another through the 'failure to hit the mark'; our falling down in heart hurts God's heart, because his heart wills only good for us, only dignity, only profundity, only victory. His heart sorrows at our heart's fall, its becoming small when it was created to become big.

It is Yahweh who 'must blot out everything and not remember your sins.' God will suffer, God will pay, God will carry.

This is redemption. Yahweh has shown his love to the Jews, and to us, already, in a myriad of ways, but the deepest love is redeeming us when we are finished. The deepest level of our defeat is what we humans cannot suffer, cannot pay, cannot carry. This is beyond our 'sin offering', beyond any and all types of 'atoning.' We cannot make this better, even if we try.

Thus Yahweh says, it falls on me what has gone wrong with you; I will bring you through it, to the other side, no matter the suffering to me, the cost from me, the load on me.

I, Yahweh, will do it.

It is I, Yahweh, whose heart is itself to become the ransom for your heart held captive, in unbearable pain, owing unrepayable debt, under crushing weight.

I, Yahweh, do not abandon the heart I forged before the world began in a furnace that burnt me.

I, Yahweh it is, who says this.

9,

The Messianic Slave of Yahweh, or 'My Slave', is described in 4 Songs.

[1] Isaiah, 42, 1-4,

[2] Isaiah, 49, 1-6,

[3] Isaiah, 50, 4-9,

[4] Isaiah, 52, 13-15; 53, 1-12.

These poems speak of the call, the labours, the sorrowings, of the Messiah who comes in the form of a slave, or servant. The previous picture of the Messiah as a world-straddling emperor now gives way to the extreme converse. The king is upended, and turned on his head. There are two aspects to the Messiah's heart, in him there is the heart of a bold king and fierce warrior, but in him is the broken heart of all humanity, the upstanding heart brought down, derelict, of no renown.

There has been much debate over Yahweh's Slave, not least because his resemblance to Yeshua Mashiach is so compelling.

Certainly, in the 4 Songs the Slave cannot be either Cyrus, or Israel. Clearly, the Slave is not the mighty Persian conqueror suddenly finding himself in reduced circumstances. Equally clearly, neither is the Slave a symbolic apotheosis of the Jewish people as a whole, for the main point in these passages is that the Slave is pitted against his own people. 'He came to his own, and they received him not.' Indeed, the Messiah in the form of the Slave is rejected by the Jews, derided by them, and killed by them. This cannot simply be Israel rejecting, deriding, killing, itself. Despite the fact the Messiah will be 'an observing Jew', still his own whom he has come to redeem turn against him, violently, and do not credit him 'as Messiah material.'

It may be that the Jews are still resisting the revelation of Yahweh in the despised Slave. Like the Hindus, the God of Hosts cannot be 'emptied' of his glory.

What if, however, this 'self-emptying', as well as 'self-pouring out', is what is required of the love that redeems?

Who is the Messiah then?

10,

In the first Song, it is Yahweh who speaks, describing the man he has chosen to do his work.

In the second and third Songs, it is the Slave who speaks, describing his call and his experience.

In the fourth Song, the Slave is dead, and men speak who saw the Slave, joined in with the general hostility towards him, but now at last realise who he is.

[1] 42, 1-4.

Yahweh describes his Slave in the 'first song':

"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have endowed him with my Spirit that he may bring true justice to the nations. He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame. Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver, nor be crushed, until true justice is established on earth, for the islands are awaiting his rule."

The Slave is endowed with Yahweh's Spirit, so that he will have the spiritual inspiration and power to bring 'true' justice to all the world. The so-called justice pursued by the nations is 'false': inadequate, distorted, a show lacking substance. Without justice, the life that human beings have together becomes unfair, giving advantage to some at the disadvantage of many. Such injustice is a major cause of strife among different persons, different groups, different nations. There can be no peace until justice is established. Peace without justice is not sustainable; it is merely an illusion, masking unresolved and usually unacknowledged crimes against the togetherness of the people. In this situation, the underburdened overload the overburdened; thus the rich and powerful, the advantaged, owe a huge debt to the poor and powerless, the disadvantaged.

"Trouble is coming to the man who grossly exploits others for the sake of his house, to fix his nest on high and so evade the hand of misfortune"
[Habakkuk, 2, 9]. Redress for the 'losers' against the 'winners' will finally be made, and a new fairness towards all put in place.

This is also a way of reaffirming that redemption is not ahistorical, but on the contrary, creates a sacred history that brings humanity's communal, social, political, imbalances and divisions to an end. This fulfils the demand of Yahweh, going all the way back to prophets such as Amos, that righteousness should govern the community-- rather than the legally sanctioned unrighteousness which is written into the very way the community is organised so that the 'top people' can oppress and defraud the 'bottom people.'

There is another side to the coin. If the heads is about justice, then the tails is about looking beneath the surface, and seeing human beings in their brokenness. The Slave will not thunder with anger at sinful people; he will see them all as crushed reeds and wavering flames, and instead of crushing the already crushed and blasting the already wavering, he will approach them in a more understanding way. The Slave is gentler with people than a furious prophet exposing the lies we are living, because his mission is to get to underlying causes, not just deal in blatant effects. This is far more difficult. No wonder such a man must be called and trained by Yahweh; from the moment of his birth, and even before it, he has been set apart for the task placed upon his shoulders. That task is so hard it will require him to do more than morally reprove wayward people, or even spiritually illumine ignorant people. He will have to 'pour himself out, even to the point of death', to get to the hidden root of the human malaise. This malaise is killing us, and the harm we do to each other is the symptom of that.

The Slave will not trumpet himself, nor put himself forward loudly and aggressively. He will not insist on his own validity, but will let his words and deeds speak for themselves. He will claim no authority from any external source, nor will he impose any hierarchy of power; he does not put himself above people, and force them to bend the knee. He is ordinary with all people, never standing on ceremony. Taking account of what is crushed and wavering in the deeper heart of all people, and taking it on in his heart, never the less he is not crushed and he does not waver because of what he embraces. His deep ground remains firm, and he stands his ground in the midst of a wasteland where all people have stumbled and fallen, and are laying in the decay of ruin. He does not become victim to the human condition, but he accepts its agony and affliction like a wound from which he does not turn away.

Therefore, nothing can prevent the Slave from 'faithfully accomplishing his mission.'

[2] 49, 1-6.

The Slave describes himself in the 'second song':

"Islands, listen to me, pay attention, remotest peoples. Yahweh called me before I was born, from my mother's womb he pronounced my name. He made my mouth a sharp sword, and hid me in the shadow of his hand. He made me into a sharpened arrow, and concealed me in his quiver. He said to me, 'you are my servant in whom I shall be glorified', while I was thinking, 'I have toiled in vain, I have exhausted myself for nothing', and all the while my cause was with Yahweh, my reward with my God. I was honoured in the eyes of Yahweh, my God was my strength."

Then the Slave is told by Yahweh: "it is not enough.. to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back.. Israel, I will make you the light of the nations." Through the Slave, redemption is going to "reach to the ends of the earth."

That Yahweh has appointed his Slave before he was born means his time and place of appearing among the Jews was always in the foreknowledge of God. There is nothing accidental in who, where, and when, regarding the Messiah. At birth, Yahweh openly acknowledges the Slave as his Messiah. But for a time Yahweh hides his Slave, training him up, sharpening his words to a sword point. This is the sword of truth pointing at every heart, and exposing the faithfulness of our integrity, or our dishonour. The Slave is also an arrow that is shot straight to the target, always hitting the bullseye, in revealing what is really going on, when you see the heart behind events, deeds, words.

The Slave confesses something every servant of God, before and since, has felt. This song tells us that in the darkest hour of our service of God, when we are likely to think all we gave of ourself for love of God was in vain and for nothing, God will reignite us. God comes to 'own' us, in our sweat, tears and blood. He reassures us that he respects our trying, and will be our strength when we are 'all out of what it takes.' The things in the world we have given up to serve God need not torture us, for God will be our reward. It means, drawing close to God, acting for God, is reward enough; it is intrinsically fulfilling.

This is similar to what occurs when the prophet Habakkuk 'complains' that Yahweh is a God who allows the guilty to tyrannise over the innocent, the wicked to overwhelm the righteous: "Why do you look on while men are treacherous, and stay silent while the evil man swallows a better man than he?" [Habakkuk, 1, 13]. The evil people are like fishermen who catch in their nets the good people who are like defenseless fishes; and are these successful evil people who prey on good people to obtain luxury and a lavish style of life going to get away with it forever? Will they be allowed to go on 'slaughtering nations without pity'? Yahweh replies, not revealing why this disillusioning state of affairs exists and is allowed to persist, but he tells the aggrieved prophet how it is to be faced: "the upright man will live by his faithfulness" [Habakkuk, 2, 4]. Act from truth, out of faithfulness, and let it fall where it will. Be free of the fear of consequences in the form of seeming success or seeming failure. Play your part—and let that be sufficient. One day your question will be answered; that day is not come yet, so for now, let righteousness be in you, and you won't flag. You will be able to go on acting for righteousness, and leave the outcome hidden with God.

"I am your consoler. How then can you be afraid of mortal man, whose fate is the fate of grass? ..why still go in daily dread of the oppressor's fury, when he sets out to destroy you? What has happened to the fury of oppressors?" [Isaiah, 51, 12-14].

[3] 50, 4-9.

The Slave describes his experience in the 'third song':

“Yahweh has given me a disciple’s tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied, he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. Yahweh has opened my ear.”

Yahweh has opened the Slave’s ear, so he can listen with his heart to whatever God will say; he speaks not from himself, or on his own account, but what God wants him to say. The Slave is like a disciple to God, following him, learning from him, honouring him in action. This process begins anew each morning; it is Yahweh who rouses the Slave from sleep, to start listening again. And it is Yahweh who knows what the Slave must say to the ‘wearied.’ As with the crushed and the wavering, the problem of being wearied is not moral, but goes deeper. This way of describing the people contains empathy and consideration for their dilemma.

The Slave continues, telling how he reacts to human adversity:

“For my part, I make no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. Yahweh comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So too I set my face like flint, I know I shall not be shamed. My vindicator is here at hand..”

This ‘turning the other cheek’ is almost impossible for any human being. Our ego dictates we give as good as we get. Our moral sense dictates the wrong done to us be set right by punishment of the wrong-doer. Our power lust dictates we come out of any confrontation top dog, not end up bottom dog. Our bodily instinct for survival screams out we fight or flight, or freeze.

Weakness of character is also implicated in not answering back in order to evade worse trouble blowing up in our face. When we have learned to have no backbone through never taking a stand, the easiest thing to do is run away, or pass by, as an almost automatic reflex of seeking the way out of any contention. Fear towards and weakness in the face of ‘furious oppressors’ are often the real drivers behind the desperate attempts of people to keep the peace, personally and politically. The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin dressed up his capitulation to Hitler with the ridiculous proclamation, ‘peace in our time.’ This sort of peace, personal and political, protects our self-interest by keeping us out of harm’s way. We don’t want our feeding at the trough disturbed.

But non retaliation need not be ignoble, for it can be a kind of ultimate spiritual courage that humans routinely lack. Non retaliating is a very powerful action because in it we leave ourself undefended in order to deliver the truth of which we are merely the vehicle. We are not an issue in conveying the message: only the message is the issue. This is a sharp sword point, and a sharper arrow head, straight to the heart of the matter. In not defending myself, I do not intrude myself between the message and the other person. I get out of the way, and let the message shoot through, cleanly. This also delivers a double message, that I am not afraid of anything that rebounds on me for telling the truth. I trust the truth so radically, I will accept any ‘come

back' that speaking or doing it brings my way. This means the truth has so possessed my heart, lesser motives about self-survival or self-esteem do not count. I would rather 'serve' the truth, in the heart, than anything else which human society can do to me. This is itself testimony of a strangely powerful truth, not like other, lesser truths.

The bigger the blows to which I stand up, not giving ill for ill, but even offering myself to them, so the more powerfully do I testify to the power of the truth for which my heart will live, and will die.

It is the child in us whose vulnerability, when under new assault, grabs at justifications and rationalisations to build a rigidly protective shield round the heart. After all the undeserved assaults, we are not going to allow any new assaults, deserved or undeserved it makes no difference. 'No mas.'

The Slave exposes other hearts by the way he never defends his heart. This is handling Holy Fire.

He does not enter the game of blaming parent or child, other or self, God or humanity. He accepts what is. He does not demand his goodness be recognised, nor his love be praised. He leaves it to God to 'vindicate' him. He does not need to vindicate himself in his eyes, nor be vindicated by others in their eyes. God sees.

In short, do not worry so much about the malice arrayed against you. Stick to the good, and do it, no matter what.

Truth abides.

Falsity cannot stand.

When we stand on truth, it upholds us. When we stand for truth, it stands with us.

[4] 52, 13-15; 53, 1--12.

Yahweh, and the men who decried the Slave while he was alive, speak in the 'fourth song':

"See, my servant.. shall be lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights. As the crowds were appalled on seeing him—his visage was so marred that he seemed no longer human—so will the crowds be astonished at him, and kings stand speechless before him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.."

The Slave has been cast out, and thrown down, by those he came to redeem, but God will raise him to great heights.

The Slave has been humiliated by those he came to assist, but God will exalt him.

Having seen the Slave ugly beyond the human, like a leper with terrible disfigurements, the crowds are now astonished by him, and even kings stand open mouthed before him. Something never before witnessed, in the protracted history of the Jews, has happened to the discredited Slave, to reveal the credit beyond compare in which God regards him. So stupendous and unusual is what Yahweh does with the Slave, after his death, that the Jews exclaim-- who could have believed what we have just seen? They further exclaim-- who could have believed that the power of Yahweh would be revealed in this Slave whom we repudiated?

What did they see?

What could they have seen? As something so 'elevating of the denigrated' as to amaze all those who were witnesses to it, there is a feeling that only resurrection from death could engender all these reactions. Is it too tempting for a Christian to read back into these elliptical lines the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Ha-Masiah qom; be-emet qom.

If we try to read prospectively, as if we were receiving a prophecy of the future, then what else fits the bill?

Isn't Yahweh saying to the Jews, he who was laid low, even killed, for your sake, will be raised from death to life by the power of the God who sent him? In that way you will know who he really was, why he really came, what he really did. He was sent for your sake.

He suffered, so you could be released from your suffering.

He died, so that you might live.

But even more indicative of Jesus Christ is the final part of the song, verses 2 to 12, where the Jewish people give their testimony of how they have come to comprehend Yahweh's Slave after his death and the stupendous happening that followed it, in which Yahweh blessed the one whom they had castigated. Their eyes having been closed to him now are open.

If these final lines are not a portrait of Yeshua Mashiach, then what do they portray?

They certainly portray the ultimate mystery of the Messiah.

Whether the Messianic mystery was lived out by Jesus Christ can be affirmed or denied. That is a different matter. What cannot be disputed is that the closing segment of the description of the Messianic Slave of Yahweh is the most profound, strange, paradoxical, understanding of the redeemer, and what he must do to redeem, in all the Scriptures. This is 'it.'

Hence it is fitting that the last account of the Messiah is left to the Jewish people to voice. It is appropriate because the whole history of the Jews, with its immense pain sustained only by faith in the unknown, was risked to the coming of a promised Messiah. They have earned the right to pronounce on him, and by design or accident, they raise the deepest matters about him, the most pained and unknown matters. It is a triumph to articulate anything at all about the redeemer and his redemption because this knowledge only comes from a place in all human beings so wrecked, and so difficult to access, that squeezing any words from it is akin to picking up a nondescript stone on the ground and discovering that it turns out to be heavier than any mountain. It is more than flesh can bear to even speak it, much less experience it, and search out its meaning. These astonishing lines — spoken from the experience of a long journey and unremitting battle which the Jews were constantly tempted to bail out on, but stayed with despite it all — signify a giant stride they have made, a huge transition, going from the old insistence on righteousness to a new opening up to redemption.

This does not mean shedding righteousness for redemption, as if righteousness were merely an approximation to redemption. It is not like that at all. Trying to bypass righteousness and go straight to redemption does not work, just as remaining in righteousness and not following its impetus toward redemption equally does not work.

Righteousness is First, redemption is Last. Righteousness is the Base, redemption is the Crown. In fact, as the Jews discovered, there is more to this 'sea change' than first seems to be the case. A complex dialectic holds righteousness and redemption in a necessary tension.

The Messianic Spirit starts with the mountain peak of righteousness yet does not finish there; but only this start paves the way for the unfathomable abyss of redemption.

Righteousness is uprightness of heart, but redemption plunges into the depth of heart.

If we skate over righteousness, playing fast and loose with the truth of the heart's uprightness or falling down, we will avoid the deeper heart that is the real ground from which the heart takes a stand or loses any standing. Righteousness forces us back to the heart which we have tried to abandon, in order to have an easier life. Heartlessness opens up 'unlimited opportunities.'

In righteousness, God's anger for truth burns our untruth, and by this God's heart calls us back to our heart. We cannot go down in to the heart's depths if we are living in a way that is not in the heart at all, but far removed from it, and this is what we are when we refuse to struggle for righteousness. The struggle for righteousness is exacting, and at times very challenging, as the Jews' tussle with it demonstrates. If we do not 'strive' at all for righteousness, we are probably not gripping the bull by the horns, and are more likely to be engaged in that cool, calm, and collected self-righteousness of the Pharisee who sneered at the Publican in the temple. The former has no awareness of

his unrighteousness, he arrogantly thinks he has arrived, while the latter humbly confesses his sinful way of living, realising he is off the mark. Who is closer to the real righteousness?

It requires resolute efforts to stand up against the inertia in our being which, if we succumb to it, will always drag us down, preventing any stepping up for truth. If we are not made to sweat, and if the two hearts of stone and flesh in us are not uncovered, then it is not righteousness we are wrestling with, but some counterfeit alternative. At times when we are determined to follow the heart of stone, God becomes like a stone wall stopping our forward thrust, and even pressing harshly against our heart. The heart can ache in a peculiar way at these times of stalemate, where I am not giving up my secret agenda of untruth, and God is not giving up his open declaration of truth. When we are restored to the flesh heart, however much the stone heart has to remain with us, God re-enters the heart to guide and empower its movement ahead, and this is like a release of a pent up river. It is often accompanied by tears. Such tears mean the heart is carrying on, no longer in a pinch.

Righteousness is the truth of heart by which we stand up to existence's exactions, make hard choices, and remain firm through circumstances, including the handed down and handed on karmic consequences of many failures of uprightness of heart by many people over long stretches of time, all of which add to the weight the heart must carry to stand rather than fall down. It is hard to stand up, easy to remain fallen down. Strength, and other aspects of the muscle of passion, develop as we take the hard way, and resist the easy way.

None the less, even when righteousness is placed in its larger existential meaning, still it is not redemptive. Indeed, righteousness if faithfully followed clarifies our need for redemption, because it cannot solve the division of heart with which it heroically contends. With some problems, you cannot solve them from within their own terms of reference. You have to go down to the base, the foundation, the root, to unleash a new approach.

This is a paradox, the same 'coinherence of opposites' that we find in Christ bringing the Sword and being brought to the Cross. Cross invariably requires Sword, Sword inevitably moves to Cross.

In redemption, God retains his anger for truth as a protective and chivalrous embrace, and a reliable and unwavering anchor, but he exceeds and fulfils such truth through a new and radical love that plunges deeper into the human tragedy, and suffers in order to change things in the human heart at that terrible depth.

The last of the songs devoted to the Slave of Yahweh therefore focuses on the paradoxes within redemption.

The Jewish people are the witness to profound mysteries:

"Like a sapling he grew up in front of us, like a root in arid ground.

He had no majesty or comeliness,
and when we shall see him,
there is no beauty
that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men,
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,
we hid.. our faces from him,
he was despised and we took no account of him.
And yet he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,
but we thought of him as someone stricken,
smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our faults,
he was bruised for our iniquities.
On him lies a punishment that brings us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.

We had all gone astray like sheep,
each taking his own way,
and Yahweh burdened him with the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted,
yet he never opened his mouth,
like a lamb that is led to the slaughterhouse,
like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers
never opening its mouth.

By force and by law he was taken;
would anyone plead his cause?
For he was torn away from the land of the living;
for our faults struck down in death.

And they gave him a grave with the wicked,
..though he had done no wrong..

Yet it pleased Yahweh to bruise him,
Yahweh has put him to grief,
When Yahweh makes his soul an offering for sin,
he shall see his heirs..
And through him what Yahweh wants will be done.

His soul's anguish over,
he shall see the light and be content.
By his sufferings shall my servant justify many,
For he shall bear their iniquities, taking their faults on himself.

Hence I will grant whole hordes for his tribute,
..for pouring himself out unto death
and letting himself be taken for a sinner,

while he was bearing the faults of many and praying all the time for sinners.”

These paradoxes of redemption raise pained and difficult questions.

Why must the Messiah be ugly and unattractive, one of the dregs of human existence? Why must the Messiah be despised and rejected, such that the decent people hide their gaze from him?

Why must the Messiah be a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering? Why has the Messiah borne our griefs and carried our sorrows?

Why was the Messiah wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities? Why did we have to see him as someone punished, struck by God and brought low?

Why are we healed by his wounds and why do his punishments bring us peace?

Why did he humbly take it all, not opening his mouth, but going to his death like a lamb to the slaughter?

Why was he executed, for our faults-- really, for our entire existential failure?

Daniel also asserts that the Messiah is a king, and will be ‘cut off, but not for himself’; he will be killed not for anything he has done, but for what the people have done [Daniel, 9, 25-26]. Yet it cannot just be that the people scape-goat the Messianic king, putting all that is amiss with them onto him, so as to generate the illusion they are perfectly all right at their core. The trouble is precisely in their core. There has to be a transformation in them, for the Messiah’s sacrifice to have a purpose. When Christ cries out on the Cross, echoing David in Psalm 22, the Greek text actually reads, “My God, my God, ‘for what purpose’ have you forsaken me?” This is crucial.

The paradoxes of redemption are necessary to its purpose.

11,

To rule the people, you must serve them.

Only the king who becomes last for the people can be first with them.

To redeem the people afflicted in suffering, you must suffer what afflicts them.

Only the king who dies for the people can give them life.

To redeem what people kill in themselves, you must become what they kill and be killed for it. You will become what they deny about themselves. They will not thank you for exposing it.

Only the king who becomes broken for the people can heal them.

The suffering is the world, and each other; love has an unbearable suffering. The weight is the world, and each other; love has an unliftable weight. The cost is the world, and each other; love has an unaffordable cost.

The Messiah comes to be reversed by the human tragedy in the depth so that it can be turned upside down and turned inside out, in order to become the place not of final defeat, but of ultimate victory. Out of death, life. Out of hell, heaven.

From the ending of it all, a new beginning.

Everything about the redeemer, and his redemption, is paradoxical-- not rational, not moral, not sensibly and decently 'going to plan as you would expect.' It does not make sense by any sane logic.

This is the drama of love, at its extreme, because it deals in humanity at the end of the line, washed up, demolished, beyond saving.

It is precisely at this point where the worst case scenario has come to pass that love brings into operation its deepest heart and most radical passion. Love goes all the way, because in this desperate situation, it has to.

There is no other remedy.

12,

There is a place in us deeper than the battle between 'righteousness and wickedness', strength and weakness, effort and laxity, standing upright and falling down. It is a place of disaster, where defeat for the human possibility is frozen and fixed, where 'remission of the sentence' is impossible. It has gone beyond recall. There is no way through, there is no way out. It is the finish. It finishes in futility.

The place in us where we are broken is a place of abject desolation, a place where the human venture has come to its doom, like land left to go to pot, unwatered, non-cultivated, not worked with to bring out its potential but utterly forsaken. It is this utter forsakenness that is so painful, so despairing. It is too old, too heavy; it has gone beyond regeneration, like a rusting ship that could never sail again, or a dock that once saw much back and forth exchange as the ships came and went but now stands dilapidated, shabby, neglected, abandoned by the owner. It reeks of the seediness that comes when something created to be a hive of activity is allowed to come to a grinding halt, and then degenerates more and more. The degeneration becomes like entropy; going downhill is the only dynamic, going uphill would have no wind in its sails, and so could not even be imagined, much less tried. Nothing stirs. It just keeps coming apart, getting ever more defunct. After a while, failure stinks of decay. It has an odour all its own, like stale clothes, sheets soaked in dry urine, musty blankets eaten by moth.

It all finishes 'not with a bang, but a whimper.' The abandonment gripping this place is so radical, no one can speak its unspeakable horror. No one can look at it; if it could be seen, it would remind us of the worm in the plump apple that never sleeps, devouring it from within. We put our hands over our ears and shut our eyes. It is beyond good and evil. It is the place of our tragedy, our end, our final collapse that leaves in its wake the distinctive stink of despair when it cannot be voiced, seen, exposed, for what it is. We don't want to know, and thus it suffocates us in our attempt to choke it back. But we do know. Deep down, we know only too well, which is why we stay out of our depths, and build defences to keep us in the shallows. Yet even living this protected existence of the superficial, assiduously avoiding the profound, still we are haunted by what we know but refuse to acknowledge. Hence our 'lives of quiet despair.' The comedians who use irony to laugh at their own impotence are the only collective outlet for what everyone knows, but will not know. The laughter by which we try to dismiss what is hurting beyond hurt in ourselves is hollow.

The place totally abandoned by us is also, we believe, totally abandoned by God. It is blocked off by shame and guilt, because its derelict state is also indicative that I have been 'derelict in my duty.' I have been neglectful in doing what I was called to do by the heart that created my heart; thus my heart, out of my not using it, has become neglected. I am vagrant in my duty and thus my life has become a vagrancy of days and my very being is a vagrancy of life. It is the heart that is this waste ground.

The heart, the forge that burnt out.

The heart, the furnace that crumbled.

The heart, shamed in its own sight, but the shame in God's sight is worse.

We don't know what the heart is, because we did not use it when it was called out into life by God.

The heart finishes in the rank deterioration that follows from its failure to act. The heart funks what it has to do, and thus as a zone of doing, it becomes defunct. Non-performance of its obligation leaves the heart's powers in irreversible waning. They keep falling in, falling down, falling apart. The putrid smell of rotting is unmistakable.

The heart's down-falling leaves it unfit for use, extinct, worthless.

Therefore, gazing upon the Messianic Slave of Yahweh is unbearable. Nothing charismatic looks at us, nothing desirable returns our gaze, nothing persuasive grabs our yearning. When we look upon him, we see that in ourselves from which we avert our eyes, and close our heart.

Kill him? He was lucky we did not flay him alive, and kill him over and over, a million times. He was lucky to be killed once.

After all, it is what we are doing to ourselves, the deep heart that failed us, even as in it we failed our God.

We failed before there was any enmity between us. The enmity is over what failed. God wants to take us back there. Understandably, we had enough the first time round. We don't want to go back.

We killed the Messiah because we don't want to return. Why return to where it all ended for us, where it was all killed off, so long ago?

We killed the Messiah because we are settled down now, comfortable with the deadness.

It would hurt in a different way, it would hurt worse, for the furnace to burn again, for the forge to spit sparks once more. It would be a different pain, like giving birth to what has died, like marrying what has past.

Shaman cannot bring you to this place.

Buddha cannot bring you to this place.

The Messiah takes on what we are, at depth, to bring us back to it, and we don't thank him.

He is lucky we are not still killing him; except we are. In every innocence become bereft, in every broken down, broken hearted, no account tramp that is me, and that is you.

We kill them all, because to keep it killed is better than being reminded.

13,

The pious say, 'God is not the creator of hell, we humans are the cause of our own suffering and death.' This is dissembling, to put it mildly. God took a risk, and placed us in an existential bind between a rock and a hard place, from day one. God is implicated in our 'fall' from the passion of heart to which he called us, and which we declined; thus God is implicated in our coming through even the farthest we can fall. This is the mystery of redemption.

The Messiah is still the lamb of God, no matter what is put upon him, and in a related sense this is equally true of us. The defiled adult is still the innocent child, whatever is put upon us, and whatever we bring upon ourselves.

The reason for which God created us, and the love in which God holds us, means our unknown name cannot be excised. It is written in God's blood. It is pledged in God's fire.

The defiling of innocence is the story of history, thus coming through the spiritual and psychological tangles of vulnerability is key to redemption.

Lucifer sucks you into defilement, then Satan judges it; such is damnation. This is why it is so significant to redemption that, "harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, never opening its mouth." His vulnerability addresses our vulnerability in a most strange and barely whispered communication. You can stand in it, you can stand it. Your vulnerability reveals God.

God is humble, God is modest, God is vulnerable, in all his relational dealings with humanity. God does not resort to the intimidation of force nor deploy the shine of seduction. He stands on, and stands by, love, and this is intrinsic. Let it be what it is, the Messiah's silence tells our anger, and hurt. It is what it is. Let it be what it is, and we are stilled, we become silent, we become composed.

Even if holding the losing hand of cards, just at this point the wildcard comes into play, and that changes the whole disposition of the game.

The need to apportion blame, to judge who is right and who is wrong, as the gamble proceeds, falsifies what is at stake. We are gambling on love, suffered, carried, paid for, by the heart through passion.

God has not abandoned our vulnerability, as we feel until we are 'reconciled' to his vulnerability, as lived out by the Messiah.

Yeshua Mashiach is the Lamb slain before the world began, but this Lamb also was resurrected by God to become the Tyger of the Daemonic in whom 'sin, death, and the devil' are overcome in the ground of the heart, so that passion can re-enter the long redemptive journey and long redemptive fight to overcome them in the world.

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright in the forests of the night, what immortal hand or eye dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

When we cease to succumb to defilement, and when we cease to subject it to harsh judgement, then we will know we are still the Lamb, and becoming the Tyger, of God.

The Messiah becomes the lamb led to the slaughter, to enable us to accept the lamb in ourself and others, so that we are freed to become the tyger.

14,

There are layers to what is amiss in us.

Our fall starts with the falling down of heart and the dying of passion. We have repudiated the call of God's heart passion in our heart passion. We 'caved', and then 'cave in.' This is our 'weakness' which becomes catastrophically powerful. This level is existentially more fundamental than

'sin.' Indeed, the weakness in our shaky and sinking ground becomes a seed-bed of sins, which the ascetic tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity differentiated into three groups [noetic, erotic, incensive], with 8 main varieties [pride, vanity; lust, avarice, melancholy; hate, accidie, bodily indolence]. Thus, sin is not the cause of fallenness, rather it is exactly the converse, fallenness is the precondition of sinful activity and deeds.

Beneath sin, then, is fallenness.

Beneath the rotting dirt of fallenness is the hellishness of sulphurous bitterness and judgemental anger about the vulnerability of the heart, and its wounding by existence. Beneath our weakness toward life is our refusal of life. This is our deep no, the profound rejection. We feel judged, accused, blamed, and we retaliate: we judge, we accuse, we blame. Existence is not fair, and executes us; so we use its unfairness as the excuse to execute existence. Because no one comes to the rescue of the innocence in us, we do not go to the rescue of the innocence in anyone. We are condemned by everything, and we condemn everything. We attack the malleable, affectable, 'passible' heart, which cannot be protected or guaranteed. We gnaw and scratch at our vulnerability like a person who keeps picking at a scab; they will not be at peace, because of never allowing it to heal.

These deeper layers are not moral, but existential and spiritual. They express the risk God takes with humanity, and the world: that existence is not ontologically secured, but is ungrounded. Existence is metaphysically precarious, open ended, capable of going in different directions and turning out in different ways. We acknowledge this in the anxiety and anguish in our own heart, which is aware of the abyss over which existence, and itself as 'bound hand and foot to existence', is poised.

Consequently, there is a place beneath fallenness and hellishness, which is what happens to the unfathomable abyss underneath the heart in our collapse. It becomes a fearful void, an abysmal emptiness, into which we can go on falling forever. Emptiness is mysterious, and ambiguous. It is the groundless ground where God can dwell, yet in our fallenness, this emptiness is abandoned by God, and becomes the deep place where God is absent. This is the ultimate in forsakenness. The fathomlessness beneath our feet, causing us to fall through the floor boards, endlessly, creates a numinous terror that turns our bowels and stomach to water, but this terror is experienced as being forsaken, deserted, left. We don't know why. All we know is, nothing stands. It is all meaningless. The venturing of meaning has come to nothingness.

Deadness, hellishness, and the vortex of nothingness-- of these three layers, the final is the worst. Here even hot complaint has disappeared, replaced by a fearful negation. It is all pointless, a sound and fury signifying nothing.

In an older, and currently neglected, theological language, it was asserted that 'what is not assumed is not healed.'

Psalm 22 presents the Messiah's death hideously, and graphically, in its plummeting down into the empty abyss where there is nothing to uphold us, and hence all brave and generous risk-taking and its adventure is rendered finally null and void. We might as well live out our time in the shallows, taking care not to be exposed to danger, and grabbing at such pleasures as present themselves as we go along. Nothing deeper in human life is sustainable. The nothing at the base of us 'makes cowards of us all', and determines we will have to settle for the safer compromise. This is not exactly a choice, more like a reflex reaction of our whole nature as it shudders when it is caught off guard and has to gaze down. It becomes habitual, built in, natural, organic. What else do you expect?

Thus when the Messiah dies this death that haunts us every minute, it is has a finality. Whatever hope he offered, whatever fragile hope life affords, is really over. The abyss, as the place where God is not, cannot be defeated by any heavenly or earthly powers. But we live with such existential despair all the time. We see little hopes rise up, and get cut down, a thousand times a minute. The despair in human beings is ancient and unremitting, and at its absolute worst when mute.

The Messiah is not just dying, but dying this death that contains all our layers below ground level. Embracing the empty abyss is the deepest solidarity with us, and the profoundest reversal, that the Messiah must suffer to redeem our lost possibility. The human heart passion was meant to be the vehicle of God's heart passion, its sceptre, its chariot, its warm fire, its sharp sword, its tears like soft rain on a summer's night and its exultant shout in the glad day. But God's abysmal depth does not live in our abysmal depth, and this we know in the 'fear and trembling' and the 'sickness unto death' that grips us at our deepest, making the heart 'dizzy.' If you stare into the abyss for any time, the abyss starts to stare back at you, Nietzsche claimed. We stare into the abyss, realising it is empty, and experience God's absence as forsakenness, and we do not comprehend why. Is it us? Are we that unworthy? Is it God who has tired of us, like a precious child who needs a new toy? It is an unrevealed mystery, and it is a searing pain—the 'black inexplicable pain'; this is the most unknown and the most hurting wound in us. For most people most of the time, this wound is unspeakable, literally, and in every sense, inarticulate and futile. We have lost the God of salvation, and acquired the God of the heartbreak. It is the deepest reality about us; we are inconsolable.

David speaks for us, crying to God 'deep to deep', asking him why we are bereft. We accept our vehicle is broken, yet we also plead with God to not leave us like this, the forgotten of God. Though God answers prayers in times of ordeal, in regard to the real cataclysm in the groundlessness of our heart passion, silence is God's only reply.

The voice in Psalm 22 is sometimes the Messiah's, though David echoes it, and hence they share the same experience of staring into the abyss, suffering the absence of God, but David prays to be relieved of it and in a sense yearns for an earlier time when God stood in a different place in human experience, and

allowed us to avoid this place of awe and awfulness in ourselves. By contrast, the Messiah surrenders to it.

In 'dying for us', the Messiah plunges further than even the dead zone, and hell, that is where our heart is in the depth. He goes all the way to the fearful void over whose empty abyss our heart is suspended. He ends the suspense by diving in.

"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

We are forsaken.

"Why are you so far from helping me?"

We are beyond help.

"Why do you not hear my groaning, my God? I call all day, but you never answer, all night long I call and cannot rest."

My crying is to no avail with you.

"Israel praised, trusted, and were delivered by you. They called to you for help and they were saved. They never trusted you in vain."

None of what you did before, to release Israel from the peril in which its people were gripped, is of any avail to this.

"Yet here I am now, more worm than man, scorn of humanity, jest of the people, all who see me jeer, they toss their heads and sneer, 'He relied upon Yahweh, let Yahweh save him. If Yahweh is his friend, let him rescue the poor idiot.'"

In my heart nothing undergirds me from underneath, so I crawl close to the ground like a worm, no longer a man. My predicament is merriment for those who have steeled their heart against what lies below, from whose support we take courage, and from whose desertion we are left hollow and afraid, gutted, hardly able to breathe. The people who put no trust in God can mock those who do trust him, for when we are falling headlong into the dreadfulness of the deep, we are stricken, as with a strange disease. Either the old saving hand that Yahweh once held out to drag us up is no longer on offer, or Yahweh is indifferent to our fate. The people who always avoided trusting the depth of existence are pleased when those who did trust it are suddenly sinking, and there is nothing to hold them up.

We are the bereft of God and the ridicule of men.

"Yet you took me out of the womb, you entrusted me to my mother's breasts, you were my God. Don't leave me when trouble is near, I have no one to help."

Be with us even here, in this place, deeper than deadness, deeper than hell. The real trouble has come. We are beset by the enemy on all sides, roaring and ravaging.

“I am poured out like water. My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it has melted within me. My strength is dried up, and my tongue sticks to my throat.”

We are in the falling, we are in the vortex, we are unravelling.

“A pack of dogs surrounds me, a gang of villains closes me in; they tie me hand and foot, and leave me lying in the dust of death. ..and there they glare at me, gloating.”

For us, there is nothing left. But for you, it is different.

We watch you dying our death, dying the death we freeze the heart against; we saw the ice melt and your vital substance flow out. You gave up your life for the sake of all of us, even those who glared at your audacity and gloated when they thought it punished by fate. They who never went on a limb for anyone or anything were relieved and satisfied when you who went far out on the limb for everyone and everything came down. In their hearts they wanted you castigated for exceeding the limits of existence no one can mess with. Who are you, they thought, to skate so lightly over the abyss? They saw you playing with fire, and wanted you to get burned. It is what you deserved, by their reckoning. Yet they did not realise what you were doing. They did not realise you were doing it for them, no less than for those of us who half believed it and half doubted it. Our faith is halting, it is crushed by existence and wavers on the edge of the abyss, it is no more ultimately faithful than the disavowed faith of your tormentors.

The limits of existence dictated by the fearfulness of the abyss would change if it were no longer the place of God's stultifying absence, but became the place of God's enlivening presence. If we were no longer forsaken, at depth, but joined in our heart passion by God's heart passion, then all bets would be off.

Even before your resurrection, we sensed this was where the change would happen, and where the turn-around would come from.

“For he has not despised or disdained the poor man in his poverty, has not hidden his face, but has answered when he called.”

This can only be said from hell. This can only be affirmed from the place of our ultimate poverty, which is the place in the heart where we are without God.

When deep cries to deep, the cry is answered but not as we anticipate. The answer is the Messiah's death for our sake, the 'death that overcomes death',

and brings new life, a life of the heart in its passion no longer contained, curtailed, defined, by the tragedy in our deeps.

Through the reversal of the Messiah, God's strength is revealed in our human weakness. We need not give way anymore.

Through the reversal of the Messiah, God's power is revealed in our human vulnerability. We need not judge any more.

Through the reversal of the Messiah, God's commitment is revealed in our human forsakenness. We need not despair any more.

That reversal is God taking on the human tragedy and undergoing it as we do, to change it from within, and reveal to us how to pass through its depth to a resurrection on the other side.

Out of black pain, a pillar of red fire.

Out of the empty abyss, a door opened onto the new land of heart.

Redemption only happens at the very nadir point, but this allows it to change things at the foundation. As the roots of sin in ever deeper hells are dug up, and the wisdom hidden in these hells is dug out, so sin becomes a tree starved of nourishment at its root, and so it withers away. It may take time, but Christ's injunction to very ordinary people 'sin no more' demonstrates that sin can be undercut. It is passing away..

Redemption lays new foundations in the depths that previously undermined, and swallowed up, our love, our integrity, our creativity. Our passion is not merely restored, it is renewed. Our heart is not merely re-grounded, its very ground is changed.

The broken and wavering human heart passion becomes the vehicle of God's constant heart passion.

Through the worst in us, the best of God is planted. This is the paradox of the Messiah's 'toiling in the abysmal', which works out at each level of our distressed condition. Redemption is not about 'saving' a better part of us from a worse part; its task is to take on the worst part and transform it at its own dire level, to change it from the inside by truthfully and bravely addressing the dilemma in which it has come unstuck, and by this, to reveal there is a way through that dilemma.

Thus our real tragedy is 'better', more fruitful, than success, or any other scenario designed to blot out the deep debacle that is human life when you really see its heart. Where is the heart? Where is the passion? It is only by fearlessly facing up to the way we are, so heartless with but a hint of heart, so passionless with but a hint of passion, that we realise where we were meant to be. What a fall from human dignity is this.

Yet through the Messiah's indignities, we are made noble, and called again to the task we first refused, as too suffering, too heavy, too costly. Through his suffering the wound, through his lifting the weight, through his paying the cost, we can do this, at last, in him, but from our own heart, by our own passion. He frees us to do as he does. He frees us for love, the love that redeems, the love that suffers to redeem.

There is no more supreme love than this, in God, and in humanity.

15,

The new redemptive reality is 'suffering love', and the Messiah brings that love from God to humanity. It introduces a new way in which God deals with us, and we deal with each other. This newness is not encapsulated by the first and second commandments which go back to Moses: love God with your all, and love the neighbour as if they were your self-- your neighbour needs to become as precious to you as your very self. But the new covenant is summed up by the third commandment given by Jesus Christ: 'love your enemies.'

In Western Christianity, suffering love has been largely missed, or reduced to 'atoning for sin.' There is a sense in which sin makes love suffer in a specific, atoning manner, but all three versions of the doctrine of the Atonement advanced by Western Christians, from Roman Catholics, through Protestants, to recent fundamentalists and evangelicals, is false, and indeed Satanic.

This false teaching is rooted in pagan systems for mollifying an impersonal tribal deity whose vengeful anger is feared; for, once you have offended this 'god' by doing some wrong, he demands 'satisfaction' in the form of your punishment, or he will accept a 'substitute' in your place to take the punishment for you. This is in effect a bribe to buy him off. You have wronged the deity in some degree, so you should be wronged by the deity in the same degree, in a balancing of the books; but in so far as you can offer a 'sacrifice' in your stead, and to the extent that this substitutory 'ransom' is also equivalent to the gravity of the offence, then the deity's 'honour' will be reinstated. You will escape the punishment you deserve.

Assuaging divine anger will never lead to true change of heart; this reaction to Satanic Accusation only paralyses the heart, masking all its problems and wounds.

The false teaching on Atonement cheapens what is so costly, and makes ugly something so beautiful. There is a Jewish meaning of 'debt' that is existential, and even karmic, which makes sense of the Messiah 'dying for our sins', and thereby 'atoning' for us. But this is a very different matter.

But even Jewish atoning does not do full justice to the new meaning of suffering for love. This is because Jewish atoning comes from Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. As such, it is a priestly ritual of symbolic atoning, comprised of three elements: repentance, making amends for one's wrong-

doing by changing one's life, and forgiving and being forgiven by one's fellows. It includes fasting, confession of sins to God and those one has wronged, prayer, and acts of benevolence, acts of mercy, toward those most in need. At the end of 'the days of awe', God pardons everyone's sins, as a community. No one goes away in any anxiety, or doubt, that they are forgiven by God, and starting out once more, as if they were a new born child who had never sinned at all. But this has much more than a moral meaning, it is mystical and ontological. Sin no longer separates God and humanity, who are re-united like a couple re-married after the estrangement of divorce, but paradoxically, sin becomes the grit in the oyster that, if worked on sincerely and humbly in the process of change of heart, becomes the pearl. The Day of Atonement ends in tremendous joy, for God and for humanity.

This Jewish Atonement is carried over into Christianity in the practice of Lent.

But the priestly atoning for sin is not the Messiah's loving way of dealing with sin, which is much more radical. This difference is clearly acknowledged by Paul [Hebrews, 10, 11-17]. What we sacrifice for God in the Temple is not as powerful or efficacious as what God sacrifices for us on the Cross.

There are, then, two very different ways of 'atoning' for the people, which involve two very different meanings of 'sacrifice.' The kingly way is far more powerful than the priestly way, thus 'once and for all.'

The priestly ritual makes a 'sacrificial offering' of blood, of innocent blood [animal] in the place of the worshipper's guilty blood [human], but this symbolises the worshipper's contrition, willingness to give up the sin to which their soul's life is attached, and work toward a new way of life by re-attaching their soul to God. This is the sinner's 'sin offering', and 'sin sacrifice.' It is necessary, but not sufficient. It is the way of 'salvation', but it does not redeem. The Messianic Reversed Kingship is the redeemer, who redeems everything and everyone in depth, and especially those who cannot be saved. What about the sinners who cannot come to the ritual, for authentic reasons as well as evasive reasons? What about the people too damaged by the consequences of evil in this world, who have long ago given up and given in, and just dwell in hell, unable to even stand in the Temple and empower the priest to plead for them? It is not just the wicked who refuse to come to the Temple service, and the journey of developmental spiritual transformation it instigates. What about those so damaged by the evil which has a free run in this world, such as the people who were as children sexually and violently abused by loved parents, that seeking 'reconciliation' with the God who allowed this to happen would feel a violation of their integrity, a betrayal of their wound? These people are not going to any Temple service, nor entering into any process of coming out of the 'darkness of sin' to re-enter the 'light of God.' That would seem obscene to them, a further betrayal of their primal betrayal, and in truth they are right in this.

Deep hurt toward, and deep anger with, God is studiously evaded by the pious, but as a Hasidic master once agreed with a suicidally hurt and suicidally angry young man, 'we live in a world where love is not enough.' We

must grieve, and be angry, as well as love, the Zaddik added. And all that this prophetic sage asked of the young man was, let us grieve together, let us be angry together-- and let us not divorce from our love the hurting and the outrage.

Christ said he came not for the 'saved', implying he thought there were people in Israel and in the wider world of his time who were indeed living within the salvational path that the priestly system is built round, and were thus safe and sound, whole, if not healed fully then on the way to healing; rather, he came for 'sinners', implying there were other people, probably in his day like ours the vast majority, for whom the way of 'being saved' was closed, for reasons of various kinds, whether valid or invalid it makes no difference. These are the people who will never be able to enter any Temple, and will never be able, with tears of affliction, to offer their sins to God, in order to 'return' to him. For many people, in the ancient world as in the modern world, there is not going to be any priestly oriented offering and sacrifice of sin, to bring them closer to God. It is not going to happen. It cannot happen. And it is truth that it cannot, and will not, happen. These are all the people in hell, of various kinds and various degrees; really, they are all people, because the trade-off for being saved is to leave the depths that are hellish alone, and rise above them, not recalling the deep passion of the deep heart, but attaining only a benign and benevolent 'pastel coloured' kindness, without hellishness yet also without fire.

The Messiah comes for the people for whom the path of salvation in religion cannot work. He comes for the outsiders, the non-kosher, the desperately and desolately injured, those in touch with their hurt and anger towards God, those who object to God not intellectually and philosophically, but existentially in the 'black inexplicable pain' of their hearts. This is the more ultimate captivity, and so the ransom to pay for its release is far costlier [Psalms, 49, 7-9]. "It costs so much to redeem humanity's life." Only God pays this cost: it is God paying this cost in and through the Messiah.

The priest stands in for the people, dragged down by sin, and looks up to God, asking him to come back to them. The kingly Messiah stands in for God, looks down into the people, and dives in to join them in their deepest hells. God is lowered, or pointed in a descending direction, by the willingness of his love to suffer for the people who will not, and cannot, go up to him; he must come down to them. He must pay for them, with his own blood. This is why the Messiah is the ransom, himself, and is the sacrifice, himself, pouring out his blood of life into the deep tragedy where humanity really dwells.

The Messiah's sacrifice is the converse of the priestly sacrifice; his sacrifice is not the blood representing the people's sin, but the blood of God given to the people's sin, a divine life embracing the people's death that they may again live.

The enormity of God suffering, and sacrificing himself, not just for those who are his friends in trouble, but also for those who regard themselves, tacitly if not explicitly, as his enemies, is beyond any measure. Yahweh gets accused,

by those frightened by his righteous anger, of being a tyrannical bully; from Jung to Dawkins this rant has been repeated-- despite the fact that Yahweh opposes tyrants and overthrows them, forbids capitalism at origin, takes to task the rich and powerful, and insists that how a society treats its powerless and wretched is the real criterion of its justice.

However, has any God humbled himself, and poured out his life blood, to suffer for the redeeming of all, including his enemies, no different to his friends? Yahweh is passionate, and has heart. Redemption, and redeeming, is passion given to dead passion, heart given to empty heart, to rekindle the furnace, to re-spark the forge, in our depths. This will make the redeemed deep, as well as great. They will come through to the ultimate secrets of God's wisdom, hidden in the hell where existence falls into the abyss.

This is the other side of the Messiah's reversal. We are reversed, our worst becoming our best, our deepest becoming our greatest.

Is it any wonder that neither in Judaism nor in Christianity has the Messianic Way been much tried?

16,

There are in the Slave Songs of Isaiah two meanings of suffering for love, in fact. These are two senses in which the king dies for his people.

He dies for them out of holding them in his love, and he dies for them out of carrying their faults in his love. Each makes him suffer, but the suffering is different. Yet the second follows from the first. In other words, if you are willing to hold people in your love, won't you take the extra step and carry their faults in your love? Love is the key, in both kinds of suffering. Without love, neither suffering is redemptive.

[1] "Through his wounds we are healed"

The first suffering arises because of how far love has to go in this existence, where risk, ungroundedness, unpredictability and the unknown, constitutes the existential situation in which humanity is placed. Freedom, and otherness, requires love to be sacrificial, primally. Many ancient Shamanic peoples knew that life does not work without sacrifice. If a mother sacrifices sleep to feed her baby in the middle of the night, this is just what love asks of her. You give of yourself to those you love, and the more you love them, the more ready you are to give your all. The sacrifice that is specific to redemption is primarily about loving your brother so much, you will take his life into your heart as a burden carried by your passion. 'Bear your brother', ancient traditions say. Put yourself out, even to the point of your own death, for the people you love. If you love them, then whatever befalls them befalls you. It is impossible for you to be on the up and up as they go down the drain. St Maximos regards this suffering for those we love as the truest meaning of friendship: "There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, for he makes his own the misfortunes of his friend and endures them, suffering with him, even to death." Sadly,

many so-called friends bail out on us when we are put to the test, and it becomes too testing for them to stay with us in what we go through. If love shows itself to be a fair weather friend, then it is not really love.

Jesus Christ asserts the same: 'greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends.' However hard it is for me to carry my own weight in existence, if I love someone else, then I will carry their weight if they hit the wall. Don't balk at the extra weight. Love engenders the extra muscle. Jesus Christ also spoke of this too: if the brother needs your coat, give him your shirt, and your trousers, and shoes as well. There is no limit to what love will 'do' for those who are loved.

This is just the way love is. Love suffers for those it loves, and makes sacrifice for them. If I myself—in my tears, sweat, and blood—must become the payment of the 'ransom' needed to free you from where you are stuck, in terrible trouble, at mortal and spiritual peril, then I will gladly give all I have for your redemption, for you to come through. The question existence poses to my love is, how far will I go? As well as sacrificing myself, pouring out my life and holding back nothing, will I abase myself? Self-giving is one thing, self-emptying is another thing. Furthermore, will I put myself in circumstances where I become the victim of a fate I can no longer affect, but must be affected by? Will I not simply take a stand, but submit to all the consequences that are unlocked by doing that? How far will I go? Personally and humanly, how far is it possible to go?

It is clearly hard for us to love. Our sinfulness keeps us self-absorbed and self-serving, treating the 'other' as merely an optional 'extra' that can be used or thrown away depending on whether they enhance or deprive the self, and it also keeps us egocentric, seeking 'power over' events to boost our agenda and defeat the rival's threat to it.

But a more ultimate difficulty is the suffering that must be accepted, the weight that must be carried, the cost that must be paid, if we are to love the world enough to commit our entire life to what is at stake in it. This is where we are put at the most fundamental jeopardy, and have to go through reversals and inversions of hope that hurt, damage, bruise, us. How can we bear and endure the existential depths of existence, for the sake of love? How can we bear the unbearable and endure the unendurable, to go to the end of the line with love? Where is such necessary existential heroism to come from, realistically?

We love as much as we can, and some people are dealt a hand of cards that allows them to ostensibly love a bit more, whilst other people are dealt a hand of cards that pushes them to love a bit less, but from where the Messiah stands, gazing into us at depth, the human tragedy is the fate of us all, with no winners and no losers, no superior and no inferior, no enlightened and no ignorant, no saved and no damned. Some are more righteous and some are more wicked, and this remains a reference point not to be casually thrown away, but in the heart where it really matters, in the passion where it really matters, we are all tragically diminished, and in prison. We are all unable to

be staked to what is most at stake for the world, and for all who sail in its brave but frail ship over stormy seas. We all have our point where we 'bail out': the point where we unravel, and start acting like frenzied rats rushing round the ship looking for a way off, when there is no exit and all the passengers sink or come through together. Peter reached this point when he said to the braying crowd he did not know Jesus Christ. Three times he bailed out, before with profound weeping in the depleted and debilitated heart ground, he recovered himself by remembering he could rely on the Messiah, not on his own paltry strength.

In a peculiar way, those who attain excellence are misleading about the human condition. They strive, and attain something, and this gives us all some sense of what things should be like for everyone. Still, this very excellence is misleading, because at a deeper level, we are all without any exceptions failing. At depth, the furnace has gone out, the fire is dead, in terms of what it really means to have a heart and live by its passion. Thus, by the reversal logic of redemption, it is the broken -- the sick, the poor, the orphaned, the dispossessed and impotent, the unrighteous and depraved, the hopeless -- who provide the actual picture of the human condition. We are all knocked out of the game, at depth, and so what conventional people call success must inevitably skate over this underlying truth. Those more faithful to such truth often pay heavily, like Van Gogh, Dostoyevsky, or Lorca. The real desolation rumbles away beneath human life, unacknowledged, but always intruding, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Our inability to live together justly, and redemptively, is only the most obvious symptom of how little we can give, and how short a distance we can go, for love. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; the intention to love is still in us, but the heart of flesh needed to ignite its passion is lacking.

Some can do somewhat more, some cannot do anything. Bear your brother: where your brother stumbles, pick him up, and help him walk on. We can do enough to reveal to us the gap between this little we do and the heroism we need when in a pinch but cannot summon. We end up guarding against too much suffering, recoiling from too weighty a duty, refusing too big a cost. This becomes the measure of our generosity or meanness, courage or cowardice, boldness or timidity, patience or 'pre-maturity', fortitude or likeliness to bolt and run. A love that does not weigh up how much we give or don't give, that doesn't calculate what we lose or don't lose, seems remote from human experience.

The question remains urgent, yet seems to be eternally poised up in the air-- how far can love go?

The Messiah gives an example of, and offers us the help for, love to go all the way. By dying our death and granting us his life, we are re-rooted in love's spiritual foundation which frees its radicalism.

Henceforth, rather than continuing in love's death, we prefer to be alive in love, even if this gets us killed.

[2] “On him lies a punishment that brings us peace”

The second suffering arises because of how we inevitably burden each other, harm each other, make it impossible for each other. Since ‘no man is an island’, but all paths must cross, it is inescapable in human existence that everyone affects and is affected by everyone, and so we ‘flow into’ each other for good and for ill, for creativity and for destruction, for compassion and for cruelty. No one is immune. No one gets off scot free. There is no ‘individual path’ through existence, for every person’s road is made lighter or made heavier, is facilitated or hindered, by all the other roads that cross it. Everyone helps and is helped, everyone hinders and is hindered. We vastly impact upon one another, and so no one starts with a blank slate from which they choose to do right or wrong, but each and every one of us starts with an existence loaded up with the beneficial and hurtful influences that are inherited from the complexity of factors in motion all around us, and even more so, inherited from the complexity of factors in motion in the past and moving into the present. A person is not just the result of their own decisions. Such are the tangled webs, the networks of complications, that we dwell in, and cannot evade.

To what extent, then, is my decision to cop out in a certain fraught situation down to my deciding alone, or what parents, society, culture, history, has put upon me and which I must shoulder? A veritable host of consequences from pre-existing personal and existential realities influence my existence; my freedom allows me to negotiate with these impingements, but denied or acknowledged, they exert their contribution to my existence. If my mother used me as a child, I might still choose to love when I am adult, but I will have to deal internally with the disabling absence of mother love, if I am not to pass on using other people. Or, if I am too damaged by having been used as a child, then the ‘using relationship’ might end up all I know, in which case as an adult I will pass it on. Someone I use is actually innocently ‘paying’ for what was done to me by a different person entirely. But, actually, the situation is even more complex, because was my mother used by her mother, or her father? What disappointments, betrayals, deprivations, shaped the way in which she entered life as a young adult? She did not simply decide to make her child the compensatory stop-gap for the injuries imposed upon her existence.

Given such mutual influence, we both benefit from other people’s loving actions, and lose out from other people’s unloving actions. And it is the same for them, from us. Everyone owes everyone much thanks; but everyone owes everyone much debt. ‘Forgive us our debts [to others], as we forgive those in debt [to us]’ is the existentially accurate translation.

It is true that some stand up more, some fall down more, and the Bible calls the former ‘righteous’, ‘just’, ‘upright’, and the latter ‘wicked’, ‘unjust’, ‘bent’, but the Bible at the same time forcibly insists, ‘no one is without sin’, and so we all burden others and are burdened by others in ways that make it harder for the community to be what it is meant to be, a situation where people help each other, rely on each other, and share the gain as well as share the loss.

Some sin, as in the priestly praxis, can be made better, because people atone to each other, and by that, restore their relationships. But not all people are willing, or capable, to make restitution to get back into 'I—Thou' with their brothers and sisters. Thus, not everyone pays a fair price for solidarity, some pay little, some pay too much. By this the community starts to fragment, to break apart. The people who realise they owe the community for their life diminish relative to the people who think they owe nothing but are owed everything; the former 'give something back', the latter 'take whatever they can grab.'

A few who try to live righteousness, however many times they fail, keep the ship sailing for everyone in it, just and unjust alike, while many who do not aim for righteousness and have turned away from it, consciously or unconsciously, in order to 'go their own way' -- "we each had gone astray, taking our own way" [Isaiah, 53, 6] -- are pushing it under the waves. Yet, this stand by the righteous against those who have abandoned the communal inter-relatedness, to seek their own advantage no matter how expensive it is to the shared jeopardy, is like a last ditch stalling action of a small army besieged by a much bigger invading force. The righteous cannot win, but they can delay, slow down, sometimes stop, the steady advance of the inhuman power. For when the ship has finally sunk, the disaster will drown just and unjust alike.

This stand by the righteous, often lonely and horrendously costly to them personally, for the community that gathers all, means that the minority of noble persons are actually not simply fighting 'against' the majority of ignoble persons, but more basically, the noble are fighting 'for' the ignoble.

The few righteous people are the defenders and anchor ['mashkon'= guarantee] of the truth of human togetherness as a solidarity forged from jointly participating in the benevolent and the harsh sides of fate, for all the people, including those who are unrighteous. Forgiveness in this context has a much more stupendous meaning than it does in the ritual of atonement where you restore friendly relationship among friends; in this situation of righteous persons having real enemies out for their blood, they forgive enemies as a way of declaring they are still brothers at a deeper level, because at that depth there is only one heart ground and one passion sharing its common fate. You forgive your enemy because you do not want that mysterious bond of oneness to be broken. You realise, mystically, if 1 sheep is lost, all 99 are lost, because in the depth, there is only one heart and one passion that we all join in and are upheld by, and that is God's heart and passion. This divine ground and fire cannot be parceled out to rivalrous individuals or competing groups.

This is why, from the earliest times, the suffering and death of the righteous was seen in the Jewish religion as atoning for all the people, both those who were trying and those who were not trying. Their sacrifice for the sake of the people was more powerful than other atonement: "particularly the death of the righteous atones for the people" [I Samuel, 21, 14]. This suffering and

death of the noble benefits everyone, friend and foe. It opens a door into the love of God otherwise closed, for in the ritual of atonement in the Temple, it is only the friends of God, in some sense, who attend. The enemies of God laugh at the priestly sin-offering, and sacrificial blood, symbolising their giving of themselves to God which starts healing the sicknesses of sin. These foes of God see no reason to change their ways, and for them in any case, the Temple is irrelevant, as the drama of good and evil, or as they see it, winning and losing, is enacted in the existential arena of the world. This is acceptable to God, since the world is the ultimate focus of redemption.

Thus, the righteous, because of their love for the people in their entirety, good and bad, have an atoning power not granted to prophet or priest. The prophet's atoning is through prayer to God, and emphasises that God can change the heart of the person, from the inside, psychologically and spiritually; the person can be remade as a vehicle of the Spirit, or Spirit-Bearing, through such practices as prayer to God, fasting, and a 'broken spirit and contrite heart.' This very personal, and very interior, focus -- 'truth in the inward parts' -- is evident through-out the Psalms of David. So powerful is prophetic prayer that there is at least one occasion when God asks a prophet not to pray for the people, as some disaster coming to them is necessary, and if the prophet prays for them, it will be averted. The priest's atoning for the people seeks both personal and communal restoration to God, which unifies the divided soul of humanity, person to God, and person to person. However, neither of these kinds of atonement wins such powerful support, and such powerful interventional potency, as the atoning of the righteous, the noble, the king. This is the Messiah's atoning for the people: not prophetic, not priestly, but kingly.

Indeed, it is even more radical than that. Doubtless it is true, as many Jewish commentators assert, that the prophets put hope in the redeeming power of God's Spirit which will cleanse impurities and renew the people from their innerds, bringing their innards to a new condition never before attained, or even imagined as possible; and this will happen invisibly, without any ritual or symbolic accompaniment. The Spirit does not always need, nor work exclusively through, the Temple, the Spirit works directly on people's insides. However, this is not the real point. The promise God makes to Ezekiel needs a conjoint action-- not just of the Spirit alone, but of the Spirit working in and through the king's action. For the Messianic King is a Spirit-Bearer, exactly like the prophet.

This leads to a stupendous, yet entirely mysterious, conclusion. This brings us to a fundamentally different meaning of atonement: an atonement neither prophetic nor priestly, but exclusively kingly.

It is the king's self-giving, and self-emptying, for the people that atones for them most powerfully, because this deed of the nobility of love is what brings the Spirit into the hellish depths common to all people, and begins the process of 'dying to the older heart and passion' and being 'raised from that death into the new life of a radically new heart and passion.'

The kingly deed for the sake of the people manifests God towards them. This loving deed is needed, to unleash, to unlock, the radical sea-change in the depths of all humanity. By spilling his blood, the Messiah plants the seed of change in the ground, and this seed goes into the depth where it becomes a spark of flame, igniting the old heart and spirit like combustible wood, and in the flame of death, bringing to rebirth a flame-forged and flame-kindled heart and spirit. The 'singular heart' and 'new spirit' is born out of the deepest debacle of the divided heart and impeded spirit.

There is a drama being enacted in this axis that binds king and Spirit: he must show the new heart and new passion, not just in words but in action, and pay for it with his life; prophetic revelation about it, or priestly sacramental theatre portraying it, would not be enough. He has to 'do' it, and the doing must require from him all he has got, with nothing left. He must be the love that is so extreme, in including friend and enemy of God, that it suffers equally both for friend and for enemy.

To the one it gives; to the other it abases itself, telling the lost brother, 'I am as lost as you', to make being lost no reason for resisting the all-inclusive love.

To the friend, it gives everything; to the enemy it gives still more, accepting without resistance or defense his hurt and anger, his grief and outrage, which needs to punish love for its 'flaw' of freedom, and its refusal to protect vulnerability. For the sake of the enemy, love is punished by what he found so deeply punishing in existence that he could not bear and endure it, but had to pass it on. For the sake of the enemy, love embraces both the deep point of failure, understanding it and identifying with it in a failure akin to it, and accepts the consequences of this failure, taking into itself all the agonies and afflictions that it has put on all people, yet not passing them on, but swallowing them, dissolving them in a different alchemy where the toxic becomes a strange but necessary part of the healed.

The kingly Messiah does nothing for himself, but all he does is for love of the people. This is why he must be a servant, even a slave.

'No looks to attract our eyes,
despised and rejected by men,
we took no account of him.'

Nothing he does glorifies himself, but everything he does diminishes him so the people may increase. Oddly, the first example of a king's love for the people that requires him to totally abnegate himself is Moses. After falling into a self-righteous wrath, and destroying the first set of the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, for which he is seriously rebuked by God by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land, Moses suddenly manifests out of left field the nobility of the Messianic kingship. For after the Golden Calf, God seems set to leave the people to their own devices, allowing them to die in the wilderness, but Moses pleads with God not to give up on the people even when they give up on him. The pleading seems to be falling on deaf ears until

Moses cries to God, 'blot my name out of your book of life, if this will mean the people's name remains in the book.' God then forgives the people [Exodus, 34, 1-9; Numbers, 14, 17-20]. The incident is paradoxical, because it is when the human leader finds his deepest heart for the people that this evokes the divine leader's deepest heart for the people.

This is the secret logic of the Messianic kingly atonement. Because of how far a single man will go, God will go farther. If a single man will give away his life, for the people's life to be returned to them, then God will do the same. We have great power with God, when we insist God love more than we can. If we can go beyond our puny measure, then God can go beyond his vast measure. We can hold God to account, and insist God love more than we do. If we do this out of love for others, for all our brothers and sisters, then it moves God's heart as nothing else, and sends God's heart into redemptive action.

The deeper rationale of the Messianic kingly atonement, then, is prefigured by Moses. Henceforth, though no one at the time grasped its redemptive implications, God will never give up on the people even when they give up on him. The rationale of this is noble.

The greater pays for the lesser.
The rich pay for the poor.
The healthy pay for the sick.
The righteous pay for the unrighteous.

This is the redemptive power.

It contains a paradox, which restores dignity to the unrighteous, equal to the dignity of the righteous. For, those who turn from God become the spur to him to go farther than he must go in the case of those who turn toward God. Thus the part of us farthest from God becomes, in the end, closer to the secret of God than the part of us always wanting to be close.

This is why only out of the darkest hell emerges the most radiant heaven.
This is why out of death and final defeat emerges the most vibrant life and true victory.

The nadir is the matrix of the real apex.

The apex untried in the nadir has no power to change it. The apex that dies from the nadir has the power to transform its deadliness into a different, and fresh, aliveness.

Where the last chance has gone is where the new beginning can be found.

The Spirit working in the depths, as in the Descent into Hell of Jesus Christ between his Cross and Resurrection, humbly accepts our objections to God, and by taking on our deepest rejections of God, uncovers the deeper truth of

God hidden in those rejections. Our ultimate spurning of God contains the ultimate embracing of God.

But this contention between God and us at depth cannot be falsely reconciled.

By the way God suffers what has undone us in existence, he can show us a different way to suffer the undoing of existence, and can bring us through, to the other side. He who dies by the Cross will live by the Resurrection.

17,

Three points sum up the Messianic drama.

It is only where the real existential possibility of humanity is lost to tragedy that it can be redeemed.

What makes the difference is a sacrificial suffering, a different way of embracing the tragedy, that the Messiah offers.

We must be in the tragedy to know we need this offer; he must go into the tragedy to make the offer count.

18,

God is Light and Fire.

The Light saves, by raising us.

The Fire redeems us, by entering the darkness of suffering, and plumbing the depth that suffering reveals.

God's Heart Passion does not waver like ours. But it is closer to ours, at depth, than most people comprehend. Ours was created by God to be the Vehicle of his. Our fall is not turning away from the Light, but losing this Vehicle of God's Fire. This is the tragedy that redemption plumbs and changes, by its deeds of suffering love, in the dark, in the depth.

To deepen: to intensify, to make more grave, to go to the remotest and most extreme part, to uncover the deep-seated, the firmly rooted, to shake it up and test it, to see what comes through and what does not stand up.

Coming from a depth: a deep breath, a deep sigh, difficult to understand, lying below the surface, serious, absorbing, profound to the heart.

God's suffering for love does not bestow upon us 'passionlessness', but generates the passion like God's.

Fire is deeper and greater than Light.

19,

The long journey of the Jews has passed from the God of righteousness to the God whose righteousness suffers for love.

Through redemption, Yahweh changes even as he changes humanity. The love of Yahweh for us comes through the very next chapter of Isaiah after the fourth Slave Song. Yahweh declares [Isaiah, 54, 4-10]=

“Do not be afraid, you will not be put to shame, do not be dismayed, you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth and no longer remember the curse of your widowhood. For now your creator will be your husband, his name, Yahweh, God of Hosts; your redeemer will be the Holy One of Israel, he is called the God of the whole earth. Yes, like a forsaken wife, distressed in spirit, Yahweh calls you back. Does a man cast off the wife of his youth? says your God. I did forsake you for a brief moment, but with great love will I take you back. In excess of anger, for a moment I hid my face from you. But with everlasting love I have taken pity on you, says Yahweh, your redeemer.”

The real situation is, if any human being ends in hell, such is God’s love, God ends in hell too.

20,

The odd thing is, this drama of the reversal of the Godly, of Godliness itself and therefore of God himself, speaks to our heart directly, even if the speech is wordless, and untranslatable.

At one level, our heart rejects it, exactly as it was rejected when it was enacted, at another level, our heart accepts it, comprehending in some lived way what it does in our depth to change the depth from being the end of the road to the real beginning.

The Messianic story can be lived, but it cannot be told if we are not living it.

The Messianic deed and the Spirit’s process is not presented in chapters 42, 49, 50, 52 and 53 of the Book of Isaiah as a doctrine, a dogma, any kind of teaching. It is not presented as theory, abstract design, ideal template, nor even as spiritual vision. It is presented as a dramatic narrative. It invites us to live its paradox, mystery, pathos. We can’t ‘know’ it any other way.

Meaning is only finally secured where meaning is most lost. This too is Messianic in Spirit.

The story will have to rip you to pieces: it will open you to the pervasive hurt for which there is no consolation; this story is consolation for the un-consoled and inconsolable. It is profounder tears than you have already cried.

Let us reject turning such a strange story into an explanation that elbows its drama aside, and so lets us off the hook of living its gaps, koans, uncertainties, as an 'absence' more present than anything.

Let us realise this story points to the elephant already in the room.

THE SPIRIT IN THE DEPTHS

We are on the way, but remain suspended 'between.'

Between life and death, between heaven and hell. No one is safe and secure yet, until redemption comes to all the world. This in between place is hard to bear, full of suspense because it is suspended over the abyss, unresolved yet capable of resolution, in motion but not arrived.

The Messiah is unique because he is in the deep place. He is universal because this is the sticking place for all humans, personally and communally. This is the sticking place for the world.

The Spirit is also in the deep place, conveying God's Wrath that will not tolerate the overthrow of truth and righteousness, of justice and goodness, and thus exposing the hidden and secret chambers, crevices, and chasms of our resistance. But the Spirit is also taking us into depths, helping us in depths, reversing us so that we can die and be reborn, torn down to be raised up. And the Spirit is in our cryings to and pleadings with God. Our sighing in the depth of heart which we cannot put into any words is the working of the Spirit within us. At the very point we feel most bereft of God, most lost to God, most unable to pray and most despairing, just here the Spirit is with us, and makes up for our lack. The Spirit does not let us drop like a stone, but takes up our cause, and prays in our stead. This accepts and reveals what and where we really are.

This is in all creatures. The soundless mourning in the whole creation finds its echo in our inability to voice our grief, and yearning, and seeking for depth however impossible it seems. The darkness is intense, just before the dawn. The Spirit holds us in this place of tension, even when we can say no more and do no more. Still the Spirit utters from our heart its broken hearted passion, finished but not giving up.

People bail out too soon. They put a limit on how far they can continue, how long they can bear and endure. But the Spirit takes us beyond this point, even from within its checkmate. The Spirit upholds us in the sticking place.

The Spirit sings our death song. The Spirit sings our longed for song of rebirth.

When the Spirit indwells and helps our deep crying to deep, we do not receive the answer, but we know we are heard. This is sufficient, for now.

The silence of God, like our silence, is resonant with the Spirit's possibility beyond any possibility.

V: The Messianic

“I have made you like gods,
but you will die like men,
and fall like princes.”
Psalms, 82, 6-7

“Is it not written.. ye are gods?
Why do you say of him.. whom the Father has sent into the world,
you blaspheme because I said I am the Son of God?
..the Father is in me and I am in him.”
John, 10, 34; 36; 38

“Defend the poor and fatherless;
do justice to the afflicted and needy;
deliver the poor and the needy;
rid them out of the hand of the wicked.”
Psalms, 82, 3-4

DO YOU WANT THE WAY OF HEART?

If you want the way of heart,
then you must plumb the abyss
where heaven can be lost to hell,
and stand in the world through passion and its sacrifice
where only by a savage cost can heaven redeem hell.

THE KOAN OF EXISTENCE

Thus suffering reveals to us the ultimate mystery in existence, of how freedom and love have to cross, for if freedom is love's flaw, it is also the case that love is freedom's wound. The fire of love is nailed to the Cross.

WHAT WE FIND

from the old Celtic

I went walking on the shore
to see if the sea would give me a heart
to give you.

I found three.

One was rent by a deep cleft.
One was dark.
One was lost in the sudden tide.

When you find your own heart, you believe there is a way of heart in the world.

THE REVELATION [APOCALYPSE] OF JOHN

PRELUDE

The John of the Gospels and Letters -- St John the Divine, or John the [Mystical] Theologian, as he is called in Eastern Orthodox Christianity -- is said by modern scholars not to be the same John who, on the Greek isle of Patmos, received the visionary revelations known as the 'Apocalypse.' Charles Freeman ['A New History of Early Christianity', 2009] points out that doubts about the identity of the later seer vis a vis the earlier disciple go back almost to the beginning of the Christian era=

"The receiver of this vision from Jesus Christ calls himself John and in earliest times it was assumed that this was none other than John the apostle and evangelist.. However, even in the third century Christian scholars were noting that the styles [of writing] were so different that they could not come from the same author. The Greek is not nearly as sophisticated as that of John's gospel" [p 107].

The Greek of the Apocalypse is crude, and vital; the Greek of the Fourth Gospel is exalted, and subtle. Another point sometimes raised is that for the later John to be the same person as the earlier John, he must have been very old indeed when he received the revelations, if their current dating is accurate [parts seem to date from 70 AD, other parts from 95 AD].

But Freeman has a third, and he thinks decisive, reason for believing that there are two different persons who have been called by the same name-- and this gripped me, because it has a direct bearing on the distinction between 'salvation' and 'redemption.'

"The clinching argument is that the John of the Gospel always writes of human beings *ascending into heaven* from a world left untouched by cosmic drama, while the John of Revelation talks of Jerusalem *coming down to earth* as the culmination of terrible destruction.." [p 107].

Whether this contrast not just in writing styles and dates, but in regard to *themes of divine relationship with and activity in the world* clinches Freeman's argument I don't know, yet it certainly does raise a powerful difference that is radically profound. Putting it simply, what Freeman describes as 'ascent into heaven from the earth' is pointing at 'salvation' as one way to resolve the human predicament, whilst what he describes as 'heaven descending to earth' is pointing at 'redemption' as a very different way of resolving the human predicament. The dynamics of salvation -- 'the worst is raised to the best' -- differ fundamentally from the dynamics of redemption -- 'the best is given to the worst.'

It is in terms of the substantial difference between saving and redeeming that the ambiguity of whether there are two Johns, or only one John, younger and

older, can be approached. The real point is, the former portrays Christ in salvational terms; the latter portrays Christ in redemptive terms.

1,

The early John refers to human beings *ascending into heaven* from a world left more or less untouched and undisturbed by divinely driven historical drama.

The later John is either an entirely different person, or he is the same person but has fundamentally changed his mind, and almost reversed his earlier mysticism, because this later John's visionary story portrays *heaven coming down to establish the new Jerusalem on earth*: a heavenly city and a 'heavenly earth' is created after the most violent, extreme, and intense, divinely driven historical drama seizes and shakes the world.

The early John is other worldly, the later John is this worldly. The former is mystical, the latter is existential; the former rises above imagination to reach what is higher than it, the latter uses imagination to symbolise the higher entering the lower, to destroy and recreate it.

In the early John, there is no drama because the human being climbs up the ladder from the world to heaven, leaving both the natural earth and the humanly built city behind. The world process and the material creation are, if not jettisoned, then left to do their own thing, whatever that might be. This pattern can be called 'salvation', because it raises you out of the problem in which you are lost. The greater reaches down, and pulls the one lost in the world out of its snares and poisons, its delusions and destructions. You rise out of the problem, thanks to the merciful compassion of the heavenly power that stands assured and secure above it.

Obviously, this salvational pattern does nothing to change the problematic field of the world, natural and historical. Salvation gets you out of the problem afflicting the supposedly lower level of existence, but it does not do anything at all to change that lower level itself, by transforming its problem. It leaves both the problem, and the world that it distorts, behind.

This is obvious among all fundamentalists -- Jewish, Islamic, Christian -- who treat sinners and the world full of sin with a dismissive shout of 'good riddance', but oddly enough the mystic shares this impulse to get above the threatening deeps of existence, to a better spiritual place where you can no longer be spiritually, psychologically, physically, harmed.

In the later John, there is an extravagantly huge and ultimately meaningful drama played out in this world, because God and Satan contend, clash, fight, for the final fate of precisely the whole world process. There is not going to be any escape, by elevation or transcendence, to a better world. It is this world-- or it is nothing. If Satan wins out over the course of the dramatic struggle, then the world process itself becomes worse and worse, ending up 'in the end' as a real and all consuming hell; if God is victorious, then this world itself

is fundamentally transformed, and heaven ceases to be above it, but is planted in it, and merges with it. Thus the heavenly descends to this world, transfiguring its earthiness, and transfiguring its worldliness. The River Of Life, and Two Trees of Life, grow, signifying an entirely spiritualised Nature, but these are right in the centre of the New Jerusalem, a City of Holiness where God dwells, and because the divine is fully present in the earth and in the world, there is no longer any temple, because it is not needed. This ending of Nature and History, this Ending of everything, is the time promised of old, the time of 'a new heaven, and a new earth.' Most crucially, Christ the Warrior King and Lamb of Sacrifice is the key that unlocks this story of dramatic contention and final transfiguration. In this pattern, heaven is incarnate in the earth and in the world; but more moving even than that, in this pattern heaven fights for the world, suffers and undergoes loss, that this world may be preserved for its total turn around, its complete reversal, in which its buried seed will flower and its hidden spark will be kindled. God ceases being untouched and untroubled by the deeps of the world, but dives in, and by his deeds of sacrifice, changes the deeps, and thereby alters the driving engine that makes the world go forward. This pattern is redemption.'

Such incarnating in and fighting for 'this world' is dynamically attained by God through Christ, son of heaven and son of earth. The Christ does not raise people out of the depth of the problem gripping the world process, and affecting both Nature and History, but joins them there, and by being subject to what they are subject to, transforms this suffering from the inside.

Salvation is easily termed a 'pattern', because it doesn't tell much of a story. As story, it is all too calm, not on edge, all too easily at peace, separating itself from the tumults of existence as it scales the heights toward God. It also completely lacks anything that would move your heart. In redemption, what we have to give of the heart to the world process, and the heart's resistance against and struggle with so doing, seizes the heart as nothing else. Christ gave all, to redeem all. Consequently, redemption is not so much a pattern, and much more just a 'story', an extraordinary story, an unbelievable, gut wrenching and heart stretching story. The story of redeeming the entire world in all its ontological fertility and existential risk is a story of stories, the ur-drama, the drama of dramas, the drama all other dramas point to and ultimately partake of, even if they do not realise it. The story of the giving, and fighting, involved in redeeming all things, all creatures, all persons, is full of pathos; it has grief and terrible despair, it has the exulting of temporary victories that forestall imminent debacle, but must remain on edge to the very end, because it is all open to ruination or coming through until it is truly all over. The tenderness, the hurting heart ache, in the story of redemption is tremendous. Everyone, God and us, in Christ, gets their heart broken, as the price of entry and seeing it through to the last gasp.

Clearly, those on the path of salvation will have to sorrow in the process of letting go of their ego and false attachments to the world; but those on the path of redemption will mourn in a different way, hoping and despairing by turns as the world goes through ups and downs that bear painfully on the question of whether God is really committed to, and 'with', its horrendous

suffering, or he is done with the whole venture, and has retreated into the bliss and inviolate serenity of heaven.

Dostoyevsky has Ivan, in the Brothers Karamazov, say that the suffering in the world is so tragic and indeed obscene, whether deserved or innocent, as to make the whole world process from beginning to end simply not worth it. This sense of each life, and all lives, being in vain, not worth the candle, is the deep pain in the heart that the person on the path of 'ascent by the human to the divine' escapes, but which the person on the path of 'descent by the divine to the human' embraces. It dogs every step in this world, every deed, every breath. It is real, and authentic. This is why only those who mourn for the fate of the world, deep in the heart, are on the road of redemption.

Salvation= the mystical way of light, and joy; redemption= the existential way of dark, and suffering.

In salvation, God is above us, reaching down, benevolently, to heighten us. In redemption, God is beneath us, dragging us down, violently, to deepen us.

Salvation allows us to put all our hopes in what God will do to elevate humanity; humanity is *saved from* something bringing it down.

Redemption forces us to put all our hopes in some risk God is taking with humanity, which requires both that the human share the risk, and that the human rise to its summons through self-giving; humanity is *redeemed for* something fruitful that can only emerge from going through the mire.

2,

We need to amplify the account of salvation, by nuancing the illumination of the early John.

This John was certainly a contemplative, and there is something sublime in all his written statements, but he is a mystic of love; his sublimeness captures God's love, as it pours out on humans, and raises them to its divine fullness. Thus it is not surprising that the early John was also the most clear sighted, and indeed mystically sighted, in experiencing the divinity of Christ as the Logos of God taking on flesh, 'the Light that enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world.' To claim the early John asserts Christ's divinity at the expense of his humanity would be a gross distortion of John's majestic and luminous statements. None the less, the early John realises that 'Void and Form' are one in Christ, and this paradox expresses not some inbuilt ontological oneness between Uncreated and created, but rather, a dynamic movement of the love of God towards humanity. No one in Christian tradition, arguably no one in all the world before or since, has mystically described love, as did the early John. The Pantocrator of Greek tradition in the domes of Orthodox churches, like the Jewish Hasidic Master of the Universe', is not divine instead of being human, but is *the divine facilitating the human to ascend to the stature of the divine*. The way Christ 'pulls the human up' to the

divine is possible for all humans, thus the doctrine of 'divinisation' in Eastern Christianity= "God became human, so that the human might become God." This is the mysticism of John, a mysticism of love. It grants to the human a divine-like dignity, freedom, lovingness. It exalts the human.

Salvation can be regarded as in three degrees, like three rungs of a ladder. They are called, purification, illumination, and deification.

[1] The first rung is practical, ascetical, moral. The divine lifts you out of sins, fallen passions, delusive cravings, unreal fantasies. This is like taking a fish drowning in toxic waters out of them, to dry out in order to expel the poison. It may seem counter intuitive to raise the fish onto land, but without this, the fish dies in its own element. Ascetic and moral yokes, such as the monastics assume, typify this earliest rising up. Greater self-discipline in eschewing what drowns and kills us, and the emergence of virtues that reflect this abstinence and its struggle for truer values, arise at this point. Such is a person of a certain 'uprightness.' It does not mean they cannot fall again, but the struggle between going through life flat on their back and standing up is energised in them, and bears fruit of self-restraint, insight, care and kindness.

[2] The second rung is contemplative, and mystical. Here consciousness itself is raised out of the doldrums of illusion, and thus is awakened, and enlightened, 'seeing it like it is' for the first time. A certain stability in the first rung, *praktiki*, is necessary to attain reliable clarity in the second rung, *physiki*. If you don't tackle motive, your 'consciousness expansion' can be deceptive, or unreliable. In fact, there are a host of different kinds of contemplative seeing, from seeing the creation in the Light of God, to rising still higher and entering and confronting 'face to face' the very Light of God in its Uncreated glory and splendour.

For Evagrius, the direct vision of God who is above and beyond all is the end of the journey, and thus he regards it as the third rung, and names it *theologia*. The Orthodox monastic tradition does not always stop where Evagrius finishes, but his approach clarifies an important point. All real theology is not speculative, nor rational, but illumined. It has to come from the horse's mouth. John of the Fourth Gospel was a genuine theologian, but the claims of mere scholars and intellectual philosophers to be theologians should be rejected. Some of these people have not even put a foot on the first rung, much less been transformed in the manner of the second, or the third, rungs. Only the enlightened can talk about the Light and what it lights up. We behold, and bear witness to, what we see with opened eyes.

John Chryssavgis sums up the first and second rungs thus= "Praktiki is the practice of virtues, beginning with repentance. It is the struggle itself against sin in the journey toward purity.. Physiki is the contemplation of nature or the world after perception is sharpened through praktiki. This is the discernment and discovery of God in all creation."

[3] The third rung is more often in Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition called the [truly] mystical, to distinguish it from the [merely] contemplative. The

divine darkness, and formlessness, of 'unknowing' is regarded as the highest mystic experience. The Apophatic is more ultimate than the Cataphatic. That may well be so, but the highest rung on this ladder of ascent is better described as 'ontological.' This is where the early John's vision of Christ becomes realised: by joining our humanity with God, it is ontologically changed from merely human into divine-human. This is not something a human 'attains' by necessary and genuine effort, but something God bestows as free grace. Yet, the highest to which salvation can reach is the human Christification, and this is what the Pantocrator on the dome of Orthodox churches depicts. Few mystics will have done more than glimpsed, or touched, this new reality in their experience; it is a reality of the kingdom to come, when all humans will be divine-human, after the pattern of the Christ. St Maximos goes so far as to contend that everything in the creation, human and natural, was created by the divine-human image in God's heart, and will itself become divinised, after its own manner. The Christ is Alpha and Omega.

This vision of divine love which the early John saw in Christ is almost unparalleled in all the world. Mystics who experience God are certainly rendered ecstatically on fire with God, but such ecstasy is not an ontological change of being in which humanity itself burns with divinity. The ontological change that generates the 'divine-humanity' is therefore the crown of the mystical, which exceeds the mystical. This is why Orthodoxy respects God, but also feels on affectionate terms with him, vividly aware of and feeling God's warmth toward humans, including forbearance toward our 'failure to hit the mark' [what 'sin' means in Greek]. God calls us paltry humans 'friends', co-workers, heirs of his kingdom, inheritors of sonship from the father. But this child comes to share the same nature and energy as the parent, rather than just being a servant under authority. This is mysticism, in a sense, but a mysticism so radicalised, it remains a scandal to Jews and Muslims, who insist on God's ontological gulf with humans. In the Orient, in contradistinction, merging with God becomes too easy, just a melting, absorbing, fusion, the drop of water going back to the ocean, and this signifies the human disappearing into the divine. What the early John saw in Christ, and participated in, is divinity itself crossing the uncrossable gulf separating it from humanity, in order to give the abundance of the divine to the poverty of the human, but at the same time preserving the human, despite changing its ontology. This is far beyond mercy, or compassion. It is love, the love that raises an inferior to equality with a superior. This is early John's mysticism, and it remains the highest level of salvation in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Can salvation go farther?

The mysticism of human ontological joining with God is nothing to do with any abstract principle, or impersonal beingness, as 'deity.' It is about Someone who loves us so much, he is prepared to bestow upon us 'as gift' what only he has 'by nature.'

The early John was no ordinary mystic, but was given by God to see and taste what lies beyond mysticism, yet completes the whole salvational ascent of the human to the divine.

None the less, when all this is acknowledged, and respected, as it merits, there remains a core truth in Freeman's differentiation. There is still an ascent in this love, as the divine lifts the human out of its doldrums, pollutions, distortions, and places it in the clasp of divine heights, charismas, clarities, which transform its state of being.

3,

Christ's redemption might build on, as well as invert, salvation [as Dogen built on, and inverted, the Buddha]; in his earlier mission, Christ teaches, heals, does miracles, in the old salvational pattern which is evident in Buddha but in fact goes back far beyond the enlightened teachers of the Orient to the dawn of humanity. However, in the latter part of his life, Christ enters 'the room of no exit', as a Greek described the root meaning of 'passion' to me, and his options to save anything or anybody rapidly run out, and more and more he confronts, and is confronted by, the impossible story of redemption. Even Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River prefigures this, but Christ's Entry into Jerusalem confirms it; the resulting tests and trials, consequent to his challenges to worldly authority [Romans] and to religious authority [Jews], their accusation and the judgement passed on him, torture, and crucifixion, plunge him into the struggle for redemption. Suddenly, the spiritual issue is not about ascent into exaltation, but descent into dereliction; and what is 'really happening' changes to what really is at stake for the redemption or loss of the entire world. Christ is suddenly staked to what is at stake for redeeming, he is not rising above anything, and he accepts to be vulnerable to this process of immersion, giving and fighting, and final sacrifice, rather than calling upon his spiritual powers to get him out of it, or to suppress it by force. He rejects 'power over the other', and allows himself to become the seed that must die to join the earth, and bring fruition out of the earth. Thus, Christ's Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, enacts the new pattern, the almost heyoka clown or holy fool's reversed pattern of redemption.

Suddenly, the story we were all waiting for actually is real, and we are all on the edge of our seats to see how it will come out. In fact, this story, if you follow Christ's strange and irrational road through it, invites you off the edge of your seat and into it. In your own context, in your own way, you will walk this road of redemption, becoming the sacrifice that allows others to come through. It will not make sense to you, nor will you be able to do what the philosophers invariably do, subjecting reality to their view on it and deciding what they will accept and what they will repudiate; no, it will be nothing like the philosopher's picking and choosing, because you will be like the fish that, once dried out and aerated just a bit, is thrown back in to troubled waters, and deeps of existence, where you will be totally in over your head, and so you will proceed by faith-- or not at all, as Kierkegaard makes clear. The world does not add up, but redeeming the world adds up even less, and so you will have to make the leap of passion that is true faith. Nothing else will keep you afloat, keep you treading on hard ground. Before, you were moved when you heard about the story; even witnessing it as a concerned bystander is not enough. Now, you are in it, living it, walking its way, and this is not a

road that will please any fundamentalist or any mystic. You have faith in Christ, that he went to its farthest reaches, drank its bitter-most dregs to the bottom, and confronted its difficulties and challenges truthfully, from within, and overcame them truthfully, from within. Christ will be with us, in the terror and suffering of the heart, as it plunges down and boldly steps forward; he will help us challenge the worldly and religious authorities, fight for the poor, assert justice for all humans against the wealthy power elites; but he will also help us die on the Cross, and Descend into Hell. This is the only 'mysticism' that redemption allows, a mysticism of heart, a mysticism allied with the horrendous battle and journey of the world towards hell, or redemption.

In the ultimate, and as the ultimate, redemption opposes salvation as 'the final word' on the human possibility, and its genuine, and final, loss.

4,

Despite the revelations of the later John being a playground for nut cases down the ages, I prefer him to the earlier John, in this one but decisive respect: that he was given to comprehend, in story form, that Christ is not like the Buddha, or other salvational figures; rather he is the crucial player, indeed the long sought for but unknown key to the story of redemption in which everything and everyone is caught up, like it or not. Yes, we can come out on dry land for a spell, but sooner or later we are going to be thrown back in, to deep waters and abysmal fires, and then it is sink or swim. In that extreme position, you will find no mean hearted fundamentalist, nor arrogant mystic, anywhere near you, and certainly not prepared to join hands with you in your predicament, and certainly not prepared to go down all the way with you as you sink, and even die for you, that from this place of ultimate defeat, you can receive the turn around, and rise again with the one who has redeemed you, the Christ.

5,

I would prefer to think, or just to hope, that the earlier John and the later John are indeed one and the same person, but a person whose mind went down into the heart, a person who trod Christ's peculiar path from the heights offered by salvation into the depths embraced by redemption. It could have been the same John even if the dates are wrong, because maybe he had the vision and did not write it down, but told it to a follower, who wrote it down in his name. Given how oral cultures work, the one and only St John could have had the revelation experience, related it to a follower, who related it to his follower, and so on, until it was written down very much later. It would still have been written in John's name. That would render the date and style of its writing irrelevant. In that case, the revelations may have been God's final gift to the disciple who loved Christ, and whom Christ loved-- and decided to spare for a reason= to receive this final, and corrective, illuminatory story of redemption.

I can picture the old man on the Greek isle of Patmos, still hoping in salvational dynamics, but knowing from all that he had seen that salvation

was not going to work, and in any event was too small and too familiar a scenario to encompass the horror and beauty of the real story he had witnessed. I can picture the heart of the boy who had followed Christ being broken in the old man, because nothing the boy had hoped in from God and his 'miracle worker' had come to pass. Yet in old age he would have still remembered the pathos and passion of Christ, piercing his heart as nothing else spiritual or worldly ever could, and I see the older John giving up his boyhood Eros and at last fully taking in the Daemonic truth of God which had played out the decisive act in its story through Christ; and the old man would have tears rolling down his face as he accepted this, creating those deep rents in the faces of the Christlike. In his own tears of reconciliation with the Daemonic, he would have known a little of what Christ went through when he wept blood.

It would have been John's greatest repentance, like Job's, for resisting the Way of God that is not our human way, not the way we want it, just the way it is. And then John would realise that the Christ who had so moved him in youth was the Messiah promised to the Jews of old. This is why the revelations which John received, as a final blessing on his love for Christ, came in the old Jewish style of cosmic and world-shaking 'apocalyptic.' The Old Testament is punctuated by this highly charged, richly imaginative and densely symbolic, style of storytelling. An 'apocalypse' in Hebrew just means a stirring tale in which some aspect of the divine story God is weaving in with the created story of the world's evolution and history is disclosed to the visionary faculty of the prophet. It is usually a prophet, not simply a mystic, who is the 'seer' involved in getting this sort of vision [like the Book of Daniel]. Why is that so? This kind of vision, and the literature it generates, is prophetic because it reveals some fate, or destiny, that is part and parcel of the divine-human story of the world. In these sort of visions the focus is totally on the world, and what heaven is 'doing' in and for the world, not on heaven as such; moreover, the world is seen as captive to and hence sunk in evil, but elemental and spirit forces of God violently fight the evil forces, in order to free the world, and to allow the world to come to its full potential.

This is the perfectly serviceable business meaning of 'redeeming'= you invest in someone and something they are doing, and then you redeem the investment when that person and that action 'come good', 'bear fruit', or 'multiply' the investment. Since the God of the Old Testament is blatantly and unarguably anti-Capitalist, forbidding any sort of usury, all his talk about wanting his investment in humanity to bear yet more, and newer, fruits is very significant, and very ultimate. This is not the language of salvation; it refers to redeeming, to bringing to flowering, and making good on, what God put into humanity. Redemption means that God will not give up on that original investment of potential in us, but will journey and fight, and pay terrible costs, for that potential to come to its full realisation 'in the end.'

Hence, the old John, coming to terms with the failure and ending of both Jewish fundamentalism and Greek mysticism -- Christ was a stumbling block to Jew, and unnecessary to Greek -- weeps tears, and in this holy sorrowing, God has mercy, and blesses his visionary capacity, and the revelations come.

The revelation of the story of redemption, which is what Christ's suffering was geared toward, comes in a cave, to underline the planting of God's seed and God's fire in the womb of the earth, to flow and flame from the ground up, going outward. The revelations tell the old John a different story to that which he had originally hoped in when, as a youth, he first met Christ; yet he is comforted, even in the tears making rents down his old face, because the stranger and more complicated, long drawn out, gambling, story is more moving, certainly more dramatic, than anything he had expected when he saw Christ as divinity incarnate in humanity, and thus as the pinnacle of aspiration for all those pressed down under the dark and heavy oppression of the world.

Christ is neither another light on the hill, or helper, of humanity, even the mountain peak of that lineage; he is something stranger, and more terrible. Christ is the Jewish 'Messiah'; he is the one who does the deed that is needed to shift the game, to bring redemption back on track, and give us all the fighting chance we so desperately need. This is the wild card in the pack.

The old man who as a youth had tried to see into the mystery of love at last, in the weight of old age, is given that vision which he always sought. It comes differently to what he thought he would find, and yet in coming differently, it also reaches back into the old Jewish prophetic vision of the Messiah, 'the man of deep heart who is coming.' In Christ, the older John realises through the revelations granted to him, the deep heart has come to the world, binding divine and human together as never before, and as never since.

In the Apocalypse of John, Christ is the sword through whom God brings evil to task, really challenging it and not letting it hide away in the shadowy recesses, but calling it out, and taking it on, especially in its most worldly and powerful manifestations in politics and economics; but Christ is also the Cross that suffers the failure of all humans, and forgives this failure and pays its un-measurable cost, and by this, transmutes failure into truth in the mysterious depths of heart. The depth is the place where hell dwells, but in Christ heaven is planted in, and overcomes hell, in the thick of hell, changing hell itself into the only heaven we humans will ever rejoice in: the heaven born of hell.

Christ becomes the road to the redemption of everything and everyone. He had said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life', and this refers to the way, the truth, the life, of redeeming the world process, by your own sacrifice, offered in the spirit and by the power of his. Christ's sacrifice is so everyone, and everything, gets through the narrow gate, the immovable wall, in the end.

The real victory of Christ in the deep is this inversion of judgement, of good and evil, through the suffering power and vulnerability of love.

Thus, if any go down to the pit, all go down to the pit. Both fundamentalists and mystics need to take to heart this apocalyptic warning, which is the real, and radical, implication of the Revelation that fittingly comes at the end of the Old and New Testaments, ending the Bible.

6,

I like the paradox that the younger John writes Greek sophisticated enough to shame the philosophers, but it is the older John, or his messenger, who writes Greek with a verve and aliveness that recalls the old Jewish heart people, always trapped in hard and impossible situations which can never be mystically escaped and transcended, nor fundamentalist-wise fixed and set right, but must be endured patiently, with fortitude and persistence, yet always in the hope that the Messiah would confirm the point of so much suffering, so much ambiguity, so much conflict, so much non resolution, worldly or spiritual -- but just the endless, ongoing struggle. The endless hard slog, the endless fights and the endless journeys, and always some cry and prayer of the deeper heart haunting the attempt to raise the voice of exaltation to the God on high. The old Jews were forced to go deep, even as they tried to ascend; thus, always the perplexity and division over what to follow -- Moses or David, the Law or the prophets who took into heart and soul the poetry and grief of existence, and knew God would never judge, or abandon, it finally, but against the odds, would bring it through to a new land of heart.

It is this old yearning, and almost forlorn hope, that the Apocalypse of John answers.

The younger John speaks repeatedly of the fertility of the earth as a symbol of divine life, and it is this divine aliveness coming to full fruition in us, and bearing 'fruit that will last', which links the older back to the younger John.

7,

Seven is the mystical number used in the older John's revelations, to signify completion. The 7 churches of Asia Minor are like the 7 directions of the Sacred Circle-- south, north, west, east, earth, sky, centre. Each church is likened to a lamp, and has a protective spirit, likened to a star. A spirit sent by Christ, and conveying his message about 'what must happen' in the future, comes to John, so that he can 'tell all that he saw' to those who will 'happily' receive the prophecy, and 'heed' what is revealed in it. Later, as the vision unfolds, Christ appears to John not as priest or prophet, nor wise person, nor healer and miracle worker, nor wandering holy person, but as a warrior chieftain, or warrior king-- the main figure of redemption in its fight with the world, for the sake of what heart rules the world. His resurrection is linked to his rulership, for he is described as the 'first begotten of the dead', and 'the prince of all the kings of the earth.' Resurrection is not about going to heaven after death, it is about being restored to the spiritual passion needed to fight for the redeeming of the world. This resurrected fighting man whom Christ has become is terrifying to John, his hair white like snow, his eyes and feet full of fire, his face bright as the sun, the sound of his words like rushing waters, and a two-edged sword pointedly coming from his mouth. This is the sword of truth, heart truth, which will call to account everyone and everything in the world as to where they stand in relation to it.

The 7 churches get the first blast. Christ speaks of good points but also severe failings. He commends 2 of the churches, including that in Smyrna. He takes to task 5 other churches for betraying their calling to Christ, through things like getting too comfortable in the world by virtue of wealth, and sitting on the fence, 'neither hot nor cold.'

The blast in these revelations comes from the Daemonic, and tells the churches to step up, and shows them how their non stepping up, and fatally weakened hearts, are seen by the eyes of God. What judgement could be more harsh than that which falls on peoples purporting to follow God? If you follow the Daemonic, you have to stop messing about, and start to stand up. In the fight with evil forces ruling this world, you are needed. 'Wickedness in high places' dominates the world, and if you love Christ, you have to be part of his sword that challenges 'the way the world is run.'

Yes, what happened to him will happen to you.

Yes, to follow him, you will have to go where he went and do what he did.

Yes, when you get to that place, you will experience in fullest impact your inability to rise to the mark, your wasting of life, your failure to do anything of significance for redemption at all. This truth will be bitter to bear, and if you can mourn your incapacity to serve God and humanity, your tears will pour out. Yet, in the place where you can do nothing, where it is check mate, you will be given by the Christ whom you love the power to do the one thing needful, the one thing you must do to make the difference that redemption needs from you, in order to 'keep on rolling' ahead. You will be allowed, even in the midst of the ruin of all your fertility and the burning out of all your spark, to make your Give Away, to make your sacrifice, to carry and die on your Cross. You will realise, as you leap into the abyss, this is your life's great gift, to let it go for Christ. But most people do not follow Christ, and so they don't test his promise: I will be with you, all the way to the end.

Love is coming, love's fight and love's suffering, are coming. In the truth of this, where do any of us stand?

Would God weep over the churches today, as Christ wept over Jerusalem? Or would he laugh? It is not funny that the followers of God are so insincere. Why are the idiots and evil doers making all the noise and all the running?

Yet redemption continues with or without those purportedly its vanguard. It works with whomever wants to work with it, religious or non-religious; in one religion or in a different religion; with realisation or with no realisation of the deep stakes, and deep deeds, being done.

Redemption is not controlled by the churches, nor is it in their power to say yea or nay to it; this is why Christ belongs to all humanity. He is given to us, for the sake of the human predicament. Anyone in that predicament turning to him, knowingly or unknowingly, is his follower. The Christ can be unnamed, or

called by many other names; it is the heart relationship in the depth of affliction that matters. Christ is the only one who goes to the dark and abysmal place into which no one else ventures.

Scholars tend to argue that the revelations refer to dramatic events in the Roman Empire at the time. A good case for this interpretation can be made. Insane people, especially those whose insanity has a religious bent, read into this story various dualistic, and escapist, scenarios that have nothing to do with redemption in its heart, its spirit, its power and way of proceeding; and they always try to connect it to whatever present day they are living through. It might be agreed that we should steer clear of this last vision in the Bible, because it is too open to misreading by people of ill will. The imagery is too open to lunatic fantasy.

The story of a final showdown between good and evil is particularly open to misinterpretation. Until these dramatic times, the greater and lesser hearts both co-exist in every person and in the world, mixed up and confused. People don't know what heart is operative in them, and so easily become paralysed, or deceived, in action. In the apocalyptic time of the end of days, this confusion melts away like the morning mist in the rays of the sun. 'What is what' inside us becomes inescapably clear; and even more amazing, the way evil hides behind masks of respectability, lurks in shadows of obscurity, pretends to be what it is not, in worldly affairs, is fully exposed. The mask is ripped away, the shadows pierced by light, the pretence blown to bits, and for almost the first time in the long struggle of history, what is true in heart, and what is at stake for the world, in the battle of divine Truth with the Evil One's Lie is rendered plain as day. There are no more excuses for us of not knowing what outer forces, and inner impulses, hold the heart in thrall. We know the truth that governs the life of the heart, and so we can make a stand from the heart. In this climate, the Evil One's game plan, his whispers and seductions, as well as his bullying and tyranny, is also clearly 'on show'; thus he redoubles his efforts, increases his ferocity, and makes a last ditch fight to prove to God that human beings cannot be redeemed. The crucial factor is not that human hearts have good and evil in them, or greater and lesser standings, which is true for all of us, for no person is without sin, and in this life sin never wholly departs any person. Rather, what matters in the end-fight is that the attraction of, indeed addiction to, the Satanic way is broken in the human heart, individually [inwardly] and collectively [outwardly]. This is achieved by turning to the way of Christ, who is both Sword and Cross, Warrior and Lamb of Sacrifice.

Christ is the Advocate of the Human before God, and his way vindicates the human, warts and all. Satan is the Accuser of the Human, despite his tricks and delusions which seem to flatter and falsely empower us; it is in reality Satan who 'condemns mankind day and night before God.'

Thus, there is something in the Apocalypse that is significant. We can quibble over the riot of symbolic images which includes harlots, beasts with the number 666, dragons, a woman clothed in the sun, white robes, pits, seven seals of non-permitted knowledge, disasters like plagues and earthquakes to

come, white horses, and the rest, but the climax of the narrative provides the key image of redemption, after all the storms. The divinely transfigured earth, the divinely fulfilled history, is 'the end'; given only in hints and subtle allusions, so we cannot get lazy and smug, the conclusion is that redemption will come through after all.

Yet if you sit back and watch, it may all go to hell in the end, because you did not do enough. Tears flow when we realise how little we have done, and that we can never do enough.

In this sense, the visionary revelation that ends the Bible, Old and New, also ends Vision, even prophetic vision, because it sounds an alarm call, the call to get involved, and do what you are called to do, which is what you will be empowered to do. Everything else you try to do will come to naught. The one thing you find hardest to do, but are called to, you will do.

The Apocalypse of the old visionary ends Vision and begins Action. Now it is the Action of redemption that counts... We have sufficient Vision; what we lack is Action.

What we all lack is passion.

Use this vision of passion's sufferings and raptures in the world; but also forget it so you can do it, in your own time and place, in your own circumstances and with your personal contribution that is required just there and just then.

Our prayer to God is for a second chance, a final chance, to make what we trust about redemption really tell in our life.

For there are no worse tears than to see, but not act.

8,

Why is salvation not sufficient?

It does not tell a good enough story, and God is a story teller, and a story maker. Salvation does not test God, or humanity, enough, as Satan rightly points out to God in the Book of Job: 'up the ante, make it more edgy, put it all on the line, and they will repudiate you, and in fact, in their last gasp spit the very adventure of creation back in your face.' God does not suppress Satan's challenge, but takes it on, agreeing with its trial. What Christ adds to the story is that God has to be part of this trial, not just humanity.

The Book of Job is the true start point of the Jewish Bible, older than Genesis. Redemption's story starts with a wager between God and the devil, the Satanic Accuser who condemns, and puts to an arduous test, both God and humanity, expecting their mutual folly to fail. What God is doing with humanity, in redemption, is futile, because humanity is futile. This is the

Satanic judgement. God's trick on the devil is to use human futility as the building block everyone rejects.

Salvation is insufficient for many reasons. Here is a sample.

There have been many saviour figures at work down the ages, all over the world. But the Jews were chosen by God to prepare the way for the one, and only, redeemer figure, the Messiah. Yet it is redemption that is universal, including all persons, creatures, and things, in their singularity and in their togetherness, over the whole span of time, or it has failed. Salvation, by contrast, is inevitably elitist and exclusive, because it can only ever reach a few humans, and this is true whether salvation is crassly stated in fundamentalist terms, or stated in much more enlightened mystical terms.

This creates a paradox rarely noticed. Redemption: from the unique to the all-inclusive. Salvation: from the widespread to the divisive, with some in, and many out.

Because salvation is a common pattern, the uniqueness of Christ is not down to his offering salvation to the world. He is not the best, or the sole, saviour that you must turn to, or be forever jettisoned by God. Christ's uniqueness belongs only to his mission as Redeemer of the entire world process, from Paradisiacal Garden through Fallen City, to New Garden and New City. If even one person, creature, or thing, is lost to redemption, then God has lost his wager with Satan. God is going for broke, and seeking the redemption of all. Salvation is satisfied with too little, raising only an elect few, or a select band, out of the worldly 'sound and fury signifying nothing'; redemption transforms that sound and fury into a poetry of grief and fire.

There is something in God mysteriously deep, not just gloriously exalted, and God has elected to make deep, not exalted, the ultimate linchpin, and engine, for what happens to God and happens to his creation 'in the end.' The mystical God has height unsurpassable, the existential God has depth unfathomable. A follower of Christ is advised-- bow to the exalted, but lean on the deep.

The early John demonstrates that salvational dynamics are not loveless. However, redemptive dynamics 'cost' more, and thus require not only God, but also human beings, to love more. Passion is not needed to save and to be saved. Saving requires the letting go of the error that drags us down, and in so far as we are identified with it, this hurts. But redemption pays a greater price, carries a heavier burden, accepts a more severe loss, takes on a greater hardship, suffers a deeper wound, in order to embrace the world process and undergo everything involved in it, as the precondition of having any redemptive impact on it. You must be affected by the world to affect the world. You must be afflicted by what afflicts the world to contribute to it redemptively. Passion is needed to redeem and be redeemed. The mystical God does not need to be at all passionate, the existential God needs to be essentially passionate.

Both salvation, and redemption, manifest God's love, but it is not salvation, only redemption, that manifests 'the love supreme.' Redemption costs more, but gives more.

The extent of what God will do to redeem the world process, and the extent of human co-action to participate in this, is radical.

This generates another paradox rarely noticed. The divine-humanity of Christ, the ontologically changed being of humanness, will not be given to human beings as the climax of salvational ascent; rather, it will be 'tested and proved' in redemptive descent, and therefore will be the 'crown' bestowed upon the humanity that has been existentially searched out in depth, tested and put on trial, but has come good over the long haul, proved worthy of God's trust.

The highest of the ontological will only be attained through the deepest of the existential.

9,

Jacob, in his vision, saw a ladder connecting earth and heaven, and he noticed upon it, spirits not only ascending but also descending. Maybe some people are destined to come to God through the path of salvation. Why object to that? This however I will stake my life on= for the vast majority of people who have lived, are alive, and will live, redemption is the only hope. As well as more costly, redemption is far less believable, indeed crazy, irrational, impossible. But it embraces all persons, and it reaches everyone at their point of nadir, from which they cannot rise, morally, ascetically, contemplatively. For those who are stuck, defeated, futile, it is redemption, or nothing.

A pop song once chirped about 'reasons to be cheerful.' Here are two.

When Christ said that he came for sinners, not the righteous, he was referring to redemption. The already saved do not need a redeemer. The lost are more clear about the human condition than the saved; they know from their unrelieved and unrelievable suffering that they need a redeemer, and if he does not come, they are truly abandoned to their brokenness, because no salvation of any degree or kind can reach them where they really are, or change them in that place.

Christ, in his action of redemption on the Cross, went to that place where we cry, 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Christ goes even to that place. And the ultimate mystery of redemption becomes: out of defeat, the real victory; in the place of final ruin, the real turn around.

Was God ever in two minds?

In Isaiah [62, 1-5], God promises the two aspects of redemption= "You will no more be termed Forsaken, and your land will no more be termed Desolate." God says "you will be vindicated", and "your land married" [to divine indwelling].

In another part of Isaiah [43, 1-7], the God who is betting on humanity coming through speaks very directly to us, of the love he bears us, and the passion he has for us that we will, against all the odds, win through, and win for everybody and for everything, for all time. It is fitting this statement is addressed to Jacob, who fought with God, both losing and winning the night long battle by the fast flowing river of time. This forged Jacob to father all the people who will fight the world, for the sake of the world's good outcome.

But now thus says Yahweh, he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters I will be with you: they will not overwhelm you;

When you walk through fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you.

For I am Yahweh your God.”

In Psalm 65, 10-12 [Septuagint], David declares=

“For Thou, O God, hast proved us;

Thou hast tried us as silver is tried.

Thou didst bring us in to the trap;

Thou didst lay afflictions on our backs;

We passed through fire and water,

But Thou hast brought us to revival.”

Revelation, 21, 1, 4-5=

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth..

And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat on the throne said, behold, I make all things new.”

THE MESSIANIC KOAN

We cannot authentically become Christs, become the passion-bearers carrying the weight and wound of God's truth in the poor human clay, unless we are genuinely entrusted with this truth.

And to be trusted to gain it, we must be allowed to throw it away.

God has more trust, and faith, in the deep of the human heart than we do.

OFFENCE OR FAITH

“Just as the concept ‘faith’ is an altogether distinctively Christian term, so in turn is ‘offence’ an altogether distinctively Christian term relating to faith. The possibility of offence is the crossroad, or it is like standing at the crossroad. From the possibility of offence, one turns either to offence or to faith, but one never comes to faith except from the possibility of offence.. Offence.. relates to the God-man and has two forms. It is either in relation to the loftiness that one is offended, that an individual human being claims to be God, acts or speaks in a manner that manifests God.. or the offence is in relation to lowliness, that the one who is God is this lowly human being, suffering as a lowly human being.. The God-man is the paradox, absolutely the paradox. Therefore, it is altogether certain that the understanding must come to a standstill on it.”

[Kierkegaard, ‘Practice In Christianity’, p 81]

Offence at the lowliness of God= Lucifer

Offence at the loftiness of Humanity= Satan

A friend= “the power that lies behind true human passion must be the power of God.”

This is what sustains the paradox.

‘With God all things are possible.’

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

A mad woman asked my wife about the book we are assembling. 'What is it about?' she demanded.

'Passion', Myfanwy replied.

The usual reaction shot back.

'What do you mean by that?'

Myfanwy's answer was short and sharp.

'It follows on from the Passion of Christ= what you live for, what you die for, what you give your entire heart to.'

'Oh, I see' the mad woman said.

The Hebrew of the Jewish Bible, in the First and Second Commandments, speaks of loving with our 'all-ness', with our 'very-ness.' This is passion.

AFFECTEDNESS= The Centrality of 'Heart' in Human Existence

Scientific or academic psychology talks about 'affect' in a way that is wholly unsatisfactory. The assumption is made that affect -- emotion, feeling, passion, and the like -- is a sort of accompaniment of cognition, or even that cognition generates affect. But there is no cognition primary over, or even separate from, affect. This is a misunderstanding that goes all the way back to Plato, who makes contemplation of the other-worldly 'higher' than action towards the this-worldly.

The human being is an affected being, inherently, fundamentally, radically. This is the significance of the Jewish teaching, or revelation, of 'heart' as the centre of human existence. To say, 'humanity is an affected creature' is to say 'humanity has a heart.' It should be immediately grasped that 'affected' carries the implication of 'suffering' in the Jewish Bible, especially the Psalms of David. We don't suffer now and then; something in our very situatedness in the world is itself, simply, a suffering. A being who is affected is a being who primarily occupies a suffering position in the world. Thus everything such a being sees, thinks, evaluates, does, on any and every level, reflects that inherent, fundamental, radical affectedness. We see, think, evaluate, act, from the heart. The heart informs every other aspect of our being, and indeed is the fulcrum of our 'being in the world.' For it is the heart that suffers the world as a pain in the heart, carries the world as a weight in the heart, and acts toward the world as a duty, a summons, a self-transcending love for the world.

Some spiritualities -- like Plato in Greece and much of Buddhism in the Orient -- believe it is possible to end the sufferingness of human existence by cutting the 'attachment' in passion to the world. This is supposedly achieved through the ascetic path that attains 'dispassion.' Biblically, this is passion purified, passion become singular rather than divided ["The pure in heart will see God"], passion restored to its enworlded calling. Thus purity is but an intensifying and renewal of passion in its attachment for the world. What remains is a true and ultimately strong passion, a deep attachment. Such is 'love.' But in the case of Plato and certain kinds of Oriental spirituality, we can speak of a 'transcending' of all passionateness as such, to escape the affected condition of being in the world. What replaces affectedness, via the transcendence of its passion, is some kind of non-enworlded contemplation, vision, mysticism.

This attempt to get rid of suffering, in its Oriental no less than its Platonic form, is neither possible nor desirable.

---it is not possible to get rid of suffering, because as an affected being, humanity's suffering heart cannot be eliminated; in transcending it in the name of spirituality, all that happens is that its greatness and its dereliction are both equally buried, disavowed, put away. Yet it rumbles away

underneath. A quietism replaces the heart's activity and activism, but this leaves the heart unused and still aching. Even in the most transcendent states of consciousness, we hurt because we are so out of touch with that in us which hurts. The hurting part holds, as a secret, a hidden treasure, our greatest possibility, and we know that. To rise above heart, to become heartless, is to funk the human condition, but therefore also to miss the real profundity and mystery of that condition. We escape the worst but thereby lose the best of being human. Being human is wasted.

---thus it is not desirable to get rid of suffering, because as an affected being, a great price is paid in loss of humanity when we eliminate the passion that suffers existence like a wound. Far from creating the 'expansion' this way of spirituality claims, it creates only a diminishing of the human being. The 'heart' disappears.

If Orientalising spirituality shelves the heart, so too does the modern West. The latter jettisons heart, by putting the ego in its place. This ego, operating through will-power, and the intellectual mind, abstracts away from experience on the ground, in the concrete, to try to gain a conceptual mastery over the world, from which it becomes feasible to impose a 1-way instrumentality of control upon the world. There is nothing of heart in this.

Both these stances of mind abstracting away from heart are seeking 'salvation by de-situation.' But as Martin Buber asserts, it is no part of man's spiritual possibility to seek to become de-situated. De-situatedness is a false paradise.

Thus, both these moves, the Platonic/Oriental and the modern Western/scientific-technological, are ultimately similar. Both use mind to try to get out of, and climb up above, the human heart; and both use mind to try to shut off the heart's cry, from the place where it really lives.

This is our affectedness= we are affected by what we are bound up with. We are bound up with existential exactions, death haunting life, futility haunting purpose, absurdity haunting value, and every other fate to which we are subject, which includes risk, hardship, loss, cost. We are bound up with other people, the collective life in culture and society, and the historical struggle of all mankind, and the very outcome that befalls the earth.

A computer is, whatever its ontological status, not an affected being. Spirits or angels are harder to describe= perhaps with them, it is a different way of being affected. Animals are affected beings, but their affectedness lacks certain key properties of ours, because we know, we are conscious of, our suffering position. Some animals are, like us, self-conscious. This is not existential awareness. We realise we have a heart. God created our heart to contain not just the suffering of other beings and creatures and things, but God's suffering for them and for each of us. The doctrine of God as 'impassible' is misleading. God qua God is beyond everything, beyond being and non being, beyond doing and non-doing. None the less God in relation to humanity is an affected being. God opened a wound in himself, when he

created us; then he opened that same wound in us, to ground us in the true meaning, and purpose, of our affectedness.

Hence an affected being is marked by 6 realities that do not pertain to a being inherently, fundamentally, radically, unaffected.

[1] Affectedness means we are placed in a 'situation', and have to undergo it and go through it= we 'experience' what it is like to be in the position we are in. The situation affects us, because we are connected to it in a way that alters all we are and all we do. We have no ultimate independence from it, even if we need not be so fused with it as to be dependent on it. We are inter-dependent. We are in dialogue with it.

[2] Affectedness means we are 'personally' in this situation= it impacts on each of us uniquely, and only each person can be in their own allotted share, or portion, of the fate that affects all persons. We can stand together, and help each other bear and endure the situatedness, and the fatedness, that befalls all, but no one can literally stand in for someone else. Each of us 'gotta go through that lonesome valley' by themself.

[3] Affectedness means we are not distant from, or standing outside, the situation and fate that affects us, but immersed in it, and involved with it. We are not an observer, a spectator of something from some safe position outside it, but a 'participant', a suffering agent thrown in at the deep end. 'To suffer it' means 'to accept it.'

[4] Affectedness means we are not neutral and disinterested, but that we care. What happens affects me, thus I have an interest in it, a stake in it, I am concerned, and thus I have a motive toward it. Aristotle, in his Poetics, says that in tragic drama the audience witnesses the suffering protagonist, and is moved to pity and fear. We pity the hero, in an act of empathy that allows us to see and think straight in regard to what is most valuable about the human heart and what is most at risk for the human heart in existence. And we fear for the hero, because we also are moved by what the heart can lose and what the heart can be damaged by in existence. Watching such drama makes us aware what our own heart is up against. We are deeply moved when we witness another heart being exposed, and its greatest destiny being derailed by fate as much as by its own flaws. This is our tragedy too. Yet tragic drama creates in the audience, says Aristotle, not despair but some strange wonderment, a kind of crying of heart that releases hope. The Cross of Christ demonstrates, it is only when we human beings are in touch with our real tragedy, at depth, that we sense the possibility and reality of Redemption, not just for any individual or small group, but for all.

[5] Affectedness means we have at our disposal, like the sensitive arms sent out by certain creatures, a number of different dialogical, communicational, trans-actional channels. These refer to the senses, feeling, imagination, intuition, desire and passion. Each of these sensitive and intelligent 'feelers', and all working together, constitute a way in which the world where we live and act reaches us and we reach the world. Purifying and constantly

revivifying these channels is necessary if affectedness is not to be derailed by [a] mere emotionality [hot or sentimental] or [b] mere intellectualism or rationalism, or [c] spiritual depersonalism and escape masquerading as transcendence.

[6] Everything good, creative, loving, intelligent, we do to affect the world is only possible if we take the world's hit.

Thus, humanity's affectedness is to be understood through those traditions which place the 'heart' in the centre of human existence. Tribal peoples were amazed, and thrown, by white people because they rapidly realised that whites think with the mind. Tribal peoples think with the heart. This is what the Bible calls "pondering in the heart", and that means thinking from the place where existence really impinges, and where we must reply, for life and death, for good or ill, for meaning or futility, for value or absurdity. This is the place from which we really act. This is the place where we really live.

Passion is forged in the furnace of the human heart.

Thus to be 'impassible' is the lie of lies for the heart. The heart's passion is not only its energy, its stretching forth, in the child's innocent enthusiasm, or in the adult's standing in adversity, or the saint's fervent zeal, but it is its 'passibility.' The heart is in a passible position, entirely given up and entirely given over to the passible. The heart takes the passible on as a wound and a burden, and passes through it, to the other shore. What is passing is what can turn out either for ultimate redemption or ultimate hell, and the passibility of our human condition is that it is really risked by God, it can really go either way, there is no guarantee which way it will turn out. This is what most affects us and what we are most paralysed by and most roused to heroism by, when we use the heart to plunge in and plumb the depth of the danger and the opportunity that is its existence in this world.

Only from within the passible is the victory won, by passion.

This victory is what the heart cries for= this is the prayer of the heart, the prayer of silence, the prayer inarticulate, unspeakable, because it is beyond all desperation and beyond all hope. We still pray, we still cry to God, but we have individually and collectively put down the wound and the burden God placed on the human heart's passion, out of his divine passion. And this is the wound and burden Christ picked up, and took on, and saw through to the end, paying its existential cost, paying its moral cost, to show that the deep heart passion can come through. He did it so we can, in him, also do it.

This is God's doing. It is also humanity's doing. In passion is the victory of both.

'NIKE'= The Victory of the 'Passible' Heart

'To love as we were loved by Christ' is to love with passion= to love with our passion in Christ's passion.

Without passion, there is no love.

Without passion, love fails.

Without passion, love is a deus ex machina abstraction that has no existential punch and carries no existential weight.

Without passion, love buckles in Gethsemane and never reaches Golgotha.

Without passion, there is no sacrifice, and no descent into death and hell, to retrieve the lost at the worst place of loss, the place of worst ruin and final danger.

Without passion, Christian love does not exist. It has no reality, it does nothing, it changes nothing. It flees the crunch. It neither plumbs the worst, nor plants the best in the worst, to redeem the worst by reforging it into the best.

In sum-- without passion, the whole Christian mystery is lost.

If we have a falsely Greek aversion to the 'the passible', not understanding the Jewish truth that it is only out of the 'the passible' that the immutable is 'won', then we will always fall short of following Christ all the way into the room of no exit.

In that room is God.

In that room is the devil.

In that room is the deeper heart ground on which all humans stand.

FURTHER NOTES ON GREEK AND JEW= Time vs Space

Christianity is based on the Jewish focus upon time and redemption, yet it has too often based itself upon the Greek focus on space and salvation.

PART ONE= SPACE AND TIME FOR GREEKS

1,

W.F. Otto ['The Homeric Gods', p 5]= "...the natural has become one with the spiritual and eternal.. The ancient Greek religion comprehended things of this world with the most [incisive] sense of [their] reality.. and nevertheless – nay, for that very reason – recognized in them the marvelous delineations of the divine."

Plato, like all Greek philosophers, started from the empirically given, the phenomenal world of space, time, and matter. His argument is that space and matter 'reflect' a higher reality, whilst time inevitably moves away from it, pointlessly, and alarmingly.. Eternity is immutable and immoveable, in permanent repose. The phenomenal world is an 'image' of Eternal Verities, but time degrades, undermines, and destroys, that 'en-visioning' of the divine built into the warp and woof of things.

For Plato, space, and the matter holistically configured in it, has been shaped by divine forces, and is therefore a metaphor, a poetic yet exact analogy, of divine realities. Thus, he can speak of the divine as 'an ocean of beauty.' Similarly, the life-giving sun is an image of the unconditional generosity of the divine. The visible realm 'below' mirrors the invisible realm 'above.' As above, so below.. We 'see' the invisible through the visible, because the visible is transparent, more like a stained glass than an opaque surface. The visible is the 'ikon' of the invisible.

Plato takes joy in describing the Greek landscape acutely yet resonating with echoes of divinity which it portrays, or depicts, visually, symbolically, imaginatively. 'Ellada' is a place not burnt by a pitiless and harsh sun, as in the desert, but warmly embraced by a bountiful sun which brings all things to light, causing them to flower in their full potentiality, and also beautifying them, and un-hiding their quintessential reality, their own particular gift. There is a pervasive ethos of the divine Above, and the phenomenal world Below, in happy accord. The divine 'overlooks' the world to encourage it to be the best it can be. 'Putting the best foot forward', in its Greek context, is not only about walking the Right Path to stay attached to What Is, as opposed to wandering ever further into What Is Not, as in the Far East, but more 'credit', more encouragement, is given to the Relative by the Absolute, in the Eros of the Greeks. 'Ripeness is all.' There is nothing of the Western god of punitive and suspicious gaze. The Greek Eros is 'on our side', rooting for us. Perhaps this

is why even the gods and goddesses of Greece are far more anthropomorphic than the multiple divinities of Hinduism in India.

For Plato, the phenomenal world is 'already meaningful' because it has an implicate structure that works as a balanced, harmonious, coherent [and comprehensible], Whole. Everything follows a circular course, returning to where it began, because Eternity is like a Circle where the unity of the divine nature cannot be divided, and is a completeness without any lack, protectively holding everything, like a mother who loves all her children the same. Thus everything in this Whole has its own essential being, its way of having being, like the instruments in an orchestra, all differing yet playing together. The 'basic nature' of each thing, and that of the Whole of all things, is basically good [life-giving], beautiful [proportionate yet ravishing], luminous [disclosed not veiled]. Yet for all that, it is only a lower, and pale, 'copy' of the Original Fullness of the Good, the Beautiful, the True. The Eros of the Greeks contains a paradox. Although it sees in the phenomenal world a 'marvelous delineation' of the Higher Realm of Ultimate Reality, the very goodness, beauty, truth, discovered here creates in the seeker a painful yearning, an almost nostalgic longing, to be there at the very Source of the Divine Splendour.

Plato both affirms the 'visibly generated', 'sensible' realm, finding it of intrinsic value, yet by virtue of that, becomes dissatisfied with the replica, and desires the proto-type, the original version, the first [arche] type, which is the invisible and un-generated, 'intelligible' realm. We look through a glass darkly now, but then we shall see as we are seen.

Lief Boman ['Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek', 1960, p 155]: "The basis of Plato's thinking is the eternal or transcendent world of which our world of experience is only an image; this image is in itself.. glorious, but the glory of the [sensory and material] world is as nothing compared to the glory of Eternity. ..For Plato, things like geometry are a sensible image of invisible Eternity. It belongs to the world of experience yet has laid aside its sensuousness as much as possible. ..Platonic Eternity is ..like a Circle that goes on ceaselessly. The Divine Ideas do not belong to the world of experience but to Eternity. Experience does awaken in us a 'presentiment', or intuition, of them. Indeed, the intuition of the Ideas is union with Eternity."

On the most 'upbeat' version of Platonism, the visible world is valued because it is a 'making visible' of the invisible Divine Nature. But the downbeat is that time is invariably cracking that mirror. If the cracks get too fierce, the mirror breaks.

3,

Plato's concern is with the difference between Being and non-being. Plato's goal as a philosopher is to find 'what really is.' His way of operating is, awaken to the Real, and thus see through the Unreal. Discern Reality from Illusion.

The highest Being is unalterable and indestructible, at rest, and possesses Goodness, Beauty, Truth, in and of itself. Everything else has not got being in itself, but is given its being, and therefore is lesser in being, dependent on the Origin of Being.

The phenomenal world is in a strong sense a domain of 'appearances.' It consists of genuine terrestrial ikons of celestial mysteries, but because of the unawareness that humans are prone to, it is also full to the brim with 'false pictures' of happiness, fulfillment, attainment; these misleading pointers cause humans to put hope in, and become attached to, what is merely temporal and perishable, and thus has no value. We need to 'look to' the things in this world that point us beyond it, to Eternity. If we look to things confined to this passing world for the answer to the question of how to find 'the good life', the 'right' path, we are 'misdirected.' We are deceived.

'Non-being' is the negation of being and therefore refers to all the 'phantasies' and 'opinions' and 'notions' that can have no reality. When human culture separates itself from the beholding of and participation in the Sacred Kosmos of the Whole, humans 'construct' more and more of this unreality. Thus, in addition to genuine images of the ultimate, our world contains much that is illusory, mere empty appearance of no substantiality, producing delusion and confusion. Plato, like Hinduism and Buddhism, has no 'devil', except as merely a personification of all the enticing 'non-being' humans become glued to; none the less, in the lesser realm there are, as Boman puts it, 'many dark corners where rogues can hide out and ply their mischief.'

In the lower world, light and shadow, reality and distortion, images [of the real] and illusions [of the unreal], the unveiled truth and the veil of error hiding and distorting truth, are interwoven, and co-exist.

The problem in the lower realm is, humans remaining captive to ignorance, blindness, sleep.

4,

The Greeks were called "men of eyes."

Seeing is the chief of the senses, the eyes of the body. But it is necessary to 'see' what is inaccessible to the senses, the invisible. Seeing the invisible in the visible requires the [plural] 'eyes of the soul' [Philo], whilst seeing the invisible in itself requires the [single] eye of the nous. In more Buddhist language, sensory eyes perceive 'the gross', soul eyes perceive 'the subtle', and the noetic eye perceives 'the pure.' [The plurality of eyes of the soul includes the psychic, and the imaginal. The psychic eye is key to Plato's description of the four kinds of 'divine madness', four kinds of psychic charisma. The imaginal refers to the ability to visualize possibility, and thus expand the factual beyond its narrow restrictions.]

Knowing refers to that which is unveiled. In Sanskrit, and Greek, 'truth' really means 'the truth of being', What Is, as opposed to what seems to be, yet is

not. Knowing as 'seeing' is an event of disclosure: a screen of Illusion is drawn back, and Reality breaks through. This is a 'theophany.'

Spectacle and solemnity are one for the Greeks, and the highest in religion. At certain rituals, the gods came to observe and to be observed. They were 'spectators.' The spectator perspective is regarded as divine in itself. It may be that it is from the cultic mystery dramas that we get the oldest Greek word for God. Thus, in ancient usage 'theoris' is a 'spectator', and this might well be the root for 'theos.'

The link with 'theoria' [theorizing] is clear cut. Thus, a theoretician was someone like a visionary, or mystic, who beheld a divine disclosure, a divine 'spectacle', and then came away from this and bore witness to it, portraying it to others who had not experienced it.

The theory is indirect, but it allows those who have 'not been there' to see, to visualize, to 'picture', what the witness who was there really saw. A bad theoretician adds to, or subtracts from, re-invents, their direct experience of beholding; they convey it falsely to others who did not behold it. The others get a false picture of what the person witnessed. A good theoretician 'tells it like it is' when they encountered it; this conveys it truthfully to others who did not behold it. The others get a true picture of what the person witnessed.

In Shamanism, the person who has had divine encounter must sometimes keep it to themselves, yet other times they must take it to the assembled people, and then say, 'I saw this, it happened there.' It must be un-fabricated, un-adorned, a 'true witness.' This is cognate with ancient Greek theoria.

Yet the fullest theoria is when the divine enters nous, soul, body, and the person becomes in their entire life and presence an ikon of the ultimate. Such persons are illuminated from within, a spiritual radiance coming from beyond them, yet active within them, and radiating out from them. The external light creates shadows; the spiritual light is without shadows.

The Divine is 'the One Who Sees All, Spectates All, the only 'objective' observer' of visible and invisible in their unity. To see it all as the divine sees it, to whatever degree we can attain this, is to be on the road that leads to human elevation. Knowing the Exalted is what exalts the human.

Humanity attains their acme when they absorb and realize in themselves as much of the Eternal as possible.

Seeing grants direct access to What Is-- but only if consciousness is altered, and cleansed, so that it can be illumined. The requirement for such knowing is quietness, stillness, vigilance in awakesness, the giving up of attachment to things of no reality, pacifying emotionality, curbing the passions. 'Dispassion' is needed to see aright. Thus, we need to be 'clear, calm, and collected.' The human must be rendered bodily 'tranquil' and mentally 'peaceful.' A host of spiritual practices, or yogas, can help us give up our investment in what is

merely passing, and enable us to reinvest in the ultimate which is not passing.

5,

Virtues that arise from the vision of the Kosmos as the sacred and symbolic image of Eternity include a valuing of whatever is holistically arranged, concordant, consonant, 'agreeable' to integration; and as well as such concord, also a valuing of equilibrium, equipoise, equanimity, stability and consistency.

Alex Aksentijevic [2003, p 1]=

"Harmony, harmonic, and harmonious, are words encountered in many contexts. They are derived from the Greek 'armonia', meaning 'articulation' and 'agreement.' The root of the word comes from the Greek for 'joint.' In its most general sense, harmony represents order, proportion, and accord, in the world. The 'Celestial Music'.. of Confucian China and the Pythagorean 'Music of the Spheres' comprise a perfectly harmonious music, inaudible to the human ear, thought to be produced by the movement of celestial bodies. Confucius [551-479 BC] regarded music as essential in maintaining order in the universe and in human society.. Plato, Pliny, Cicero and Ptolemy are amongst the philosophers of the ancient world who contemplated the music of the spheres. ..in medieval Europe it found its expression in abbeys and cathedrals designed to conform to the proportions of musical and geometric harmony. The English hermeticist Robert Fludd [1574-1637] visualized grand celestial scales spanning three octaves and linking levels of [being] from the sub-planetary elemental worlds to.. choirs of angelic intelligences beyond the stars. More recently, Leibnitz described the mind-body relationship as a 'pre-established harmony' – a divine synchronisation of monads and ideas. In mathematics, the series= $1 + 1/2 + 1/3 + 1/4 + 1/5..$ is called a harmonic series. It diverges to infinity and is often used in statistics and applied mathematics.."

The Greek respect for the 'golden mean', the middle way, the avoiding of dissonance, the repudiation of extremes, the distaste for the undisciplined and disproportionate in anything, constituted an ideal to which the Greek athlete [look at the statues of human bodies], no different to the Greek philosopher, aspired.

The Meta Design responsible for the holistic formation of the Sacred Kosmos could be called, in a more Shamanic context, 'Natural Law', or the Way which is always Naturally Flowing through all things. It is clearly parallel with the Sacred Circle and its Four Directions. The Whole is always a binary system, starting with two and proceeding to multiples thereof. It is a Sacred Geometry. Everything is 'a part of it.'

In a more modern terminology, the Sacred Kosmos is the 'House of Being.'

Our real need for 'belonging' is frustrated until we join it.

6,

According to Boman [p 175], Plato focused on the question= “What is the relation between the sensible world and the supra sensible world? ..he had found that the sensible world was transitory, and the supra-sensible was wonderful, beautiful, and divine. If.. the sensible world is transitory, it must have an origin and.. will pass away.”

Plato focuses on ‘being’ as real, and rejects ‘becoming’ as no pointer to anything ultimate, thus spiritually spawning only the fictitious.. Divinity cannot be known in terms of time; the divine can be known only in terms of space. Boman [p 162]= “The Greek conception of blessedness is.. spatial.. determined by the contrast between this world and the timeless Beyond.”

Eternity is ‘incompatible’ with time, in the Greek world-view.

Eternity, for Plato, is not endless time; rather, Eternity means: outside of time, beyond the reach of time, above the vicissitudes and losses of time. Eternity is the ‘life-form’, to use very Platonic language, of the Divine. Eternity is not affected, for ill or for good, by time. It does not rust, decay, die. The damage of time cannot hurt Eternity. The Eternal is not only immobile, remaining always What It Is and never changing or becoming different to its Being, but also Eternity is not affected by anything that happens in time. The very essence, or nature, of Eternity is that it is ‘non-affectable’, or in the language of the Stoics [later continued by the monastics of Eastern Orthodox Christianity], ‘non-passible.’

Plato calls time ‘a moving image of Eternity’ [Timaeus, 38], but the analogy between higher realm and lower realm can be very well articulated in space, through a cosmic architecture [‘the harmony of the spheres’], but the analogy breaks down in regard to time. Eternity is at rest, thus how can time be ‘like’, or ‘akin’, to Eternity?

Eternity and time have the same formal similarity as between an Original and a Reflection, but there is a qualitative dissimilarity as between a Perfect Type and a Weak Imitation. The culprit making the weak imitation an inadequate copy, a degenerating image, is time. Perfection is the unalterable Eternity. Time brings stunning and shocking imperfection.

Indeed, some hyper pessimistic versions of Platonism push this point so far that it becomes hard to comprehend why the divine would ‘bother’ to generate such a lacking facsimile of itself.. This decidedly extreme Greek attitude throws away Plato’s sense of wonder at Nature as the mirror of all the abundance of divinity. Everything in the material world seems, then, alien, uncanny, meaningless, and humanity cannot feel ‘at home’ down here, so that the desire to ‘return’ up there becomes overwhelming. This nostalgic desire draws us out of life, and makes death preferable as ‘release’ into Eternity.

Such was the stance of the early Gnostics against whom Christianity fought fiercely, rejecting their view that the 'lesser realm' has no point. The Gnostics believed we can have no duty to the 'sinking ship' of this world, and expending love on it is a waste of time better spent on 'getting out of here.' Spirituality becomes an ascending movement out of the horrors of materiality and towards the 'purity' of the spiritual.

In fact, viewing the material realm as not just flawed, but fundamentally non worthwhile, paves the way toward the extreme doctrine that the divine act of creating is, in itself, the Fall. Just by coming to be, the phenomenal world is a catastrophic falling away from the spiritual-- not a new, creative adventure, for God and for the creation.

On this extreme Gnostic view, the material world is simply Fallen by definition, wholly inferior and impoverished in itself, and thus drifting, through time, towards a final collapse into non-being.

Yet, even without taking up the radical dualism of Gnosticism, for Plato and his heirs, time has the disastrous tendency to bring everything from Being into non-being, from What Is into What Is Not. Time, in its relentless losses, is the 'design fault' in the lower realm that cannot really be purged out of it. Consequently, Platonic spirituality, despite acknowledging the 'mark' of Eternity upon the phenomenal world, cannot but seek a way out, a way back, to Eternity 'in the end.' There can be no consciousness of working in time, to augment time. Our consciousness must be raised, in order to remain focused on Eternity. This is how we can 'put up' with time.

To commit oneself to time, to look for the ultimate within time, would be like leaving safe harbour, and floating out on the tide into raging seas, where the boat must sink.

For many Christians, the Platonic Eternity is confused with the Jewish 'heaven', without any realization of the mistake involved in that. The higher place free from, and not open to, the tragedies inherent to time, is 'heaven'; and they believe, in a Greek and not Jewish manner, that if they 'serve their time' stoically here below, and fulfill certain divine requests in this vale of tears, then after a short span on earth they can go 'up' to heaven.

This is probably the greatest 'Greek heresy' in all of Christianity, East and West. It denies Christ as the Redeemer. Redemption is of time, and it only works in time. It fully embraces time, as only the Jews ever did, in all the world's religions. William Blake: "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

But it is more radical than that.

The God of the Jews is staked to what happens, or fails to happen, in time. Yahweh moves in time and is moved by what humans do in time. Indeed, human actions can change Yahweh's disposition.

Plato believes that the only thing that can 'save' the visible, generated realm from total eclipse at the hands of time is its desirous seeking of the Eternal. Do not many, if not most, Christians de facto agree with him?

Plato urges humanity to recollect, or 'remember', the Source from which we came, and in this way, we will not fall ever further into the inevitable process of degeneration that is taking us ever farther away from that Origin. Christians have somehow contrived to make Christ's sacrifice the saving agent, yet Platonism embarrasses this misinterpretation of Christ's Cross; for, Platonic recollection, or remembering, is a process in the soul which needs no saving agent outside the soul to do it, nor would it require any suffering from such a salvational agent. Eastern Saviour figures function as Light-Bringers, opening the eyes of people; this is not the deed of the Messiah. You do not need a Messiah to 'save' the soul from Illusion and return to Reality.

But, if being forced to remain in time has no meaning in itself other than losing Eternity, why wouldn't we want to return to our Source? Being in the world, existing in time and history, seems 'a waste of time'-- we could be somewhere else, far better than here. At most, it can be allowed that this world is like a school where we learn a few necessary lessons before our [long awaited] 'departure' into Eternity.

Eternity is so superior to time because it is without alteration, hence without unrest, disturbance, tumult, privation, decay, and destruction. Nothing Daemonic can invade the bliss of the Eternal, according to Plato. Boman [p 128]= "The 'tooth of time' does not gnaw on it."

"Time destroys" is the maxim Plato, and Aristotle, take as simply obvious. Aristotle= "Everything grows old under the pressure of time and is forgotten in the course of time, but nothing grows new or beautiful through time" [Boman, p 128].

To put any hopes in time is futile. Time is more destructive than constructive. Basically, 'you live, you eat, you shit, you die.'

Everything reminding us of Eternity is highly regarded by Plato; the gods and goddesses, the divine realm itself, and even geometry, were all exempt from time, the transitory, and change. These three factors are all synonymous with 'what is passing' and 'what will pass away.' If it can pass into something else, and if it can pass into death, it is not a reflection of the Real, but it is, rather, the very epitome of the deceptively Unreal.

Trusting anything good can come from within time is 'foolishness to Greeks.'

Consequently, on the best case scenario for Platonism, humanity is generated by the Divine, we live a short while during which we actualize some of the Gift of Eros, and then we return to the Matrix from which we came. Anaximander's 'Apieron' is the Infinite, the Undefined, the Immutable 'First Cause of all things whence they all arise and whither they all return.'

7,

The higher world, itself at rest, acts like a magnet, drawing those inhabiting the lower world towards it.

The Divine Ideas draw us 'up' toward them, awakening in us a desire or yearning for their Eternity, and so we strive upward. But the desire, and strength, for this upward striving stem from the Ideas themselves. They are two-fold in impact: they awaken and draw us. Awaken= mind. Draw= soul.

This divine Pull is Eros. We are attracted to the Light, drawn outside the self, beyond the corporeal and sensory, drawn toward the spiritual and intelligible, and as we go higher, so the desire for the Divine Good, Divine Beauty, Divine Truth, increases. As we awaken more, so we desire the ephemeral and unreal less, letting it go, and desire the Real and Eternal more. Mind and Soul, awakening and yearning, are the two sides of illumination. Illumination has a salvational implication, in that it helps us cease to be blind towards what is lastingly real, and redirects our thirst away from alluring but passing appearances.

Hence, Eros pulls, draws, lifts up, humanity toward the rays of the Divine Light. Who would want to go on seeing shadows, chasing chintz and drinking poison?

For Plato, no human can ascend to the divine realm by his own effort, and thereby save himself. Eros means the pull is from the Divine Reality. Without this pulling of us from the divine, we could not reach the divine.

To think we can, of our own resources or practices/disciplines/yokes, reach to the divine is Luciferian; this 'prelest' is the ultimate in illusory error, and it stalks the spiritually and mentally advanced more than anyone else-- monks of both Greek Orthodox and Buddhist traditions recognize its supreme peril.

The temptation of the 'East'= the false light of Lucifer.

PART TWO= TIME AND SPACE FOR JEWS

1,

God binds himself to time, in Judaism: an odd thing to do, and by this, God gambles that in the world, and over the entire span of history, humanity will 'come through.' This is counter intuitive to all the versions of that 'timeless, other worldly, ahistorical' [Eastern] religion of Eros. By tying himself to 'time, the world, history', God takes a risk. There is no more security of the lower being plugging into the higher, by definition, as a given. This ontological security, guarantee, certainty, is undermined; the plug is pulled, because the lesser is risked to a future that is not yet and might never be.

To keep faith, to keep one's promise or vow to be committed to God, whatever he does, is enacted in time. It must 'overcome' time, but not by

transcending time, escaping time, but by 'bearing and enduring' within time. Forbearing: bearing and enduring in patience. The root of the Hebrew for 'victory' is 'enduring'; not simply duration, but enduring, bearing up, actively, patiently, through all trials and tribulations, all setbacks. Biblical time: Keep going. Do not give up, or give in. Do not stall.. Drive forward. Victorious in time, by driving ahead towards time's true goal, or End.

For the Jews, eschatology – the Last Things – replaces the 'timeless' mystical union with God. The moment of the End of all time is apocalyptic, because it is the 'time of decision', the time to turn or not turn, a last chance to repent and turn the heart away from the Lie and toward the Truth; this is the final 'moment of truth' for humanity. Getting to this point, over time, and historically, is dramatic, because the clash of Truth versus Lie 'hots up', and the masked Lie is unmasked, so we see in the heart much more starkly the contest between Truth of heart and Lie to the heart enacted in the world, and driving the world toward what it will finally become. What the world, and humanity, will finally become is not pre-set, but open ended.

That is the horrendous danger we face, the risk God has taken with us, and because of us, with everything else. If we go on falling, we bring down the House of Being.

The real meaning of the existential awareness of existence being 'out over the deep', suspended over the Abyss, is Jewish: when the Daemonic God subjects the fate of everything to time, the world, history, the lower is de-rooted from the higher, and made to advance-- or fall into Nothing. Its existing becomes fundamentally active, because if it stops, it falls into the Abyss. Its only chance of making the Abyss 'full' rather than 'empty' is in what action redeems the time, or fails the time, in the End.

Biblical time has a dynamic quality of pressing forward toward a goal; this time never knows a 'backwards', only a 'forwards' [Boman, p 162]. However nostalgic we become, however much we would like to go backwards to a safer, less existentially risked, moment of time, the arrow of time does not allow that.

2,

For Bergson, time is not 'succession' -- portrayable as successive movements between points in space -- but 'duration.' Bergson's experiential account of time gets close to its mystery, and is congruent to Biblical time. Its arrow is forward, each moment is not so much an 'eternal now' as the decisive turning point, the decision for action that comes but once, and then -- whether we rise to it or fail its summons -- moves on. There is, in time, no second chance. There is a new chance, yet if so, it is not the same as the opportunity and danger we crumbled toward in the moment that has passed; it is a different opportunity and danger, and we bring crumbling in the old moment to the new moment. In a sense, each instant is a watershed, a separation of 'before' and 'after' that is absolute. Thus each moment is 'a

moment of truth', all or none. We bring past failures and past victories with us as we move inexorably forward: this is how the past lives in the present.

Thus the whole human history, for the Jews, is with us in the now, even as an unknown and not yet created future opens to us in that very moment. Consequently, past and future pressure the present. In the moment of truth in every moment, we are linked with the past yet called by the future. The future comes into the moment of decision, demanding we decide for the possibility of what can still become, rather than despairing over what did not become in the past.

For the Jews, the past is out there 'ahead' of us, it is what we see looking ahead, and it regales us with stories of failure and of victory, yet nothing in it is finished, complete, perfect, thus it alerts us to the future which is still 'behind' us, still following on behind our present moment, waiting to claim its own moment, its 'day in the sun' for action.

The sense of time for each person is that of being in a race where you hand on the baton to others, once your time is up. A good father, for example, is precisely the runner who mentors and empowers his children to receive the baton from him, and carry on, going beyond where he stopped. This is in marked difference to the Greek myths of the jealous father who wants to block his children lest they get farther down the road than he reached-- this father who sits on his children so they cannot go beyond him is evident in Uranus, Cronos, or the king who fathered and repudiated his son Oedipus. It is humanity as an entirety, and over the whole span of time, that is 'running the good race.' There are no winners or losers, as individuals. All win, or all lose. The baton has to be passed on, again and again, continuously.

Both Greeks and Jews were 'holistic', in the modern parlance, but the Greeks were spatially holistic, and the Jews were holistic in regard to time: past and future are 'contemporaneous' in the present. Thus, all events in time are linked, and continue to exist, to resonate, down the ages. Yahweh's activity runs unbrokenly in time; his creating runs unbrokenly into his taking of the people out of Egypt, and his repatriation of the people from Babylon. It is all of a piece.

Only the Jews refuse to spatialise time, to blunt its headlong rush, and accept it for what it really is 'doing.' There is no break in duration; time is continuous, like a mighty river that flows head-long without interruption, discontinuities, breaks or pauses, in the surge. Heraclitus: "you cannot step into the same river twice." Time is also a river rolling in a certain direction. The question this raises is: where are we going? Where will we end up?

Only persons who believe there is some 'place' they can go outside time are not 'bothered' by such questions.

Time is irreversible. The before, the now, the not yet, cannot be qualitatively equated. Time just continues in its powerful movement 'forward' which could take us in significantly different directions, and we are thrust into this dynamic

'ongoing stream of events', forced to take our moment for action, or let it pass us by, rendering us inactive. Time is always actively in movement, and says to us, what is your movement in reply? When we are inactive towards the possibilities time offers, it slows down, tormenting us; when we are active in seizing hold of the possibilities time provides, it speeds up, hardly noticed by us.

There is a tide in the affairs of men which, if taken at the flood, leads on to victory.' This is good timing.

Action, to be effective, must be well timed.

3,

All the Indo-European peoples marked time by the annual cycle of the sun; their great festivals are Winter and Mid-Summer. The Jews did not note these solar moments; they marked time by the three phases of the moon. A beginning, middle, and end, to every good story.

For the more regular 'keeping time', the Jews used time rhythms, neither time cycles nor time lines; rhythms: pulses, heartbeats. The heart is in time: the heart bears time. The drum beat of the heart announces, I am here, I am ongoing, I am not backing off, I am not getting out. My heart beat rises and falls, thus does my energy keep coming.

Like the Celts, the Jews began the New Year in the late autumn, at the time of Nature's dying. The Jews, and the Celts, start in death and move toward life. Everyone on solar time starts in life and moves toward death..

Time, for the Jews, is qualitative. There is, wartime; peacetime; office hours; feast time; good times and hard times; time of mourning; and 'The Day of Trouble.'

4,

For the Greeks, the divine 'dwelling' is a marvelous, indeterminate, indefinable, infinite space. The 'spaciousness' of Eros is its capacity to 'make room' for anything and everything which it holds in its embrace. Hence 'Void and Form', or, 'Emptiness [No-thing] and the Ten Thousand Things.' It stretches, broadens, expands, to grant space for each and to all. Each has its own space, all share a common space. Spaciousness: 'living space'; 'space to breathe'; 'space to become what you can be'.. Plato identifies the colour blue as a chief symbol of Eros; in Greece, there is the transparent blue of the sheltering sky; there is the ever deepening blue of the distant and rounded mountains; there is the beautiful, ever shifting blue of the 'wine dark sea.' In fact, as light enters the earth's atmosphere, it is perceived as blue, but this blue contains all the colours.

In the Jewish Bible, God has no 'permanent' dwelling spatially, whether it be centre or periphery, above or below.. God's dwelling place in the universe: he

dwells everywhere [Psalms, 139, 7] and nowhere [1 Kings, 8, 27]. When God is associated with a place, this is not to be interpreted geographically or cosmologically, but the place reveals a certain quality of God. So, God does not dwell 'in heaven' any more than he dwells 'on earth', for both are 'created', and will pass away, and a new heaven and a new earth will arise at the End Time.

Christians mistakenly think God 'lives in heaven.' This is not so.

When God is associated with heaven, it is to reveal one or more of his qualities as God.

"God is in the heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few" [Ecclesiastes, 5, 2].

When Yahweh's highly exalted and numinous quality is to be indicated, he dwells in heaven. This means there is a distinction between God and humanity as vast as the heavens; thus, be humble. Do not 'set yourself in heaven', and do not try to humanly get above yourself. Accept God's 'aboveness.' We cannot raise our human clay from earth to heaven. The attempt to do so is Luciferian. It exemplifies the "man-god" of Dostoyevsky-- as opposed to the God-man, or divine-humanity, of the Messiah. If we are to be raised, to be exalted, indeed to be divinized, God alone can do it. [It should be recalled that Plato similarly warned against 'hubris' toward the divine.]

"To thee I lift up my eyes, O thou who art enthroned in the heavens" [Psalms, 123, 1; and Psalms, 121, 1].

Or= "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" [Isaiah, 66, 1].

Heaven is therefore not the mysterious and ultimate divine realm; for heaven is a work of Yahweh, like the earth, and one day will be scattered with the earth like smoke [Isaiah, 51, 6]. Yahweh exists as independently of heaven as of earth [1 Kings, 8, 27]. Divine transcendence is not spatial as it is in Greece, but is temporal.

The 'ever abiding' of Yahweh is in time. Thus this declaration is ultimate for the Jews: "God is the first and the last" [Isaiah, 44, 6; 43, 10; 41, 4]. Christ said this ultimate of himself, as divine-human, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega' [the first and the last in Greek letters]. The Beginning of time and the Ending of time. God abides in time but is himself 'ever-lasting.' He goes on and on.. Thus, Yahweh's name is not the Greek, 'he is', but the Jewish: 'he is and he will be.' And 'he is that he is' means: he has no origin, but his reality is always ongoing, always ever-lasting.

This is not an endlessly long time; rather, it is a boundless time, a time with neither origin nor end. In regard to the boundless time of the past, the feminine figure of Wisdom says, "Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth"; in regard to the boundless time to come, the

rainbow appears to Noah as a token of an 'everlasting' [ages to come] covenant ['berith olam'] between God and all the world [Genesis, 9, 16]. 'Olam' is used of God, and it suggests unbounded time, and does not refer to Yahweh's transcendence of time, or his being beyond time. "...from everlasting to everlasting thou art God" [Psalms, 90, 1].

"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endures throughout all generations" [Psalms, 145, 13].

"Yahweh is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth" [Isaiah, 40, 28]. Trust in Yahweh forever, for Yahweh who is God.. is an everlasting rock" [Isaiah, 26, 4].

The Rock of Ages; 'adh olam' means 'always'.. The Jewish ultimate: 'I will love you always.' Jeremiah, 31, 3: 'God's everlasting love', and Isaiah, 54, 8: 'God's everlasting mercy.'

From 'everlasting to everlasting.' The endlessness of time stretches backwards as well as forwards. All Yahweh's loving actions toward humanity have the stamp, the anchor, of this everlastingness.

However, Yahweh occupies different places in the creation, or upon the earth, to manifest different qualities of his doing. This is 'the spirit of place'-- it refers to a certain power, gift, or divine manifestation, associated with that place. This is not arbitrary. Yahweh will dwell 'in the midst of his people' is an expression of Yahweh's proximity, closeness, accessibility. Similarly, Yahweh's dwelling in the Temple signifies: God is near and gracious [Psalms, 134, 3; 1 Kings, 8]. The Temple is the special place of 'grace', the overflowing fountain of Eros in its generosity and goodness.

The other association of Yahweh's name to definite places has historical significance. God of Sinai [Judges, 5, 4; Deuteronomy, 33, 2-4], or Mount Horeb [1 Kings, 19, 8], indicates that Yahweh is Israel's Covenant God. In these places, God vowed himself to the Jews, making a solemn and binding promise that committed him, over the fullness of time, not only to love and care for them as a Saviour, but also to love and suffer for them as a Redeemer. Through the Jews, this vow and its promise is spread to all humanity.

5,

What static 'being' is to the Greeks, dynamic 'existing' is to the Jews.

Hebrew verbs always express a movement or an activity. 'Your kingdom will not stand' [instead of, 'your kingdom will have no endurance']. Your kingdom loses impetus, loses power, in the Jewish way of thinking. It is not that static being loses one of its rich panoply of characteristics.

For the Jews, motionless and fixed being is a non-entity. Only 'being' which stands in inner relation to something active and moving is a reality. Thus,

'static being' is a motion that has passed over into repose. The distinction between being [real] and becoming [unreal] so vital to Greeks is irrelevant to Jews. The whole creation is in flux, in constant becoming.

In Hebrew 'to be' is 'hayah', and is a verb designating existence as in movement. Thus to 'exist' is a dynamic and moving state; as Levinas once said summarizing Heidegger, "the verb 'to be' is transitive" ['A Short History of Existentialism', J. Wahl, 1949, p 51]; and, "a potentiality which passes into act: this describes an existent which least resembles a tranquil [condition of being], self-contained and situated outside of existence" [ibid, p 52]. In Hebrew, such existentialism is built into the very language, since existence is identical with 'effectiveness.' Existing is inherently not at rest, but dynamic. It expresses itself in activity, activity that has 'power.'

The hayah of the Word of God 'came forth' or 'came' to a person. The hayah of Yahweh's Word is like the coming down of the fruitful rain from heaven; it will not return until it has accomplished the purpose for which Yahweh sent it [Isaiah, 55, 11].

The hayah of Yahweh's 'hand' -- God's mighty power -- intervenes in history. Or in regard to the prophet, the hand -- the power of God -- seizes him. Similarly, the hayah of the Spirit of God is its effect, its impact: "The Spirit of God came upon Saul's messengers, so that they also spoke in ecstasy" [1 Samuel, 19, 20]. Or: the coming of the evil spirit -- sent by God -- upon Saul [Numbers, 24, 2; 1 Samuel, 16, 23].

"Above all others Yahweh IS; he is the sum of all dynamic existence and its source and creator" [Boman, p 49]. There is not a single person or thing in the world to whom hayah could be ascribed if it could not be ascribed to Yahweh. To Yahweh is ascribed an unchanging hayah, and this hayah is a dynamic, energetic, effective, personal being who carries out his will and accomplishes his purpose, and who thereby advances the salvation and good fortune of his people. The one who is the root of all dynamism, all action and deed, all activity, all energy and power: the Creator.

For the Jews, 'to be': not to remain statically complete, and flowering, in space; to move actively through time. Lakota Elder: 'wisdom is not something you think; wisdom is something you do.'

6,

God is unknowable in essence, but can be known in his activities, energies, and dynamic outreach. He is in movement, coming out of the Divine Mystery, acting in, with, and upon, creation, and especially focused towards humanity. It is a paradox. God cannot be 'known', except through entry into a relationship with the Divine Darkness. This numinous Darkness renders unknown not only God, but also the outcome of what the future will bring. We 'close the eyes' and leap into the dark when we move ahead in time.

“The [Jew].. was interested only in this world.. The poetry is intensely realistic.. Things, to be of any interest, must be of deep personal concern, [for] passion then generates a feeling of human relationship even with the inanimate. ..their poems will breathe a ‘pagan’ passionate love of life [see David’s lament in II Samuel].”

The Jews reach wisdom by searching out the depth of things. This leads to an understanding of the heart which can accept what must be and what will be. ‘So be it.’ Humanity attains their acme when they become what God wills for them, in their action of heart. ‘Thy will be done.’

7,

The capacity for hearing is to Jews what the ability of seeing is to the Greeks. For the Jews, the Word of God is to be ‘taken to heart’, so that it changes the heart’s action.

Greek= seeing—mind axis. Jews= hearing—heart axis.

Seeing is a far-way, distance sense. Hearing is a nearby, intimate sense.

Seeing is panoramic in space, hearing is sequential in time, thus needs to be sharply focused to each instant that arises.

The Hebrew ‘Dabhar’ can mean ‘word, deed, thing’.. We speak or act to effect change in the world. Hence ‘mere words’ [‘words of the lip’] are empty and vain, and pernicious. For the Jews, untruth is the Lie. That which is powerless, empty and vain, is a lie; a spring which gives no water ‘lies’ in Hebrew.

The Lie: mirage, nullity, futile [‘shaw’ in Hebrew]; a deception, a phantom. Vain: cannot bring anything to pass. Vain: all show but no clout to back it up; impotent to do anything that matters.

The Devil for the Jews is a distinct hypostasis with a will of his own, and is a Liar; for in Genesis, the Lucifer Spirit masquerading as a ‘cunning’ Serpent – the wisest of all animal spirits in the Great Goddess religion of the Near and Middle East – lies about God. Thus the Evil One begins as ‘he who lies about God’, and hence introduces into the existential arena and all of history a dynamic of collision, of clashing, of non-negotiable and irreconcilable contention, between the Truth that ‘moves’ it all, and the Lie which lies about what moves it all, and thus seeks to hinder and finally stop its dynamic, and bring everything God-created to destruction.

The Divine Word has a dynamic force; it does not so much illumine our seeing as strike and move our heart.

“My word, is it not like a fire, a hammer that shatters the rocks?” [Jeremiah, 23, 29]

The Voice of Yahweh works through the many powers of nature, like a tremendous thunder that rolls through all things, like a wave running through sand and raising it into different shapes. Yahweh's Voice is not just 'a brute force'; it expresses a moral intent.

The Word of God is thus always creative, coming to humans to help them, to task them, to bring them through challenges [Isaiah, 55, 10]. Yahweh is 'the Creator' who 'calls' everything into existence when his Voice speaks – sometimes like thunder, sometimes like the still small voice after the storm. [The Greek Christians said of this constant theme in the Jewish Bible that, all creatures called into existence by God are each a 'word' spoken by God, a little word, a 'logoi', created by, patterned on, and held within, 'the' Word of God, and dynamised by the Spirit of God.]

To 'speak' in Hebrew means to be 'behind' and 'drive forward.' Or, 'to drive forward that which is behind.' The word is, if true, always a deed. Goethe changed the opening of the fourth gospel, 'In the Beginning was the Word' to 'In the Beginning was the Deed.' In Hebrew, they are not much different.

The Greek term for 'word' makes a clear differentiation with the Jewish 'dabhar.' The Greek Logos plays a mediating role in the construction of the Sacred Architecture of the Kosmos, as the central hub of the wheel of many spokes, or as the conductor of the orchestra of many instruments. The Logos is like an unextended point that holds within it all the vast Mandala that will expand outward from it, and revolve around it. Kosmos: the Logos expanded to the periphery; Logos: the Kosmos contracted to the centre. 'In him is held all things.' The Logos then becomes the unifier of higher and lower, visible and invisible, material and spiritual, worlds. The Logos is the macrocosm, and in each human soul is a mirror image of it, a microcosm. But each part of the Kosmos reflects the Whole in some manner. Thus 'above' and 'below', 'in' and 'out', and all other binary building blocks, converge in, and flow out from, the Logos at the core of the Kosmos.

Christos Yannaras= "The fundamental distinguishing mark of ancient Greek cosmology is.. the recognition of a universal [and] common ..principle [logos] that articulates, structures, and governs ..natural reality. This *logos* forms the universe into a cosmos-- an ordered harmony and beauty. The *logos*.. distinguishes the *essences* of existents, shapes the variety of *forms*, formulates the *laws* of the order and harmony of the coexistence and movement of beings. The *logos*.. is the lover of matter, ..that urges [it] to the movement that gives it form.." ['Toward An Ecology of Transfiguration', ed. John Chryssavgis and Bruce Foltz, 2013, p 190].

Kosmos, in Greek, can mean the world, a lot of people, or what in English we would term the universe. Kosmos is better rendered 'the Whole people', the 'Whole of Everything.' Thus, 'Kosmotheoria' is, how all the System, all the Pattern, all the Meta Order, is working; it is, in addition, what any given person 'views', 'sees', or 'envisages', in regard to this. So, it is my or your World-View, or Cosmic-Vision. There is one Kosmos, and multiple World-Views depending on the angle of our view.

The Kosmic Dance is beneficial, but it is not personally involving. It conveys knowledge, but it does not move the heart.

The Jewish Word/Voice, of God is masterful, intentional/willed, energetic: passionate. It drives the world forward, in time.

The Jewish Word effects; the Greek Word is. The former reveals/declares God's intention, or will, for the creation. The latter discloses/shows the divine structure that holds all the different realms in a pattern of complex yet unified being.

8,

God requires from the heart truth in action. This means to be steady, to be faithful in the existential sense. To draw closer to God needs change of heart. 'God requires truth in the inward parts.' To seek the truth in one's own heart so that it can be true to God and true for God in the world. This is Christ's saying, 'the pure in heart will see God.' Pure, in this context, means 'undivided.'

The heart needs to engage in a passionate trusting in and following of the passionate zeal of God. "Yahweh must be sought with all the heart" [Jeremiah, 29, 13]. This seeking of Yahweh is full of struggle, striving, strife. It needs an ever increased 'activation' of the heart. Boman [p 198] refers to "these heroes of the battlefield of the inner struggle.." Those who were more advanced in the struggle, or spiritual warfare, were called "the second born"; they were teachers for everyone in the struggle. These Wise Men and Women, or Sages, were not like the Platonic philosopher-- illuminati, but were persons tested and proved in the arena of existence and the furnace of God. They were granted a place alongside the prophets as bearers of revelation. [Job= a Wisdom book; Jonah as well; and Wisdom of Solomon, and Proverbs.]

For in a profound sense, truth is hard, and wounding, to the heart.

Lakota prayer= "Truth is coming, it will hurt me, I rejoice, You can heal me."

Greeks= mind--soul; 'Reality versus Illusion', in regard to consciousness [or knowledge] of the Divine Reality.

Jews= heart—spirit; 'Truth versus the Lie about Truth', in regard to intention of the heart.

9,

What the 'symbol' is for Greeks, the 'sign' is for Jews.

The 'symbol' is the image of Eternal mysteries of the Divine Nature, or Essence of Divinity.

For the Jews, a symbol expresses varying attributes of the Energy of God, not the Essence of God.

A Jewish 'sign' is an expression of divine will and power, manifesting through a natural entity or historical event.

Clearly, symbol and sign are in many respects overlapping and similar. Both communicate to the generated/created level here and now from the uncreated/un-generated level beyond. The real distinction is that the communication for the Greek is intellectual and abstract, so to speak 'neutral', a showing of some aspect of the higher reality. It asks of us that we contemplate it, to learn its nature. For the Jew, the communication is anything but neutral; it is urgent, forceful, personal: a message from one mysterious personhood to the human personhood, a talking 'heart to heart' between Creator and human. The message is urgent because it is part of helping the human to fulfill the action it is called to do in this existence. Signs answer the question, 'what am I to do with my life.'

The 'signs of the times' manifest what Yahweh is doing with humanity at a given point in time, and may be communicated through natural or historical felicities or catastrophes.

Crying For A Vision in Shamanism would seem to be more Jewish than Greek. In a sense, this message is 'inarticulate speech of the heart.' It is 'no words songs' between Spirit and humanity.

Bodily metaphors are used of God, but as signs of his power, intention, energy. Burning nostrils: wrath [Isaiah, 30, 27-30]. Arm: might, strength, energetic assistance on which we can rely. 'Helping power' [Isaiah, 52, 10; Jeremiah, 17, 5]. Hand: 'in the hands of a man is to be in his power.' "Thy hands have made and fashioned me" [Psalms, 119, 12]. The description of Yahweh's 'appearance' is an evocation of his spiritual personalness as it is accessible to humans. All his qualities and energies, described metaphorically, are his 'name.' The name is therefore, for Jews, a manifestation of divinity. In the name of the Covenant God, his person is met face to face and his action is experienced.

God's face: 'panim.'

The face is not what is seen by we who look, but the other who turns toward and 'faces' us. Panim is used of a personal meeting with God, and really means, not that we 'saw' God's 'face', what he looks like, but that God faced towards us. Thus Yahweh knew Moses face to face [Deuteronomy, 34, 10], and Yahweh spoke to Moses like a friend face to face [Exodus, 33, 11]. God comes to us face to face-- not vice versa. Only God can initiate personal face to face with us. We cannot intrude upon God out of vain curiosity, power seeking, egoistic immodesty, or pride. And, as with Moses, God gives us grace, and protection, to meet him, for if we were somehow to 'steal upon God', and 'force our way near to him', we would die..

Yahweh is revealed as power, goodness, care, wisdom, moral earnestness, graciousness, mercy, wrath, tenderness, anger for truth, compassion. All are aspects of the divine love, in its passion.

PART THREE= HISTORY FOR GREEKS AND FOR JEWS

1,

For the Greeks, 'becoming' must be grounded in 'being', to have any reliable reality. This gives rise to basically circular, or cyclical, notions of time, and thus to 'developmental' or 'evolutionary' models of history.

The most fully spatialised time is circular. So, in its becoming, everything passes through 'stages' of Eternity's disclosure, like the four seasons of the year, always returning to the same point where it began. This seems the main intuition in Nietzsche's 'Myth of the Eternal Return' [Mircea Eliade, in 'Cosmos and History: The Myth OF The Eternal Return', 1959, investigates the background of this ancient idea of time repeating.] The four seasons, like south, west, north, east, of the circle, are really simultaneous; you need all four spatial points to adequately portray the Eternity which the circle symbolically signifies; it may need time to pass through all four points here below, but above the four points are not sequential but simultaneous, expressing the fullness of the Circle of Being.

Cyclical time, in eras, or distinct periods, also following a symbolic arc of inevitable unfoldment, are Greek.

The popular modern notion of 'development' in the sense of an innate seed that over time grows and flowers into what it was always meant to be is also Greek. The 'essence', or innate meaning, given with the soul of the living creature, is freed over the course of its development: its becoming is an increasing manifestation of its inherent potential. The compacted seed becomes the fully articulated plant. St Anthony's injunction captures this, "Become what you are." Jung thought in this exact manner in his notion of 'Individuation', which is thoroughly Greek, as is his [Platonic] notion of 'archetypal structures' [he relocates the archetypal forms from above, in the Platonic Eternity, to the below, in the collective unconscious of humanity-- but this underlying ground of the soul is also 'timeless' in a Greek sense: a storehouse of potential]. Much of modern Humanistic Psychology, ala Rogers, Maslow, et al., is also thoroughly Greek. 'To be the best [most evolved, most completed, most sublime] you can become' is quintessentially Greek. Self-improvement, needing self-discipline, unites athlete, warrior, contemplative, equally. Though this can be distorted into something selfish, and narcissistic, it is not inherently so; you 'shape' yourself to the Shape, and 'move' to the Flow, of the Higher Realm at work in the lower realm.

Maslow wrestled with this ideal of developing oneself toward one's brightest and highest in his notion of 'Self Actualization', especially when he linked that to the 'Peak Experience' where consciousness becomes expanded to the

awareness of the Sublime. Maslow had a sharp appreciation for what Freudian neurosis was really talking about-- our lying to ourself, and other people, about inner problems of character-growth, our shadow side, against which we build defenses. But Maslow also speaks of the converse which Freud missed-- the 'Jonah Complex' where we fear not our lesser self, but actually fear our bigger self, our fuller self, our more excellent self. We hide the darkest truth about ourselves, but we also flee from the brightest truth of what we could become. We settle for 'the pathology of normality', we content ourselves with a life of mediocrity.

It can be concluded that becoming is a reflection of Eternity if, and only if, it is a 'natural' growth process where What Is can unfold some of its goodness, beauty, truth, on the material and temporal plane. A 'whole' or 'realized' human being reminds us of Eternity, for this person has absorbed into their limited being some of the radiance from above and this has expanded them; at the same time, what they absorb from Eternity also acts as a catalyst to what is latently 'seeded' in them as a gift from Eternity -- and can be brought to a flowering in time -- for a time, before it dies, and returns to Eternity.

In an important sense, then, the Greeks 'assimilate' History back into Nature, as time is fully spatialised in differing ways. Time as [natural] 'process' is Greek; time as [existential] 'project' is Jewish. For the Jews, time is subject to very different kinds of forces, fates, agencies-- including the contribution of natural forces, some of whom, some of the time, manifest divine power and intent.

This is why 'uncontested unfolding' is Greek, not Jewish; for the Jews, time is inherently and unavoidably 'contentious.'

2,

Repetition has a darker side. The other view of history among the Greeks, given their negative view of time, is James Joyce's 'nightmare of history.' Humans living in ignorance of the Eternal get disoriented in time, and just repeat the same old mistakes, again and again. 'There is nothing new under the sun.' Even the Jewish preacher said, in Greek vein, 'all is vanity.' Or, as Heidegger argued even more negatively, history is not any sort of progress, not any sort of advance over time, with things always improving 'over the long haul', but on the contrary, the history of humanity has been little more than a constant decline. Things get worse, as they move farther away in time from the Beginning of Time, when all things were close to their Origin. Zen= "Show me your original face." Heidegger is adamant that the peoples of the Beginning Time are naturally closer to Eternity, thus stronger and more aware than modern peoples who are weaker and more distracted; primal humanity lives at the very mysterious point where time emerged from Eternity. Paradise is not timeless like Eternity, but Paradise is a special kind of time, a timeless time, an eternal time. The Eternal Now..

The Western European idea of 'unstoppable linear progress' over time is not Greek.

Nor is it Jewish.

It loses any connection with God working in time, to move the world through time in a certain direction, rather than another direction. For the Jews, the nightmare of history is not inevitable because human defeat in the historical battlefield is not inevitable. Since time is the realm of the 'contingent and changeable', it 'depends' how things will turn out; they can be 'changed' in different directions depending on how humanity changes-- if we will work with God and work for God in the world. Thus, the nightmare of history wins if the devil's Lie prevails over God's Truth, and if we fall into a 'merely human' attempt to fix the world without calling upon God's active help and powerful involvement.

3,

God reveals himself to humanity in history for the Jews.

History is a movement toward an End set by God; with his blessing and promise, he gets the movement underway, and intervenes in it when necessary. All valued actions by humans promote the movement to the divine goal. The life of humanity is meant to have a final End in which God's greatest and profoundest purposes are worked out. Eschatology -- victory at the last gasp, it all coming good in the End -- replaces what the preoccupation with the Higher Reality is to the Greeks. For the Jews, the final roll of the dice is a Show Down at the close of all time which resolves -- or fails to resolve -- the inescapable risk of everything existing in time.

The world is 'basically' dynamic, in flux, changing, unstable, always 'leaning forward' in time, never at rest. We cannot stand pat on, nor cling to, what we have done up until now. There is more to do, and the past gets lost, cleared away, jettisoned, sometimes even destroyed, in order to clear a time for the action that can only be done now and the action yet to come. Existence is becoming, an action that starts now, has unbounded yesterdays, yet more boundless tomorrows. It is not that 'time lasts forever.' It is, on the contrary, that 'time as ceaseless motion is ever lasting.' The river has no start and no end. It goes on, and we can hardly remember any moment when it started going on, and we can hardly foresee any moment when its ongoing will stop-- if God is in time, and time is indeed the dimension of his heart action, and humanity's heart action in reply.

This is why it is true, as the existentialists assert, that the world, and we as 'thrown' into it, are inherently active, basically in movement, without let up. Instead of an essence, or a nature, we have a 'dynamis' [a 'hayah'], a heart that is like an engine driving action, an energetic heart. This is passion.

Time presupposes change, and that implies a heart with a free, and personal will. What we do with our heart in the world supremely matters.

For the Jews, God's creation inaugurates history. That humanity will go wrong in history, out of the freedom to do noble things or terrible things, is accepted and anticipated by God. Thus, in the Jewish Bible, the terms 'creation' and 'salvation' are almost identical [especially in Isaiah, 41, 18-20; 40, 12-31; 42, 5-9; 43, 1-7, 15-21; 44, 1-4; 45, 12].

It is more extraordinary even than that.

The Jewish Bible regards a trinity of divine actions from the very start of creation. Thus Yahweh is [1] Creator, [2] Saviour, and [3] World Perfecter and Redeemer. All three of these tasks/roles/energetic actions – Creator – Saviour -- Redeemer – are endlessly extolled in Isaiah. They go together, making a triad.

Indeed, it is clear from the Jewish Bible that it is God the Creator who has a right arm and a left arm, since 'arm' means 'helping power', or 'mighty empowerment' in Hebrew. Thus, God's Right Arm is Salvational activity, and God's Left Arm is Redemptive activity.

So, Yahweh is the people's "God and Saviour" [Isaiah, 43, 3], which is Eros, and Yahweh is their "Holy One and King" [Isaiah, 43, 15], which is the Daemonic.

As the people's Redeemer [Isaiah, 43, 1], Yahweh is their keeper and defender in huge perils [Isaiah, 43, 12]. Yahweh works the transformation of the desert into a fruitful field: this is his creative work [Isaiah, 41, 20], his Eros; yet Yahweh must also battle, fight, contend, on the reverse side of creativeness [Isaiah, 42, 10-17] to prevent the Evil One, and human fallenness and openness to wickedness, from negating and annihilating all the fructifying and flowering that is brought by Eros.

God's powerful interventions do not stop at the 'genesis' of the world, but continue in and include all the creative and destructive actions of God that are saving and redeeming.

PART FOUR= DAEMONIC TRADITIONS IN GREECE

Heraclitus= "Everything changes; war is the father of all things." This high estimate of change and motion, and the battling that determines its directionality, is un-Greek. Heraclitus came from Ephesus, and his followers were mostly from Asia Minor. Heraclitus also said something very 'Jewish'= "Fire is the point of departure for unceasing change." Similarly Daemonic is Dionysus who came from Eastern Thrace, and the so-called 'Mystery Schools' who offered 'death and rebirth' in this life. Whether the Homeric heroes were also Daemonic is not clear.. Warriors often are Daemonically inspired, even in cultures heavily biased toward Eros.

Greece was never without the Daemonic, especially before Hellenism, but culturally Eros won out, was made primary, and the Daemonic was forgotten, or marginalized.

PART FIVE= FINAL SUMMARY OF GREEK AND JEW

1,

Boman's summary is a little too neat.

He says of the Greeks= Divinity is a 'reasonable' being disclosing its nature, essence, attributes, to human beings through the world as a system of symbols.

And of the Jews he says= God is an active person who, through relevant deeds, is leading the world to a destination.

In the latter, God's power is experienced and felt in the human heart and spirit, in the former, the being of Divinity is perceived, contemplated, known: either directly and mystically, close to source, or indirectly and by analogy in imagery, farther from source in emanation. [In going up to Divinity, we 'thin' down, and jettison symbols and images from the world of generation; this is the 'via negativa' or 'apophatic' way. In tracking Divinity coming down, we 'thicken' up, acquiring symbols and images that are delineations of the Divine. This is the 'via analogea', or 'cataphatic' way.]

Greeks= the What of Divinity. An elaborate, static, cosmic structure.

Jews= the Who of God. A powerful, change-provoking, force.

Boman, wanting to end on bringing Greek and Jew closer, argues that 'in both is a Divine Being, or God, who stands behind the world, and deploys the world, in part for self-disclosure, in part for action.'

'Greek versus Jew' is how Eros versus the Daemonic is known in the West.

But a conclusion different to Boman's is needed to make an additional nuancing.

2,

In the Jewish Bible, it says 'God has a soul', and 'God has a heart.'

Greek= God's soul. God discloses his nature as a being, God shows his essential nature through the order and fluidity of the Kosmic pattern evident in all things.

Jewish= God's heart. God reveals his will and heart through the circumstances and occurrences of the world which then appears as a field of dynamic action, an arena of test-- for God as well as for humanity.

The Greeks in the classical culture of Hellenism play up the soul—mind, but play down the heart—spirit.

The Jews found a way for the heart to take the soul on the hard journey and savage battle for the world. Heart= husband, Soul=wife. Whilst he is the existential hero, she is his helpmate, the magical source of unexpected aid from beyond.. As he must venture into the trackless wastes of the desert, so she is the oasis that keeps the venture going. She brings back the mythological, the magical, in a way that serves the existential risk-- though it cannot eclipse it, nor become any escape from it.

Eros is not only Light and Space, but is also Water. The Water is incarnational, humbly and modestly flowing into every crevice, every lack, in existence where it is needed. This Eros does not raise us up to divinity, but brings divinity down to us, at our lowest point. It therefore encourages us to remain in the here and now. It also becomes the wellspring: the gift of Eros is to be shared, here below, and among all who thirst.

Eros= Light and Water.

Daemonic= Fire and Earth.

Greek= mind—soul.

Jew= heart—soul.

The Greek soul is carried up into the heights [of space] by the nous; this is 'the way of the alone to the alone.' Hence the Monk.

The Jewish soul is projected into the future [of time] by the heart; this is 'the way of sacrifice for the sake of something only found at the end.' Hence the Marriage Couple.

3,

Thus it is possible for Eros to 'stand pat' and 'not move', in order to preserve the sense of divinity inhering in the world-- not in the artificially built world of humanity, but in the naturally given Kosmos of the earth, nature, the universe.

Yet, paradoxically, it is also possible for Eros to accompany the Daemonic in time.

Surprisingly, the philosopher-mystic Plotinus, the creator of Neo-Platonism, had a very Jewish revelation that not only points clearly to Eros and Daemonic as God's two powers, but also conveys them in terms of the Daemonic taking responsibility for Eros.

Plotinus= "But there is a [most ultimate vision].. It comes from a voice in my own soul, which is God-possessed and divines where it does not know. This voice told me that while God is indeed one, his highest and chiefest powers are two, even Goodness and Sovereignty. Through his goodness he begat all

that is, through his sovereignty he rules what has been begotten” [‘De Cherubim’, IX, p 27].

These ‘highest and chiefest powers’ are Eros and the Daemonic, but it is the way they are inter-related that is Jewish, not Greek.

Eros is no longer an alternative to the Daemonic, rather, Eros is in the protection of the Daemonic; the heart protects the soul and the soul helps the heart.

The ‘Zohar’, the main text of Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism, echoes this dynamic coming together, in describing God’s ‘right side’ as ‘Kindness, Benevolence’, and describing God’s ‘left side’ as ‘Strictness, Severity.’

Even the two craftsmen chosen by God to artistically fashion the divinely-required furnishings of the earliest precursor of the Temple of Solomon -- the mobile tent crossing the wastes of Sinai, where the ark of the covenant was kept – had names [Bezaleel and Ahooliab] indicating the right side, God’s Eros Power, and the left side, God’s Daemonic Power. The right-side person was from a prominent and wealthy family. The left-side person was from an ordinary and not well off family. Jewish commentary points out that the more charismatic right side person is not sufficient to any religious task, he must have the backup of the more plain left side person. The Daemonic person is often not making a splash in the foreground like the Eros person, but in the background is doing the heavy lifting.

4,

The fearful Greek response to the Daemonic can be to try to make its discrepancy and savage truth ‘fit’ into the kinship pattern of the Kosmic Whole. So, it gets interpreted as the yin to a yang, or a yang to a yin. Or, its fire is muted, toned down, reduced to a pink pastel hue, by making it one of the ‘four elements’ in the Circle of Being: its role is merely ‘transformation.’ It ushers out the old and ushers in the new, and therefore is just the ‘transition’ between what is in decline and its renewal. That is putting it mildly!

The Daemonic cannot be made a ‘relation’ within the Eros System of Harmonics, a part of its inevitable pushes and pulls, its fluid balancing act. The Daemonic is the threatening stranger. You can stretch Eros to try to welcome the stranger, but if the stranger is too strange, and too much the outsider, then he will be exiled. Exile from the Circle Dance is the ‘hell’ where the inclusivity of Eros breaks down; at this juncture, to preserve its Web of Life, Eros has to shut all doors and close all windows. A bridge too far..

5,

As the old Greeks tried to spatialise time, and traditions in their heritage in the modern world still try to reduce the Daemonic to merely ‘a part’ in the Eros Kosmic Design, so the Jews accommodated Eros by placing it in time, for a time only, but not as any exit from time.

Ecclesiastes, 3, 2-8=

“A time to be born and a time to die,

A time to kill and a time to heal

A time to weep and a time to laugh

A time to mourn and a time to dance,

A time to rend and a time to sew

A time to love and a time to hate

A time for war and a time for peace..”

For the Jews, the Daemonic becomes primary, yet Eros is also present as the accompaniment, and co-worker. Right and Left arms are both active.

Thus, all Yahweh’s ways are ‘hesed we’emeth’, grace, and truth [Psalms, 25, 10].

Grace is understood as ‘merciful guidance’, and truth as ‘true ways of acting.’ Grace is Eros, and Truth is Daemonic. Yahweh tells Moses he will be gracious and show mercy. Yet God also asks for Truth inwardly in the heart and outwardly in action; ‘God chastises those he loves.’

The Creator loves his people as a married man loves the bride of his youth [Isaiah, 54, 1-7]; this is the Daemonic protecting Eros.

Or, Yahweh loves them as a father loves his children [Isaiah, 64, 8; Mal, 2,10; Psalms, 103,13; Deuteronomy, 32,6; Job, 38,28]= Daemonic.

Heavenly ‘lamps’, or luminaries, are signs of Yahweh’s kindness= Eros.

This is also Eros= “O give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever” [Psalms, 36, 5, 7-9].

But this is acutely Daemonic= “What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?” [Psalms, 8, 1-4]

The sun rules the day, and “day to day pours forth speech”; the moon and the stars rule the night, and “night to night declares knowledge” [Psalms, 19, 1-4].

The sun, moon and stars, are the daily signs and promises of God’s mercy shown forth in the whole of creation. This is Eros.

Eros= “The sun comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. ..And there is nothing hid from its heat” [Psalms, 19, 5].

PART SIX= CONCLUSION

1,

From an ‘idealistic’ and ontological Greek perspective= by filtering out the passing, the ephemeral, the decaying and dying, we can get to the ‘essence’ of being in the lower world that helps us ‘recollect’ [remember] the essence of the Eternal Being. Every entity and creature and consciousness has an essence, and this is the ‘nature of its being’, and the ‘way of its being’; the ‘signature of its being’, as it were. When things are in repose we can see them as a reflection, however fleeting, of the Eternal; when they move, get busy, enter becoming, we lose that reflection.

From a ‘realistic’ and existential Jewish perspective= we cannot ‘rest on’ any plugging-in to higher being from our lower being, in order to ‘ground’ the lesser being, safely and securely, in the matrix of all being. Existence calls humanity ‘out’, calls us into personalness, and radical freedom. History is the freeing up of human agency, yet this is crippling in its angst, and certainly burdensome in its responsibility.

2,

None the less, there are points where Greek and Jew over-lap. A more everyday example: Jews and Greeks share a very potent sense of family, where parents rejoice in their children, and they coincide in a corresponding ‘communalism’ and social togetherness. For example, both Greeks and Jews were in the forefront of democratic and left-leaning political reforms in the USA during much of the last century. For the West, the centre of the human being is the head, but this is not so for either Greeks or Jews. For the Greeks, this centre lies in the nous—soul axis, while for the Jews this centre lies in the heart—spirit axis. Both are trans-intellectual in important ways. It was the Latins who reduced Logos to logic, and the Word to verbiage.

3,

Still, the difference is also stark at many key points, resting in different experiences of different revelations and showings of the Divine Mystery. The Right Arm of God cannot be reduced to the Left Arm of God, nor vice versa. As they both stem from the same Creator, they both express the love of God for humanity. In some final reckoning, Eros and the Daemonic are ‘partners.’ But in time, they initially go in different directions because of the need to do different jobs.

Eros, basically, ‘looks back’ to the ‘old’ lost Paradise at the Beginning; the Daemonic, mainly, ‘drives forward’ to a possible reversal of the human tragedy in the ‘new’ Holy City and Sacred Garden at the End.

Eros flows out of time to the Real Source, to effect a restoration of the ruined human condition. The Daemonic marches ahead in time, risking everything to what is accomplished or failed in time, to effect a victory in time.

In the primarily Eros religions, the Daemonic will be a secondary 'dark side' to be integrated into the prominent 'bright side', but not followed as a Way in its own right.

For the primarily Daemonic religions, Eros will be secondary yet a travelling companion all the way down the hard road. Eros will remind the Daemonic of what it is fighting for, and therefore the Daemonic will act as the chivalrous warrior towards Eros, protecting the Sacred Origins. The Daemonic will fight the worldly, and the devil, for God, so as to redeem time, the world, history.

4,

This is why Eros and the Daemonic cannot be simultaneously effective as Ways.

If you embrace time in spirituality, you vote with your feet for the primacy of the Daemonic.

If you reject time in spirituality, you vote with your feet for the primacy of Eros.

We cannot embrace and reject time at once; thus we cannot grant the Pleroma above and the Abyss below equal gravitas= if we look for the Pleroma, there is no Abyss; if we venture out over the Abyss, there is no Pleroma.

Thus, either Eros must be primary as the Way we actually walk, or the Daemonic must be primary as the Way we actually walk.

If you look for the Light of God, "fire" will be in your system only as a bit player in the band. This will hugely underplay the Fire in order to make it serve the Light.

If you seek the Fire of God, you will have to plunge in where no "light" can go.. You will be tested in a depth from which the Light shrinks. Only Fire will, in the end, after a long and arduous struggling in heartbreak, 'radiate' the heart, turning it golden.

The Light of Eros can dispel certain kinds of darkness, and bring certain kinds of knowledge, but against the deepest Evil it is powerless. We have to fight fire with fire= only the Daemonic can take on the fires of hell.

The Daemonic, by imposing a harsh fate on the heart, carves out for it a destiny, a difficult but worthy heroism, that will shift 'how things turn out' finally.

Judaism and Christianity must be Daemonic primarily, and bring Eros on board thereafter.

God gambles on time.

Jewish Eros= ontological; we contemplate what was, and could be again, but is not now.

Jewish Daemonic= existential; we trust the unknown in action by pressing ahead, with no 'cast iron' guarantee.

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UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS= The Metaphysical Philosophy of Greek Hellenism

Greek Hellenism= Lift your mind up to higher things.

A Hasidic Zaddik was asked why people do not experience God, as in previous times. He replied, 'they do not stoop low enough.'

1,

The God revealed in the Jewish Bible is not *impassible*, nor should the humanity for whom God's love is the driving force impassioning existence in the world, on the ground, in time, seek to be *dispassionate*.

2,

Greek Hellenism, like its cousin Hinduism, is a wide umbrella that includes almost every permutation of Eros, though in all these versions the Daemonic is more or less ignored. There is nothing wrong when the path of Eros is followed 'on its own' with rigour and fullness. Why not?

The problem arises in Judaism and Christianity when the allure of Eros is made primary, and the summons of the Daemonic is resisted, evaded, excluded, hardly even registering as secondary, because the way Eros is articulated cancels out any conscience toward the Daemonic. Salvation is used to obscure Redemption. This is disastrous for both pre Messianic Jews and post Messianic Christians. In the case of the former, it means the 'old dynamic' leading to the Messiah is lost, in the case of the latter, it means the 'new dynamic' stemming from the Messiah is lost. Whenever this happens, in Judaism or in Christianity, it is always due to the influence of Greek Hellenism which looks on Jewish and Christian divine and human 'pathos' as 'folly.' In any true Judaism, in any true Christianity, the Daemonic is primary because it sets in motion the dynamic thrust into the gamble of fate, and Eros leaves its static refuge – refuge in the static -- to 'go on the road' with the Daemonic as its help-mate. Hence, the divinely constituted Feminine Wisdom, Sophia, is "more mobile than any motion" [The Wisdom of Solomon, 7, 24].

3,

There is a Greek Hellenism that knows Eros is love.

But the most vital contrast is with the Greek Hellenism that entirely rests in nous and reason= it can be called metaphysical philosophy. This is the Eros of mind, elevated mind rather than ordinary mind, but in jettisoning the soul, its tendency is to envision Eros as something higher than the human mind but in some way akin to mind, or at least more accessible to mind, provided mind is raised from the merely physical to the 'meta'-physical, from the sensible to the intelligible, and from the intelligible to the celestial, and ever higher.. Eros, in this tradition, is not love, but something like a super mind, an ultimate mind,

a limitless mind, a pure mind and an exalted mind – a nature, or substance, or essence, purely mind and exaltedly mind. Even if ‘transcending thought’, its very transcendence is framed by thought. It is a ‘beyond the mind’ envisioned by the mind, and only accessed when the mind is freed *from* enslavement to the below, and freed *for* travelling upward toward the above.

There is a strand of Greek Hellenism that knows Eros is love-- not a sublime yet abstract nature, being, substance, essence= such terms are respectfully ascribed to it in order to signify it is a very superior entity unlike anything else. But it is not love. The Eros of love works through nous and soul [the Buddhist wisdom-compassion], and is mystical not simply philosophical, and at its fullest, it is also philanthropic socially, never just the flight of ‘the alone to the alone.’ This fuller Eros of love is evident in certain aspects of Hinduism, in Buddhism, in Sufi-ism, Neo-Platonism, and in Hasidic Orthodox Judaism and Greek Orthodox Christianity.

An example= The Greek Orthodox Christians built the first free hospitals, and the first free schools for girls, in the history of Europe. “St Basil himself, who had been trained in medicine in Athens, often was seen working with his monks and caring for the sick and infirm. ..Basil did not expect his monks to stay cloistered in their cells and pray all day, but rather should balance their prayerful life [theoria] with good deeds for their fellow man [philanthropia]” [‘Raising Lazarus’, John Demakis, p 17]. Interestingly, Basil regarded contemplation as belonging to the ‘night’, while action belonged to the ‘day.’

Still, how predominant this Eros of love is vis a vis the Daemonic ‘difficult love’, as Oliver Clement once called it, remains a grave problem.

Yet far more of a problem is the nous--reason axis, when denuded of soul, for that will inevitably become markedly anti-heart, in God and in humanity. The metaphysical philosophy of Greek Hellenism is no friend to Jews or Christians. [Western Buddhists have also fallen in with it when they refer to Big Mind, despite employing a Chinese term that really means Big Spirit.]

4,

Abraham Heschel [‘The Prophets’, 1962] deftly sums up the two key elements of the loveless, mind-oriented, tendency in Greek Hellenism.

“The static idea of divinity is the outcome of two strands of thought: the ontological notion of stability and the psychological view of [affects] as disturbances of the soul” [p 335]. Given the former, the latter follows.

5,

[1] THE ONTOLOGICAL NOTION= the philosophy

The ontological notion of stability refers to the Static Eros, yet this receives a very specific nuance when Eros is not ‘essentially’ love

The ontological presupposition that Greek Hellenism takes for granted is that real being, not its flimsy copy that degenerates, is incompatible with change. The real being, by definition, must be changeless. “The principle that change is incompatible with true being has led to what Sextus Empiricus called ‘the dogma of the philosophers that the Deity is impassible [‘Outline of Pyrrhonism’, I, 162]. Indeed, ..a static view of the Deity has become the common property of most [Jewish and Christian] philosophers. Rest and immobility are regarded as the typical features of divine pre-eminence. The Deity is thought of as a being who abides in absolute calm” [p 337].

Philo, a Hellenised Jew, establishes the pattern that many monastics of Greek Orthodox Christianity followed, in regard to the Biblical revelation of divine passion. Heschel puts his finger on its dishonesty= “To experience divine anger ‘as if’ God were provoked is a subterfuge alien to the Biblical mind” [p 359]. Philo misinterprets the Bible’s poetry in just this falsely symbolic manner= “Some people who hear these words suppose that the Existent feels wrath and anger, whereas He is not susceptible to passion of any kind. For disturbance is a mark of human weakness. To God irrational passions of the [heart] can no more be attributed than bodily parts or limbs. ..Thus it is for training and admonition, not because God’s nature is such, that these words are used” [‘Quod Deus Immutabilis Est’, XI, pp 52-54]. And= “..We shun indeed in words the monstrosity of saying that God is of human form, but in actual fact we accept the impious thought that He is of human passion. And therefore we invent for him hands and feet, incoming and outgoing, enmities, aversions, estrangements, anger, in fact, such.. passions as can never belong to the Cause; ..a mere crutch for our weakness” [‘De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini’, XXI, p 96].

This statement takes on huge irony for Christians who acknowledge that the Logos, the Son of the Father, indeed did take on not only the hands and feet, but also the fallen and true passionate heart of humanity, assuming it into the bigger and deeper heart of God with its unwavering passion.

Never the less, Philo ‘has a point.’ Humanity does project all manner of psychological factors belonging to us onto God. We project our fallen passions into God when we misread the divine wrath as the white haired old man in the sky sadistically wringing his hands in glee as sinners – everyone else but us – are zapped and thrown into the waste bin. It needs psychological acumen to discern when our shadow sadism, allied with our murderous moralism [the perfect storm of id and super ego fused], is being projected from our interior into the supposed interior of God. Apophaticism is the medicine to cure this= though the too strict distinction between apophatic and cataphatic introduces an opposite illness of turning ‘the living God’ into the lifeless vacuity of the Blakean ‘Nobodaddy’ [as happened with another Hellenised Jew, Maimonides].

As it is possible to reduce the mysteriousness of God’s heart by projecting our fallen passions into his passion, conversely it is no more helpful to romanticise or idealise God, out of building an idol of God from our ‘better nature’, from our nobler heart and truer passion.

The Daemonic God destroys romanticism and idealism, even as all manner of sick and evil passions are challenged.

Philo is only right up to a point= it should not be believed that God is passionate in the same way as humans, rather it should be realised human passion is called to be ignited by divine passion, but falls short of it. Thus human passion struggles between true and false passionateness, between stronger and weaker passionateness. If you reject all passion, you reject all heart. The genuine warfare is not “war with passions”, as Theophan the Recluse puts it, but ‘war between the passion hitting the mark and the passions missing the mark.’

The Jewish prophetic revelation of the ‘two hearts’ in humanity, struggling to be faithful to the undivided heart of God, was forgotten, or put to one side, in early Christianity, due to the Greek Hellenism that Philo believed could be seamlessly melded into Biblical tradition.

By the fourth century AD, “the theory that God was impassible was a generally recognised principle” [p 387]. “Clement and Origin, following Philo, refused to take [seriously] the.. anger, repentance, and jealousy of God” [p 387]. Origin= “just as when we are talking with little children we do not aim to speak in the finest language possible to us, but say what is appropriate to the weakness of those whom we are addressing.. so also the Logos of God seems to have arranged the Scriptures, using the method of address which fitted the ability and benefit of the readers” [‘Contra Celsum’, IV, p 71]. The theologians, many of them monastics, in the Christian East are no different to Augustine of Hippo in the Christian West, for whom it would ‘feel a blasphemy and a desecration’ were anyone ‘really to suppose God passible.’ Heschel differentiates two aspects of the Greek Hellenic philosophical conviction that divinity is a changeless substance.

[a] Sublime Being

“Since to the Greek philosophers the Deity was immutable, remaining absolutely and forever in its own [formless] form, it could not be susceptible of pathos, which would contradict the transcendence, independence, and absoluteness of the Supreme Being. Indeed, to attribute any pathos to God, to assert he is affected by the conduct of those he has brought into being, is to reject.. him as Absolute. Pathos is a movement from one state to another, an alteration or change, and as such is incompatible with the conception of a Supreme Being who is both unmoved and unchangeable” [pp 334-335]. Hence “Xenophanes ..insists that omnipotence implies repose, absolute calm, and immobility” [p 335].

Similarly, Parmenides stressed being, but rejected becoming, affirming that generation, multiplicity, change and movement, are illusory. He claimed that being can only be ‘one’, for anything manifold is subject to change and motion, and this would be contrary to the very persistence that is essential to the nature of divinity as the ultimate support, and matrix, of becoming.

Parmenides= divine being is “unborn and imperishable, complete, immoveable, and without end; nor was it ever, nor will it be; but now it ‘is’; all at once, a continuous one” [p 335].

[b] Abstract Being

“..the thought that God is too sublime to be affected by events on this insignificant planet.. stems from a line of reasoning about a God derived from abstraction. A God of abstraction is a high and mighty First Cause, which, dwelling in the.. splendour of eternity, will never be open to human prayer, and to be affected by anything which it has itself caused to come into being would be beneath the dignity of an abstract God. This is a dogmatic sort of dignity, insisting on pride rather than love.. In contrast with the *primum movens immobile*, the God of the prophets cares about his creatures, his thoughts are about the world. ..the [Everlasting] God is concerned with what is happening in time” [p 333]. Consequently, “..the denial of man’s relevance to God is as inconceivable as the denial of God’s relevance to man” [pp333-334].

[c] Impersonality

It goes without saying that the Deity is impersonal in Greek Hellenic metaphysical philosophy.

When the emphasis is on the ‘what’ of God, but the ‘who’ is acknowledged, or, as in the Eastern Orthodox Christian Trinity, there is recognised both multiplicity of the ‘person’ as well as oneness of the ‘nature’, then there is a paradox, not a problem. The problem is acute when divine impersonality is used to eliminate divine personalness. This is really Deity as De-Personalised.

[d] Conclusion

The key issue is what happens when we try to seek God through the mind without soul, without heart, without body. There is a certain dualistic ‘structure’ always generated by the metaphysical philosophy that has, as its basic premise, a divinity which is a changeless substance only accessible to the mind when it ‘pulls its socks up.’

For, what follows from this, inevitably, is that the divine is regarded as the ‘above’, while we and all creatures and things, are the ‘below.’ The Deity is the Upstairs, whilst the world of forms and decay is the Downstairs. Uncreated vis a vis Created is transmuted into Higher versus Lower.

Buddhism speaks of ‘Void and Form’, and that description is more mysterious, less static, not basically mentalised. For Buddhism, matter and mind is Form. A true apophaticism cannot believe God is mind any more than God is matter. But metaphysical philosophy, because of its bias toward the mind as the arbiter and pinnacle, subtly cheats. It negates the physical but affirms a de-physicalised mental as the Ultimate.

There is an unrecognised hidden motive in this= the preference for father sky over mother earth. The 'spiritualised' mind seeks the higher sky, and rejects the lower earth, in making the division between Upstairs and Downstairs, a High eternal infinity versus a Low temporary finitude.

This is 'Angelizing.' It appeals more to men than women, for it offers the man a way to escape having to take up the cudgels of the manliness of heart toward the world. The man, instead, identifies with his mind, and via the mind, seeks to flee the mother 'here below' in order to climb up to the father 'far above.' Of course, this is how a schizoid mentality construes the father= as a saviour from the mother. It is not Yahweh at all.

Yahweh created the fatherly sky and the motherly earth as one of many polarities within the creation, and will destroy the old heaven and earth at the beginning in creating a new heaven and earth at the end. The mind-rooted apophaticism does not grasp the paradox that Yahweh is both beyond heaven and close to the earth at the very same time.

The Angelising mind seeks to shed the feminine soul, the masculine heart, the physical body, the world, nature, the cosmos, and it calls such seeking 'spiritual.' In the grip of this evil, we do not want to be human, frail yet brave, but prefer a de-materialised, 'ethereal' spirituality. We believe the spirits are 'pure intelligences', minds darting about in some ether beyond the impact of anything. Spirits are not purely minds, pure minds; pure intelligences, purely intelligences. In reality, they are wheels of fire, as well as wellsprings of living waters.

But we aspire toward a higher condition, the highest condition, as a spirit, a spirit of mental substance-- unsuffering, unimpeded and unlimited.

And there is always a sneer, disguised or unapologetic, for those stuck in 'the lower order' of things. The angelised mind has contempt for the embodied soul and enworlded heart. It is disincarnational, not incarnational. Calmly, it looks down on everything and everybody, like a bird on a perch high up in the air, spared life's joys and tribulations. But this 'impudent bird', as an Eastern Orthodox Christian commentator called the deceived nous, cannot really fly, as it believes it can. It is nailed to the perch, and like all of us, one day will 'fall back to earth.'

The pseudo apophaticism= no humble bowing to the divinity beyond the mind.

[2] THE REJECTION OF PASSION= the psychology

Once the ontological duality of above and below is established, then this metaphysical division is carried over into human psychology= we too become divided into an Upstairs and a Downstairs, a rational part that is psychologically superior because it can see the Ultimate Superiority Above, and an irrational part that is psychologically inferior because it is blind to the

real Ultimate, and chases after the Relative Inferiority Below. The former aspect would raise us up, the latter aspect would drag us down.

The nous-reason axis= the nous to rise higher, the reason to keep the irrational part under strict control, or even expunge it entirely.

Heschel summarises the Platonic Upstairs and Downstairs psychology= “..the human soul [is] a house of two floors, with reason dwelling upstairs, and the [affects] downstairs. The two tenants have separate ways and different manners. Reason is dissociated from the [life of affects] and sharply contrasted with it. [Affects] belong to the animal life in man, reason to the divine in man. [Affects] are unruly, fleshy, the source of evil and disaster; reason is order, light, and the power that raises man above the level of the animal” [p 322].

In short, from the metaphysical philosophical belief in divine impassibility arises the psychological bias against passion of any ilk in human beings= dispassion is the aim of spirituality. The more dispassionate we can get in relation to the Lowest Illusory nature of transient things, so the more expanded and clearly will we be able to see in relation to the Highest Real nature of permanent things.

Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics= “By passions I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity; and generally those states of consciousness which are accompanied by pleasure or pain.” This famous list fails to distinguish which of these energies is of the soul, which is of the heart; which are feelings and which are passions; which are emotions and which are passions. Moreover, there is no distinction between the fallen, fragmented passions of the heart of stone, and the innocent, struggling, holy, singular passion of the heart of flesh. Lumping all energetic phenomena together, and treating them as a problem to be overcome, is typical of Greek Hellenism, but it is not Jewish, and therefore it cannot be Christian. Passion must be discerned, but some of passion is to be wrestled with, while some of passion is to be enflamed so it can increase in ardour.

But by the time of Kant, the prejudice against passion as ‘anti-rational’ is ingrained. It is associated with ‘drunkenness of mind’, ‘an agitation of the soul’, ‘a fever of the heart’, just ‘an emotional convulsion.’ Hence it is ‘devoid of reasoned purpose’; it prevents the exercise of free will, as well as blocking the consideration of moral principle..

This misunderstanding and belittling of human passion, struggling to be true to its calling rather than false, arises because of the same misunderstanding and belittling of the divine passion. The divine passion is ethical because it is personal= passion is “an act formed with intention, rooted in decision and determination, but one charged with love” [pp 297-298]. Passion is never self-centred, but is always directed outward, in God and in humanity. Hence= “Neither in the legal nor in the prophetic writings is there a suggestion that the desires and passions are to be negated. Asceticism was not the [Biblical]

ideal. The source of evil is not in passion, not in the [very] throbbing [of the] heart, but rather in hardness of heart, in callousness and insensitivity” [p 331-332]. The prophet uses the images of soul to stir the heart, to rouse it to action, to tell a different story that people are not living, so from the heart they can move in a different way, move in a different direction. Repent= change the movement.

The Greek Stoics were undoubtedly the most extreme advocates of dispassion in their doctrine of ‘apatheia.’ Passion per se “was considered the chief danger to the self-determination of man, whereas ‘apathy’ – the subduing of the [affects] – was believed to be the supreme moral task” [p 325]. Moreover, knowledge of higher, spiritual realities “is shown in the relation which man maintains to his passions. His overcoming of the world is his overcoming of his own impulses” [p 325], since passions chain humanity to the world.

“Zeno defined ‘pathos’ as a ‘movement in the soul contrary to reason and to the soul’s very nature’, and the post Aristotelian schools [said] that the only happiness consists of mental imperturbability, or peace of mind. [It] may be secured by avoiding all disturbances, those which are due to external causes and those which arise from within, namely, [the affects]. The wise man must strive for both *apatheia* [absence of feeling and passion; indifference to what appeals to feeling and passion] and *autarkeia* [independence, self-sufficiency]” [pp 326; 327].

Hence, the Greek Hellenic ideal of self-control, in this context, refers to reason controlling impulses= feelings, desires, passions. For, the affects in the widest sense are unnatural, unreasonable, the source of evil.

This dualistic psychology has had a vast influence upon the West. In the West, nous and reason declined into reason and intellect. No more seeking of higher vision, just building ‘world views’ from ‘higher ideas.’

Heschel thinks the gods and goddesses of the philosophers also provided a model for the Greek Hellenic ‘impassible divinity and dispassionate humanity.’ For the divinities of Greece, the divine realm is existence without cares, like the existence of the philosopher-sage who takes no interest in human affairs. The gods and goddesses possess everything necessary to their well-being, in a permanent state of bliss and serenity. Thus they are ‘not bothered.’ The immortal knows no trouble himself nor causes any trouble to anyone.

To be blissful and serene is a pseudo ‘god-likeness’, modelled on a vacant and vacated divinity.

This metaphysical philosophy, with its asceticism of self-control, dominates in certain traditions. We can see it in Plato-- though he is not as given over to it as the Stoics; we can discern it in Thomas Aquinas, though like Plato, something else, something more, touches him occasionally; we can see it in Kant.

Much more dangerous= can we see it in the monastic traditions, such as Buddhism, and Greek Orthodox Christianity? Can we see it in St Isaac of Syria sometimes, but not all the time? Can we see it in Theophan the Recluse virtually all the time?

Buddhism= “The best of virtues [is] passionlessness; the best of men [those] who have eyes to see. This is the way, there is no other that leads to the purifying of intelligence. ..If you go on this way, you will make an end of pain” [‘The Life of Buddha’, Asvaghosha, the twelfth Buddhist patriarch].

Theophan the Recluse= “..passions harm our blood and effectively damage our health.”

Theophan insists ‘God does not tolerate any passion whatever.’

Thus= “We simply need to remind ourselves that God does not favour any kind of passion.. Because of this, passion sets God against us and cuts us off from Him” [‘The Heart of Salvation’, p 93].

Hence= “..monasticism.. is a perpetual labour of conquering passions and uprooting them in order that, being in a pure and immaculate state, one may preserve oneself before the face of God.”

And= “..ascetic struggle is cleansing the heart from passions.”

The same Hellenizing tendency exists in Judaism.

Maimonides= “It behoves the governor of a city, if he is a prophet, ..not to let loose the reigns of anger, nor let passion gain mastery over him, for all passions are evil; but, on the contrary, he should guard against them as far as this lies within the capacity of man.”

Maimonides contemptuously dismisses= “the stormy transience of passing affect.”

This falsehood is really dangerous when it seeps beyond the ivory tower of academia, or the monastery walls, and insinuates itself in the tradition as a whole. For then the Greek Hellenic ‘call upward’ becomes a block on, and escape from, the Jewish ‘call forward.’

Theophan= “Attention to that which transpires in the heart and proceeds from it-- this is the chief activity of the proper Christian life.”

This is not discerning the heart to act with more truth of passionateness, as is evident in the Psalms of David. Rather, it is watching the stirrings of passion so as to contain them. Theophan is pursuing much the same practice as Maimonides who warns against allowing ‘any kind’ of passion to get a grip, and suggests always acting with moderation, in order to attain tranquillity. The rational mind must keep the passions under scrutiny and never simply ‘let them rip.’ Even a ruler, if he has to simulate anger, never the less should not

give way to it, but should remain still and collected on the inside. The victim of take-over by passion wastes their life on unrealities or realities that are fleeting. For Maimonides, this is most of humanity.

St Isaac of Syria [seventh century AD]= “When we wish to call the passions by a common name, we call them the world. But when we wish to distinguish them by their special names, we call them the passions. The passions are the following: love of riches, desire for possessions, bodily pleasure from which comes sexual passion, love of honour which gives rise to envy, lust for power, arrogance and pride of position, the craving to adorn oneself with luxurious clothes and vain ornaments, the itch for human glory which is a source of rancour and resentment, and physical fear. Where these passions cease to be active, [in the saints] there the world is dead; for though living in the flesh, they did not live for the flesh. See for which of these passions you are alive. Then you will know how far you are alive to the world, and how far you are dead to it.”

John of Kronstadt= “earthly passions and worldly attachments.”

This is a vivid, and existentially accurate, description of the many fallen attachments of passion that distort the heart and therefore distort what the heart demands from the world. But the world has more value than heaven for the heart because God placed the heart in the world and called the heart to the world. The Contemplation that replaces Action, trumpeting itself as the ‘chief’ way of Christian life, creates that quietism which is a dereliction of moral duty to humanity ‘thrown into the world’ by God.

The Greeks were known in antiquity as ‘men of eyes.’ The seeing is contemplative, visionary, illuminative. The point is, the Greeks believed that such expanded seeing is the key to the most advanced state humanity can attain. In Eros, this is so. For the Daemonic, this is problematic, having some validity, yet more basically, misleading and very untrue. The Biblical ‘understanding’ is from the heart, and is not any kind of seeing; it ‘stands under’ the existential fate of God, world, evil, history, and bears it like the burden on the heart too heavy to carry.

6,

The way of soul and nous is different. We see it in Philo as well as in Plotinus in Neo-Platonism. We see it radiantly and joyously in the tradition of Sufi-ism. St Dionysus celebrates and articulates its ‘ex-stasis’ of love in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. This is the wine of love, the sacred drunkenness. But it all too easily lapses, and then we get a viciously anti-Jewish misconception put into play.

The falsely spiritualised mind of Greek Hellenism creeps into Judaism, and sneaks into Christianity, mainly among the monastics, and with them, more among the men than the women.

Women are more gifted at picking up the Eros of Love, and though they rise up, they also go outward, on its wave of beauty, and goodness. They know Love must come down, to nourish, succour, transform, refresh and renew. The feminine soul can curb the excesses of the nous in men inclined to regard not only air as superior to earth, but male as superior to female, light superior to water, day superior to night.

The specific dualism of Greek Hellenism has many biases..

7,

Heschel points out something very important.

It is not being but the mystery of being that strikes Jewish awareness. The message of the Bible is not that God made the world, and that is why there is being instead of nonbeing. Rather, the message is that the world, nature, the creation, is not ultimate. The phrase 'in the beginning' is crucial-- it sets a limit to being, as it sets a limit to the mind [p 341].

God is 'uncircumscribed' by all binary contrasts in the creation, such as being and becoming, top and bottom, within and without. Yet God is also, therefore, free to be in them all.

The irony is that mentalised contemplation, in being too lofty, misses the sacredness which is everyday, in small things, in the details, right around us, at hand, but lost if our gaze is too taken up in the grand overarching sweep. This is how the feminine soul sees, and it keeps the nous grounded. There is a Hassidic tale about this.

A Zaddik visits his son in law and daughter, who have a baby. The daughter goes out, leaving the baby with her husband. He is contemplating; the baby is in a cot in the same room. The Zaddik is in another room, also contemplating. After a while, the baby starts to grizzle, then to sob a little, and finally to cry with some gusto. The baby's father does nothing to comfort the crying, because it continues.. The Zaddik goes into the room, picks up the baby, comforts the distress, and returns the baby to the cot. Throughout this, the father remains in a rapt state, oblivious to what is happening. Later that evening, when both men had come back together, the Zaddik asked his son in law about the incident. 'Did you not hear your child crying?' The son in law replied, 'when I am in the state of contemplative consciousness, nothing can disturb it.' The Zaddik exclaimed, 'oh, what a pity! When I am in that state, I can hear a fly walking on a window pane.'

Without philanthropia, the real theoria is lost.

8,

The worst error in the metaphysical philosophy and ascetic psychology of Greek Hellenism is that it equates 'spirit' with mind, or the mental, or with thought when over-viewing vast vistas and gazing toward remote mansions of

the uplands; the very term 'Spirit' becomes identified with perceptive insight, expanded consciousness, 'seeing' but not 'doing.' Doing disrupts Seeing. This is a false light, a false beacon, a false way of ascent.

This sets up a more subtle error, with devastating effect upon Judaism and Christianity.

The false light, which eventually if pushed far enough becomes outright evil, is one problem. But the bias of equating Spirit with Light, even the true Light, is a different, more subtle, arguably worse, problem.

Spirit is the Dark Fire, not the Light.

If Spirit is limited to Light, then its Daemonic Dynamic is lost to yet another permutation in the Static Eros.

That destroys the real 'thrust', the real purpose and meaning, of Judaism and Christianity.

9,

Anthony of Egypt [fourth century AD]=

"God is good, dispassionate, and immutable. Now someone who thinks it reasonable and true to affirm that God does not change, may well ask how, in that case, it is possible to speak of God as rejoicing over those who are good and showing mercy to those who honour him, while turning away from the wicked and being angry with sinners. To this it must be answered that God neither rejoices nor grows angry, for to rejoice and to be offended are passions; nor is he won over by the gifts of those who honour him, for that would mean he is swayed by pleasure. It is not right to imagine that God feels pleasure or displeasure in a human way. He is good, and he only bestows blessings and never does harm, remaining always the same. We men, on the other hand, if we remain good through resembling God, are united to him; but if we become evil through not resembling God, then we are separated from him. By living in holiness we cleave to God; but by becoming wicked we make him our enemy. It is not that he grows angry with us in an arbitrary way, but it is our own sins that prevent God from shining within us, and expose us to demons who punish us. And if through prayer and acts of compassion we gain release from our sins, this does not mean that we have won God over and made him change, but that through our actions and our turning to God, we have cured our wickedness and so once more have enjoyment of God's goodness. Thus to say that God turns away from the wicked is like saying that the sun hides itself from the blind" ['The Philokalia', chapter 150, p 352].

This statement is ambiguous. It contains the Eros of love, in speaking of God's Goodness, and how we close our eyes to its ever shining and undimmed Light. Yet the 'Greek Heresy' of divine immutability and dispassion also is blatant.

The real error in this statement, in deploying Eros to blot out the Daemonic, is that it absolves God from any responsibility for the existential human problem. The Book of Job clearly implicates God in the human predicament because he is its author; or, rather, God's gamble with Satan the Accuser sets it in motion.

Anthony of Egypt misunderstands the very name of God, the only name of God not just another energia, another quality, like the many rays of the sun. This is Yahweh.

Yahweh is not the name of the first, second, third, person of the Holy Trinity, but the name of God's Heart which is common to all three persons. Father, its groundless ground. Son, its explicit and visible voice. Holy Spirit, its implicit and invisible power.

"What is a person? A person is a being whose anguish may reach the heart of God" [p 276].
This is Yahweh.

The God of passion takes on the real question of existence= what do you do with a broken heart?

THE PASSIONATE SPIRIT OF GOD= The Ruach

“..it’s like what happened to the Jews. In the beginning there were men who talked with God. As the power or faculty dried up men began talking ‘about God” [Henry Miller, p 176, ‘Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller, A Private Correspondence’, ed. George Wicks].

1,

Abraham Heschel [‘The Prophets’, 1962] points out the Jewish prophets had no ‘idea’ of God. “Having an idea of friendship is not the same as having a friend or living with a friend, and the story of a friendship cannot be fully told by what one friend thinks of the being and attributes of the other friend. The process of forming an idea is one of generalization, or arriving at a general notion from individual instances, and one of abstraction, or separating a partial aspect or quality from a total situation. Yet such a process implies a split between situation and idea, a disregard for the fullness of what transpires, and the danger of regarding the part as the whole. An idea or theory of God can easily become a substitute for God, impressive to the mind when God as a living reality is absent from the soul” [p 286].

What the prophets had, instead of an idea or theory, was an ‘understanding’ of God. This was not the result of intellectual inquiry, rational speculation and imaginative envisioning, or even advanced contemplation that is formless= without concepts, without words, without images. It did not stem from any kind or degree of [Western] discursive mental activity or [Oriental] meditative expansion of consciousness. The ‘prophetic God-understanding’ comes only from the heart. “To the prophets, God was overwhelmingly real and shatteringly present. They never spoke of him as from a distance. They lived as witnesses..” [pp 285-286]. The prophets never used the Greek metaphysical language of deity as immutable, impassible, immobile, ‘essence’; rather, they used the language of presence. Not to depict God, but to make God’s presence felt, was their aim.

God was not ‘an object of interest’, to be researched, explored, scrutinised, in order to come to a hypothetical over view about divinity as a nature, a being, a first cause, a matrix. “God is not a point at the horizon of the mind, but is like the air that surrounds one and by which one lives. He is a not a thing, but a happening. The psalmist may ask man to meditate on God’s works; the prophets call upon man to consider God’s inner acts. They not only sense God in history, but.. history in God” [p 354].

Heschel points out that the vivid metaphors used by the prophets, in conveying God, “are attempts to set forth God’s aliveness. One must not forget that all our utterances about him are woefully inadequate. But when taken to be allusions rather than descriptions, understatement rather than adequate accounts, they are aids in evoking our sense of God’s realness” [p 355]. “What does the human mind know about God? His works. Where is his goodness to be found? In his works. There is no greater goodness than that

which is already given in the universe. The prophets speak of a mercy that transcends the mercy found in the [creation]. It was not from his works alone that they knew him, but also from his word” [p 356].

From his promises, his vow.

“God is alive in his regard and concern for life, for man, for righteousness. Compassionate is his concern, although the form in which it is expressed may be harsh. Man is callous and deaf to God’s call. It is frequently in moments of distress that he regains ultimate understanding. ..[God’s] wrath can be unbearably dreadful, yet it is but the expression and instrument of his [everlasting] concern. ..mercy and anger are not sporadic reactions, but expressions of a constant care and concern. The divine pathos embraces all life, past, present, and future; all things and all events have a reference to him” [p 356].

“By God’s livingness the prophets did not mean living in a biological or physiological sense. They never thought of God as a thing, or an organism, as a force or a cause. God’s life was.. a unity of ..acts, of creating, demanding, expressing, and responding. He was [understood] in terms of [deeds], in terms of moments, rather than in terms of thinghood. A thing may be thought of as a force or a cause. Personal life is the presence or manifestation of a will, of unity of intention, of a regard and concern for the nonself. [Thus, is] history ..a mere chain of chance? Is the survival of mankind the exclusive concern of man? Is human life to be defined as life that cares for itself? Biblical religion did not.. evolve from a reflection about an ultimate cause. Its premise rather [is] that, just as there is an ultimate origin, there is an ultimate concern. Human life is life that God cares for and that is concerned with him. ‘God is alive’ does not mean he is a [Personality] among [personalities]. ‘It means’, the psalmist or the prophet would say, ‘that more than my own life do I cherish his regard for me.’ ‘For thy love [hesed] is better than life’ [Psalms, 63, 3]” [pp 356-357].

Even the dreadful divine wrath is not retaliation for offenses against divine majesty, or divine authority. “God’s anger is.. a reaction occasioned by the conduct of man. ..the anger of God is not a blind, explosive force, ..but rather voluntary and purposeful, motivated by concern for right and wrong. He has a merciful purpose toward the universe which he has made. The land was his gift, rain his blessing. [Thus the] anger of God must not be treated in isolation, but as an aspect of the divine pathos, as one of the modes of God’s responsiveness to man. It shares the features that are characteristic of the pathos as a whole: it is conditioned by God’s will, it is aroused by man’s sins. It is an instrument rather than a force, transitive rather than spontaneous. It is.. never the ruling passion, disclosing only a part of God’s way with man” [pp 362-363].

Heschel concludes that the anger of God cannot be viewed in the light of the human psychology of [fallen] passions, but must be understood as inherent to God’s divinely passionate love for the human venture, and refusal to give up on it, and simply out of indifference allow it to continue in self-destruction.

“God’s relation to man is not an indiscriminate outpouring of goodness, oblivious to the condition.. of the recipient, but an intimate accessibility, manifesting itself in his sensitive and manifold reactions” [p 363].

God’s sensitive and manifold reactions are to humanity’s inner movements and outer deeds of heart. The divine wrath is because humanity matters in some radical and ultimate way to God.

Human history is not ‘man in search of God’ – human history is really ‘God in search of man.’ “Israel did not discover God. Israel was discovered by God. The Bible is a record of God’s approach to man” [p 561].

“Yahweh found him in a desert land,
In the howling waste of the wilderness;
Yahweh encircled him, Yahweh cared for him
Yahweh kept him as the apple of his eye”
[Deuteronomy, 32, 10].

Psalms, 73, 26=

“My flesh and my heart may fail
But God is the rock of my heart.”

2,

What Heschel terms ‘God’s pathos’ is the multiple flames, dispositions, deeds, of God’s passionateness of love, freely aimed in humanity’s direction. The ‘ruling passion of God’s way with man’ is mysterious, always redemptive in final outcome, yet it is more than that. ‘God requires the heart’, but no eye has seen, nor any soul imagined, what God will do with the human heart, once it is wholly won to him.

Humanity’s pathos moves God. This is what moves the prophet. From within the human heart, the prophet apprehends the heart of God.

This passionate love of God, shot like an arrow into humanity, is the Ruach, the Spirit of God.

3,

The Ruach= the Rushing Wind that blows where it will.

The Ruach= the Raging Fire that burns what it will.

The Spirit of God takes the prophet into the Wilderness, to influence him to influence humanity, to inspire him to inspire humanity, by conveying God’s passionate responsiveness – not emotional reactivity -- to what is going on in the world, on the ground, through time.

There are three places of divine presence= The Temple, the World, the Wilderness.

Temple= Sacredness. The place of transformation necessary to purify, cleanse, heal, enlighten.

World= Holiness. The place of struggle for what heart directs the world's historical changing.

Wilderness= Mystery. The place of warfare for what spirit impassions the heart.

The prophet went into the wilderness where there is no fruit and abundant overflowing of Eros, but only the 'monsters of the spirit', good and evil. In this 'wild place', the prophet 'discerned spirits.' Then, filled with the Spirit of God, he returned to the World and returned to the Temple, to rebuke in order to spark change.

The prophet is not a Logos person. The prophet is a Spirit person. The Hebrew for Spirit is used mainly in the Jewish Bible for the prophetic 'voice crying in the wilderness.' The prophets wore the shaggy skins of animals, and wandered deserts, and mountains, and lived in caves and ravines of the earth.

Hosea, 2, 14=

"I will lead him into the wilderness and speak to his heart."

The prophets were the first to openly admonish the arrogance, over-bearing bullying and tyranny, and cruelty toward the weak and dispossessed, the poor and the vulnerable, routinely demonstrated by false kings. The king had to enact the passion of heart, and therefore the prophet was his necessary corrective, advisor, mocker, since the prophet was able, in the Spirit, to search into the heart, discriminating the callous and indifferent motive in the heart of stone from the courageous and generous motive in the heart of flesh. The prophets discerned the difference, in the heart, between true passion and false passions. The 'singular' heart directs 'passion', the split heart creates 'passions.' Passion hits the mark, or is learning the true aim by correcting falls, and repenting of harms done; the passions fail to hit the mark, and resist changing the false aim by refusing to accept mistakes, and denial of harms done. The former process 'softens' the heart, and leads it away from judgementalism, or sloppiness; the latter process 'hardens' the heart, and leads it ever further into harshness, or laxity.

To kings, the prophets deliver God's judgement on injustice= the crimes that harm the unique person and the crimes that harm the solidarity of persons as a community.

The prophetic blast is at its fiercest in denouncing the pride of kings and the duplicity of priests.

Hosea, 5, 1=

“Hear this, O priest.
Harken, O house of the king.
For the judgement pertains to you.”

The unrighteous king -- the high and mighty ‘over-lord’ of any description who dominates and cheats the low and powerless – evoked God’s righteous indignation.

Yahweh insists on justice for the poor, compassion on the widow and orphan, mercy to the stranger-- or disaster will follow.

Exodus, 22, 22-23, 27=

“You will not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You will not afflict the widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will hear their cry.. If he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.”

Isaiah, 1, 17=

“Help the oppressed, be just to the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

Isaiah, 3, 14-15=

“Yahweh enters into judgement
With the elders and princes of his people:
It is you who have devoured the vineyard,
The spoil of the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing the people,
By grinding the face of the poor?”

The prophet’s warning to the priest is more manifold. The wrong deference to king, or priest, by the populace is idolatry. The Spirit of God is ‘running things’, and to attribute too much majesty, autonomy, primacy, potency, either to king or to priest is idolatrous= the worship of an idol instead of God.

The Temple is blasted when used as an escape from loving duty to the World.

Isaiah, 1, 11-15=

“What are your endless [liturgical] sacrifices to me? I am sick of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of calves. I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. Bring no more futile cereal offerings; the smoke from them fills me with disgust. Your new moon and your meetings I utterly detest; to me they are a burden.. You may multiply your prayers. I will not be listening.”

Hosea, 6, 6=

“Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice.”

The hypocrisy of priests arises from the abuse of their task of sanctifying the everyday life of humanity, including humanity's use of the 'stuff' of the material world, the 'pragmata' of existence. We live in a physical environment, and live in it through a physical body. The priest offers materiality back to God, to signify humanity recognises it as a gift of God and will not exploit it as our possession; key to this is also acknowledging humanity shares the gift among all and sundry= it is offered equally, not preserved for a few and taken away from the many. In a sense, the material creation is already the window, and fountain, conveying God's down-coming and in-coming energies. Yet if humanity refuses to behold Nature in God, then in effect we try to snatch what we need and desire from Nature as ours alone; this urge to possess for ourselves 'what does not belong to us' is always selfish and corrupting of what it steals. We do not eat, we devour; we harm and subtly alter what we greedily consume. Nature is not what it was before we raped and ravaged it.. This is why something fluid and responsive in Nature no longer responds to our touch, our foot fall, our sighing in the wind or song to the rain. Nature flees from us, erecting a hard shell on the outer to protect its inner sanctum. Hence "Nature loves to hide."

It is precisely because priests must be immersed in the material to perform the calling of 'making sacred' that they can sell out to the material. They get too impressed by the worldly status and worldly privilege of rich and powerful people, and collude with the evil they invariably get up to, but justify this as 'promoting the church.' Or they think there are 'princes of the church' -- prelates, popes, patriarchs -- who should wield the same iniquitous and idolatrous hierarchic authority within the church as false worldly leaders exercise outside the church. Or, they believe the despotic monarch of the church should also rule over the world.

The basic corruption for the priest, however, is grabbing all the comforts, luxuries, 'goods', which 'money can buy.' This means the priest is always tempted away from not only Yahweh's sacrifice of the Daemonic, but also Yahweh's gift of Eros. The priest becomes sucked into the religion of the Great Mother, and her Son-Lover Baal. Elijah fought king Ahab whose Phoenician wife promoted the worship of Baal. At that early time, 20,000 infants were sacrificed to Baal every year in Carthage.

As Berdyaev rightly pointed out, the priest is the first to sell out to the bourgeois ethos; then the Temple becomes the victim to, and apologist for, Babylon.

Asked what 'avarice' is, a monk of the Egyptian Desert tradition replied, "not to trust the promises of God, not to have faith our daily bread is in the care of God, and to hate the brother."

The prophets looked forward into the future, not only in regard to history, but also in regard to Nature. They were less interested in seasonal, cyclical festivities and rituals that presupposed the Static governed Nature, and more interested in 'the new heaven and the new earth' that would come eschatologically, at the climax of all things, when the Dynamic had run its course.. The end of the story of human travail would bring a 'sea-change' in Nature. The Paradise lost in the Beginning is not the Sacred Garden and Holy City of the End. The Beginning is not a state of perfection; it is innocent and therefore perfectible. Completeness only comes at the End. Nature is sad, and groans, with humanity, awaiting the Final Parousia.

The prophets were resented by both king and priest, obviously. The only authority they acknowledged was the Ruach, the Spirit of God, and no authority, whether Church or State, could inhibit their forthrightness. Prophets were tortured, flogged, pilloried, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in half, killed by the sword. Jeremiah resisted the calling to become a prophet. He also had to stand alone in fulfilling it.

Of all paths in the Daemonic, this one is among the hardest.

James, 5, 7-10=

"As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of Yahweh."

The Wind of Change challenges the very air we breathe and rely on for life. The Fire of Change challenges the very earth we stand upon and out of which we are made. The inspiration, and influence, of the Ruach moves, and shifts, dynamically; it does not stabilise, and preserve, statically.

Isaiah, 29, 16=

"You turn things upside down."

This is what the prophet breathes and what the prophet stands on. He is the sail in the Wind that is taking the boat across perilous seas to a new land of heart, he is the torch kindled by the Fire that is taking the caravan across empty zones to a new spirit of heart.

False prophets abound= we should eschew cheap tricksters, unpurified psychic mediums, zealot apocalyptic preachers, who spread fraud, confusion, deception. We need 'discerning of spirits.'

Paul, 1 Thessalonians, 5, 19-22=

"Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil."

Christ provided the ultimate criterion of the Spirit's impact= 'evaluate a tree by its fruit.'

4,

God is not impassible, not immutable, not immobile, and certainly not apathetic or 'indifferent', as the Greek Stoics assert. God may be, 'in a sense', Aristotle's unmoved mover, the divinity who can act on the creature but cannot be acted upon by the creature. That simply establishes the necessary gulf between Creator and creation. But, what is not evident in Eros, but is starkly revealed in the Daemonic, is the God who 'has a heart', and therefore 'approaches with passion' humanity's victories and setbacks, our vicissitudes, our comings and goings, ins and outs, ups and downs. The De-personalised Deity is not just transcendent, but transcendently stand-offish. By contrast, the God who is unknowable qua God, yet mysteriously and paradoxically moves out of that ultimate beyond, and comes near to humanity, to break in on and find us, is heavily involved.

It is God who crosses the ontological gulf, not erasing it, but making it an open-ended relationship of mutual affecting.

The revelation that "God can be intimately affected, that he possesses not just intelligence and will, but also pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God" [p 289].

Human events arouse passion in God. The deeds of passion that come from the human heart gladden, anger, trouble, grieve, affect, move, God's heart. God's passion is involvement in, and regard for, the fate of humanity. God does not judge the human heart from aloofness, from general standards, from fixed rules, but from commitment to and empathy with our strength and our weakness, our faith and our despair. God is in our corner, willing us to prevail.

Isaiah, 57, 15=

"I dwell in the high and holy place,
And also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit;
to revive the spirit of the humble,
to revive the heart of the contrite."

"God's participation in the predicament of man is the elemental fact" [p 291].

'Though to God belong the heaven of heavens, yet Yahweh set his heart in love upon humanity.' To the Evil One, this is not a mystery and paradox to be bowed before, and to serve; it is an insult to the high station of angels, or spirits, and therefore something to be coldly repudiated.

Humanity is not simply a creature. Humanity is a partner, a 'factor in the life of God.' God has no need. Yet, God, in Eros, desires our love even as we desire his love, and in the Daemonic, God passionately wants our love, even as we passionately want his love. In relating to us, God gives up his self-sufficiency.

God feels and is felt by humanity. God affects and is affected by humanity.
Thus God has a soul and a heart=

“I will plant them firmly in this land, with all my heart and soul” [Jeremiah, 32, 41-42].

In loving humanity, God opens a wound in divinity.

This is the mystery and paradox of what humanity means to God that even the good spirits hide their eyes from, out of respect for the inexplicable and unfathomable.

With the passion of God, ‘all things are possible.’

God’s passion= no distinctions of philosophy, or psychology, however valid in the statically established order of the created vis a vis the Uncreated, can restrain the excessive dynamism of God’s heart.

God’s heart is neither essence nor energies, and defies the distinction. The heart of God is apophatic and cataphatic, and breaks the distinction= the darkness and the poetry equally reveal it.

God is love; not= God is loving. Yahweh’s love is darkness when unrevealed, Yahweh’s love is poetry when it is revealed in movement.

The darkness moves in the poetry, the poetry rejoices, and delights in, the darkness which brings to pass impossible things.

Because of what God’s heart does, God’s soul announces=

“I make all things new.”

5,

Jeremiah, 17, 10=

“I, Yahweh, delve the mind and try the heart,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his doings.”

Jonah, 3, 10=

“God repented of the evil he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.”

Jeremiah, 31, 28; and 1, 10=

“..as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and plant, says Yahweh.”

Jeremiah, 18, 11=

“Behold, I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Return everyone from his evil way.”

Jeremiah, 26, 13=

“Amend your ways and doings, and.. Yahweh will repent of the evil which he has pronounced against you.”

The prophet, as a man of heart, is imbued with God’s passion. He understands ‘affliction under Yahweh’s wrath’; he also understands Yahweh’s attachment, which surpasses wrath.

“Yahweh is good to all, and his compassion is over all he has made” [Psalms, 145, 9]. This is Eros.

God is patient, long suffering, forbearing, slow to anger, merciful, tender. This is Daemonic.

Patience is not indifference to circumstances. It is the willingness of God to do things in the time we need.

Our patience is not indifference to conditions, as in the dispassion achieved by mental discipline; it is waiting upon God even in stale mate, and dragging oneself along when the labour seems never ending..

What is calamity for humanity is grief for God.

Jeremiah, 14, 7=

“Though our iniquities testify against us, Act, O Yahweh, for thy name’s sake.”

Lamentations of Jeremiah, 3, 31-32=

“For Yahweh will not cast off forever,
but, though he cause grief,
he will have compassion,
according to the abundance of love.”

6,

The prophet is ‘for’ God, yet the price of this is high, not only in terms of the outside world that is despairing toward and hardened against God, but also in terms of his own inner world that lives wholly given over to the tension within God’s passion for humanity= “a prophet is a person who holds God’s love as well as God’s anger in his heart, enraptured or enfevered” [p 400]. This

tension is between God's justice and mercy, God's urgency and patience, God's intensity and gentleness, God's grieving and fighting.

Even harder to bear is the tension of prophesying itself= for it insists that we be opened up, yet again, to the Daemonic Reversal, and not understand, yet again, what must be uttered, until the heart breaks and the Spirit of God breaks in. If the prophet denies the building tension, tries to relax as escape from it, he will be 'driven crazy.' The 'peace that passes all understanding' is only after the prophet's heart has done the deed the passion of God demands of it. Unlike the bliss of Eros which comes and goes, the prophet lives in the unremitting pressure of wrestling with a divinely charged commitment, the experiencing of a summons that will not let go, will not relent.

In his own difficulties with God's call to action, he understands humanity's difficulties with God's call to action.

Yet he cannot get off the hook= he understands that only action will relieve the tension between God and humanity, for simply 'feeling better' will not relieve the misery of the world, the injustice of society, the people's alienation from God.

The heart must go into action, and people must witness the action. The prophet is for God, but God is for the people, and thus even in his castigation of their ways, the prophet is fighting for the people beyond their resistance.

The prophet is gambling on God's gamble; thus he lives in a contradiction, full of 'consternation and dismay', and unyielding 'sympathy for God.' "The prophet's communion with the divine in experience and suffering is of such evident and striking power, that it can evoke surrender and devotion" [p 396]. Indeed, the prophet's passion cleaves to the divine passion so unreservedly, this "may explain the shifting from the third to the first person in the prophetic utterances" [p 396].

The prophet is the first Fire-Bearer, as distinct from, and in some respects, opposed to the Light-Bringer.

What moves in God's heart comes to move the human heart. This is through the Ruach, the Spirit of God, the Fire of God.

Yeshua the Mashiach called him 'the Spirit of the Father' [Mathew, 10, 20].

The Ruach is Yahweh's Spirit, Yahweh's Fire, Yahweh's Passion.

7,

In the Hebrew of the Jewish Bible, there is no real distinction drawn between 'spirit' and 'passion.'

Moreover, there is not any hard and fast distinction drawn between the spirit which is passionate, and the passion which is spiritual, in God or in humanity.

The passion of God is where the passional spirit arises, and yet the passional spirit in humanity is close to it, akin to it, able both to betray it and go cold on it or remain loyal to it and be kindled by it.

This mystery is thanks to the Spirit of God, and in the hands of the Spirit of God.

Thanks to the Ruach, and in the hands of the Ruach, the heart of God is not alien to, nor distant from, the heart of humanity.

Thanks to the Ruach, and in the hands of the Ruach, the heart of God becomes key to the destiny of humanity, but equally, the heart of humanity becomes key to the destiny of God. It was ever thus= leading up to the Messiah, leading on from the Messiah.

Thus Heschel points out that the very term 'ruach', in ancient Hebrew usage, denotes 'the state of the heart' in its passion, the condition of the heart in its affectedness. The term never means 'thought'= thus the increasing tendency over three thousand years, from the advent of Greek Hellenism down to the present day, to equate 'spirit' with 'quickness of thought, perceptiveness of mind, mentally significant meaning, expanded consciousness', and the like, is not Biblical. The 'spiritual' is not heightened mind. The spiritual is impassioned heart, stricken and proved, deepened and upright.

Heschel goes on to point out that if you put another term in front of 'ruach', like an angry spirit, or a grieving spirit, you arrive at the specific passion you want to invoke.

Heschel gives a few [of countless] examples. Thus, the wives of Esau affected Isaac with 'bitterness of spirit', a grief mixed with gall [Genesis, 26, 35]. The inner state of Israel in captivity to Egypt was 'dejectedness or sorrow' [Exodus, 6, 9]. Hannah describes herself as a woman of 'sorrowful or troubled spirit', speaking out of great anxiety [1 Samuel, 1, 15]. 'A spirit of jealousy' comes over a husband whose wife has been unfaithful to him [Numbers, 5, 14]. God dwells with those of a "humble and contrite spirit" [Isaiah, 57, 15]. God is "near to the broken hearted and delivers the crushed in spirit" [Psalms, 34, 18]. The human heart falls into a condition of "a faint spirit" [Isaiah, 61, 3]. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a "broken spirit" [Psalms, 51, 17].

The 'ruach' is used in the sense of profound suffering and anguish of heart. "You will cry out for pain of heart, and you will howl for vexation of spirit" [Isaiah, 65, 14]. In the Book of Job there is the urgent utterance, "the spirit within me – or, 'the spirit of my breast' -- distresses me" [Job, 32, 18; 7, 11, refers to 'the anguish of my spirit']. The afflicted David exclaims= "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate [Psalms, 143, 4].

Equally, 'ruach' can be used to describe the heart seduced away from its Daemonic passional calling by false Eros= "a spirit of harlotry" [Hosea, 4, 12].

It refers to intense inner excitement stirring up the heart [Ezekiel, 3, 14], as well as a “downcast spirit” [Proverbs, 17, 22; 18, 14]. David has times when his spirit becomes languid, losing its zest and intensity, as well as its direction= “when my spirit is faint” [Psalms, 77, 3; 142, 3]. Or, “my spirit fails” [Psalms, 143, 7].

Thus, ‘ruach’ is employed in the sense of vivifying and overpowering passion, especially as it relates to anger; “be not hasty in your spirit to be angry” [Ecclesiastes, 7, 9]. Yet, Ecclesiastes declares that “no man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit” – we cannot ‘control’ passion, suppress passion, repress passion, sublimate passion, deflect passion, oppress passion; it will out. The path from innocent, to fallen, to holy, passion is turbulent and marked by turmoil. Its learning curve is steep. However, it is never a matter of rational dominance of irrational passion. The Stoic Sage, or what Heschel calls ‘homo apathetikos’, is Greek, not Jewish. Our ‘rocky road’ with living and doing the passion of heart is necessary. It is not the way of ‘self-mastery’ in monastic Eros, it is the way of self-giving, self-losing, self-abnegating, in the existentially enworlded Daemonic.

Understanding -- the fruit of passing through passion with truth ‘in the inward parts’ -- is a “cool spirit” [Proverbs, 17, 27], but this is not mental abstraction away from the heart’s cauldron. Passion is warm but keeps its cool; emotion is cold but blows hot. Coolness means staying focused in the storm, not giving way. You don’t buckle, you are not swept away; you come through the waters, you come through the fires. You make changes as you go, but you keep going. Perseverance, above all else. Thus do you reach understanding.

Mood is also implied by ‘ruach’= “A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken” [Proverbs, 15, 13].

Heschel asserts that in all these cases we are confronted by affected, passionate, states of the heart. They are applied to God= “they rebelled and grieved Yahweh’s Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” [Isaiah, 63, 10].

The Passionless God is not Biblical, not Jewish, not Christian. It is Eros – but an Eros filtered through the lens of Greek Hellenism, a bias in favour of the mind as gateway to the ultimate, a way without heart. Sometimes this way has nous and soul, sometimes it has only mind= nous and reason. What it never has is the heart, in its passion and pathos, its aching vulnerability and its austere honour.

“Only through arbitrary allegorizing was later [Jewish and Christian] religious philosophy able to find an apathetic God in the Bible” [pp 332-333].

God’s heart never falters in passionateness, but without the Ruach to ‘steady our nerves’, the human heart’s passion fails. It is the Ruach who gives us courage, lifts us when on our face in the dust.

“I am filled with power,

With the Ruach of Yahweh,
And justice and might,
To declare to Jacob his transgressions,
And to Israel his sin.”

The prophet is called ISH HA-RUAH, a man filled with divine passion, with Holy Spirit. But the people, sunk in their failure of heart, wedded to their twisted passions and avoidant of the true passion, dismiss a declaration such as Micah, 3, 8, saying= “this inspired fellow is raving mad” [Hosea, 9, 7].

8,

The Ruach reveals, and imparts, the Dynamic of God, coming to the world, and humanity. The Spirit of God is this Dynamic, which announces and conveys the ‘dispositions’ of the divine heart.

The Ruach is God’s Secret Agent, always mysterious and in the background, or below ground, working through the human heart to move it anew and move it differently. He is called an east or west wind – the parallel with the ‘bad, black road’ of Shamanism is clear – because the Ruach can be beneficial or harmful according to God’s will, God’s disposition, in a given situation.

An Eastern Christian commentator points out that by 700 BC, ‘ruach’ implied humanity’s spirit as the seat of passions, and therefore in Jewish anthropology ‘spirit’ and ‘heart’ are virtually inter-changeable.

It makes a huge difference whether human anthropology is built on the Light and Logos of God, or built on the Fire and Spirit of God. All Greeks, pre and post Messianic, Hellenising or Christianised, did the former; the Jews did the latter. The Jews understood that the tears and flames of the human venture are ‘in the hands of’ the Ruach.

It is the Spirit of God who is always probing the heart of humanity ‘hidden away’ in order to flush out its real disposition, true or false.

It is clear that this most ultimate disposition in humanity is not derived from the nous, not latent in the soul, but arises from the heart.

It is not an accident that the term ‘heart’ occurs with much greater frequency than the term ‘soul’ or the term ‘mind’ in the Jewish Bible. The ‘soul’ comes second, and the ‘mind’ comes a distant third.

The Desert Tradition of Eastern Christianity is Jewish when urging= “take the mind down into the heart.”

The Christian Bible [Luke, 2, 35] echoes this for the soul in what the angel says to Mary= “A sword shall pierce your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

The human heart is inescapably affected by existence, as well as by God's disposition toward existence, and that is why existential crises, worries, concerns, pains, are 'spiritual' and profound, not 'low level stuff' and illusory. All such Daemonic events 'really matter.'

These are the 'troubles of the spirit'= troubles in our spirit because of what they mean for what God's Spirit is doing with our spirit in its engagement with existence.

All spiritualities, East or West, that transcend these troubles of existence, rising higher to get above them, leave behind the heart, and lose the truest spirituality; they lose the spirituality of Fire.

It hurts and it strengthens.

It tears down and rebuilds.

It hurts unbearably, and yet we are bearing it with every breath, with every step.

Bearing it produces the unanswerable questions.

Where is it going? Where will we go if we go with it?

In the Ruach, we have God's heart, and the divine passion proving and remaking our passion.

Spirituality= to bear in our spirit the Spirit, to bear in our fire the Fire.

This is Mystery.

9,

Nietzsche= "The dignity of death and a.. consecration of passion has ..never yet been represented more beautifully.. than by certain Jews of the Old Testament; to these even the Greeks could have gone to school" [p 373, 'Gesammelte Werke', XVI].

Hegel= "We may affirm absolutely that nothing great has been accomplished without passion" [Introduction, 'The Philosophy of History'].

It is hard.

It pierces old hiding places and exposes old defeat, old guilt, old shame, stale and sour; its flames painfully burn up the false, but the freeing of the true is the honouring and empowerment the heart always wanted and wants still even in its ruination.

Passion is not a state of passivity, for even its acceptance of what cannot be otherwise, like its acceptance of what it cannot do, is a furnace; the 'acid in

the blood' is burning away the dross and revealing 'the fine wirey line of creation.'

Biblically passion is regarded "as a motive power, a spring, and an incentive. Great deeds are done by those who are filled by ruah, with passion" [p 332].

God's passion is "the great secret; a divine attachment concealed from the eye, ..unnoticed or forgotten, hovers over ..mankind. ..This is the.. precious [thing]: to sense God's participation in existence" [p 619].

The most precious thing..

The prophet is moved by God's Passionate Spirit in a depth where the whole of humanity is dead, and in hell. He is the first of those in hell who, unable to stop loving God, receive God's secret wisdom. The praying of the prophet occurs in anguish of heart, and the entire gamut of feelings that accompany it. He is not a contemplative, not an exponent of noetic prayer or the higher reaches of pure contemplation. His prayer is from the human gutter, a cry from the profound place where the human being has become derelict.

This is ultimate Mystery.

This is where Mystery operates at its most savage and gentle, its most fierce and tender.

The Fire of God wounds and raises again the poor human clay.

Yet, it is just the awareness in the human heart that we matter to God which is so existentially tested, stretched, and broken-- by the careless way time presses ahead losing too much that matters; by the crazy destructiveness of the unending nightmares of history; by so much evil making the running and too much innocent suffering in the world.

Psalm 44, 17-19; 22=

"All this has come upon us,
Though we have not forgotten you,
Or been false to your covenant.
Our heart has not turned back,
Nor have our steps departed from your way.
You have ..broken us in the place of dragons,
..for thy sake we are slain..
Why do you hide your face?"

This is in the hands of Mystery.

KIERKEGAARD QUOTES

1,

“The moment I take Christianity as a doctrine and so indulge my cleverness.. or my eloquence, or my imaginative powers, in depicting it, people are very pleased: I am looked upon as a serious Christian. The moment I begin to express existentially what I say, and consequently to bring Christianity into reality, it is just as though I had exploded existence – the scandal is there at once.”

[‘The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard, A Selection’, 1938, entry 988, p 343].

2,

“The quality of an individual can be measured by the distance between his understanding and his willing.. Between understanding and willing lie excuses and evasions.”

[ibid, entry 576]

3,

The professor of theology is “a professor in what cost Christ a life of anguish and a death anguished to the point of despairing over God’s help.” Such a one “would become professor of Christ’s being crucified.”

[ibid, pp 634-657]

4,

“In the magnificent cathedral the Honourable and Right Reverend Getheime-General-Ober-Hof-Pradikant, the elect favourite of the fashionable world, appears before an elect company and preaches with emotion upon the text he himself elected: ‘God has elected the base things of the world, and the things that are despised’ – and nobody laughs.”

[‘Kierkegaard’s Attack Upon *Christendom*’, ed. Walter Lowrie, 1968]

HEIGHT AND DEPTH= Knowledge versus Wisdom

1,

A prayer to the Mother of God – the Akathistos or ‘Praises’ – contrasts height and depth in a brief, but telling, Zen-like way.

--Height unapproachable to human thoughts,

--Depth unfathomable to angelic eyes.

This is spiritually accurate, and has an edge to it as fine and sharp as Lorca’s “knife in the street.”

The Divine Height is beyond the reach of the human.

As all mountain climbers have discovered, the higher we go humanly the more evident becomes the gap between God and the human, uncrossable on our side. God is beyond everything human, thus neither comprehension nor non-comprehension, form or no-form, touches the Reality that confronts us, and pre-dwells before us and continues after us.

The Divine Depth cannot be fathomed – gone down into, plumbed, searched out – by spirits, especially the spirits accustomed to the unreachable heights of God, the angelic.

Lorca rightly pointed out that neither Angel nor Muse can plunge into the depth from which emerges ‘duende.’ The depth is ‘unfathomable’ -- beyond the experience and understanding of the visionary faculty of spirits. Vision cannot plumb depth. Enlightenment cannot plumb depth. The ‘Eye of Light’ cannot descend there. Depth is numinously dark, and only ‘lit up’ by fire, the fire that suffers for love. Look into that flickering candle= deeper than the yellow glow is red, and deeper than the glowering red is profound black.

2,

The Height is where Eros begins, beyond humanity’s aspiration, and thus is ‘dark’ to our vision before, graciously, it overflows and gives itself to all and sundry, becoming the Light and Life in every human being who enters the world, and indeed in all things.. The overflow fills all of space, and thus Eros becomes the gracious, and entirely free, ‘gratuitous’ gift of divine love to each and all. If anyone tries to reach up to it, they miss it, for only by its deed of self-offering can it be found; thus the creature learns to receive it, give thanks to it, and to share it, especially with those who need it most. In this way the Wellspring of Light, Life, and Love is never empty but always full, passing beyond itself ecstatically. Eros bridges the entire ontological spectrum of being from the mystical to the communal, from the uncreated to the created. It comes from Spirit into soul and body. Often it is our daily bread of the

ordinary; occasionally it is our wine of the extraordinary. Everyday happiness – contentment with our lot is its key – expands into unusual joyousness.

If you try to acquire the good things of the Well, you render it empty; if you give away the good things of the Well, it remains always full. Similarly, if you try to pin down and define the Beauty of Eros rolling through all things, you extinguish it. Acquisitiveness, having and possessing, are the ‘delusive cravings’ that cause us to push away the gift that is already given to each and every one of us. We grab at life’s Goodness, violent and hateful towards those we perceive as rivals out to steal away our share. In many respects, we are like the fish surrounded by water crying out in thirst. We are blind toward Eros, and need to see, for once seeing, we will be fulfilled. We too will become a wellspring overflowing.

Eros is clearly the same as the Great Tao of Lao Tzu, a mysteriousness that becomes light, and a light that becomes water flowing into all things:

“Tao is all pervading, and its age is inexhaustible!
Fathomless! It is like the fountain-head of all things..
From Him all things take their rise, but He does not turn away from them;
He gives them life, but does not take possession of them;
He acts, but does not appropriate;
Accomplishes, but claims no credit..

The Great Tao flows everywhere..
The myriad things derive their life from it, and it does not deny them..
It clothes and feeds the myriad things,
Yet does not claim them as its own..
Being the home of all things, yet claiming not,
It is considered great:
Because to the end it does not claim greatness,
Its greatness is achieved.”

Loss, and dying, acceptance, as well as modesty and humility, are key to walking the Way of Eros in its radical generosity, and care for, the myriad things.

3,

The Daemonic is the Presence of God which shakes the world to its foundations, to change it, and burns it to ashes to reforge its heart. The Mystery is that this ‘kindling’ of the world with divine fire only takes place through a strange and difficult depth.

Among the ancient Jews, the way of depth is not described in conjunction with Mystical Knowing; rather, it is always part of the ‘Wisdom of God.’ The Wisdom of God is folly to humans, just as what humans regard as wisdom is folly to God; similarly, what humans regard as strength is weakness to God, whilst the strength of God is weakness to humans. Wisdom involves not only Depth, but also Reversal, and many other odd things by human reckoning.

The power of God is impotent to humans, but what humans regard as powerful is pathetic powerlessness to God. We want to be invulnerable, roaring like the Tyger and setting down our marker as the biggest beast in the jungle, but for God Tyger and Lamb are Necessary Contraries, and therefore the most ferocious energy in the forest of the night only manifests through vulnerability.

The prophetic consciousness is similarly depth delving; the Spirit searches out the deep things of God and the deep things of humanity, and the prophet is someone privy to this unique kind of searching which is not theology, not philosophy, not science. Depth haunts human action because it is 'subject' to divine action, thus searching out depth is telling a story of a dramatic collision of divine and human that is crucial to the destiny of the world. Depth delving is, in a sense, storytelling and searing 'existential analysis' of experiential struggles that accompany the non-guaranteed and uncertain action of life. 'I went there; I did this; I experienced that. It was hard. Nevertheless I went somewhere different.'

Wisdom is often confused with Mystical Knowledge, and consequently gets assimilated to Eros, but from the perspective of the Jews, this is a huge mistake. Wisdom and the Prophetic belong together, yet do not go with other kinds of heightened and expansive enlightenment. Wisdom takes the risk, and gambles with the opportunity and danger; Wisdom suffers the unbearable and unendurable wound; Wisdom carries the unliftable weight; Wisdom pays the unaffordable price. It is in the dynamics of Wisdom's Depth and Reversal that there arises all the existential paradox, contention, agony and passionate ex-stasis, of human life in this world.

This is why the unfathomable Wisdom of God, in sharp contrast to the shallow wisdom of humanity, works through the poor, not the rich; it works through the dis-possessed and oppressed and wretched, not by means of the owners of the earth and the tyrannical and protected.

It is also the Wisdom of God that both reveals the terribleness of the Daemonic and yet its infinite kindness and unexpected tenderness toward the aching pathos of the creature.

"I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.. And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things I will do unto them, and not forsake them" [Isaiah, 42, 15—16].

The Daemonic goes farther for the human, even giving up the Majesty and Omnipotence and Glory of God, to suffer 'with' humanity, and finally, in emptying itself of all divine qualities and attributes in the Messiah, suffering 'for' humanity: undergoing and doing what we cannot undergo and cannot do, that in the Messiah's Spirit, we may undergo and do the humanly impossible and humanly lost.

Thus Wisdom also decrees that it is through failure, break down, and abject ruin, that the turn-around, the break through, the resurrection of the spirit and heart in hell, will come about. Yahweh 'gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength.'

In Wisdom, we are led by the Spirit and walk a way that 'we know not.' On this way, the darkness of not knowing becomes our only guiding light, the crooked is our only 'round about' route that gets us to the truth in the end.

Wisdom includes Truth; these make a fundamental pair= Dark and Fire, Reversal and Standing. The Old Testament declares of Yahweh, 'there is no searching of his understanding', yet in the searching of the abysmal deeps of the heart, and the absence of any heart, truth is revealed 'in the inward parts.' We search deeps through experience, deed, tears and sweat and our life blood. It is lived, not intellectual.

Exodus= 31, 1-6= "I have filled him with my Divine Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and practical skill.. In the heart of every person who is wise I have placed [the Spirit of] wisdom.."

4,

Eros= Knowledge
Daemonic= Wisdom

Eros= illumination of nous and soul
Daemonic= suffering and change of heart and spirit

David realises that the common factor in both ways that God relates to the world, and humanity, is Love.

"You have beset me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.. Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your Presence?"

If I ascend up into heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there.

Even.. in the depths.. will your hand lead me, and your right hand will hold me" [Psalm, 139, 5, 7—10; King James].

Eros= God's right hand will 'hold' me.
Daemonic= God's left hand will 'lead' me.

Eros= ontological -- maternal -- holding in being.
Daemonic= existential -- fatherly -- risking of being in doing.

Eros= The First Innocence, and even after its departure, the Good Life.
Daemonic= The Fall and Redemption, the Second Innocence.

Eros= Salvation
Daemonic= Redemption

In the Daemonic, we are pushed farther out on a limb by God, and do more at God's behest; but in the Daemonic, God goes farther for us, and does more to bring us through where we are deeply and fundamentally blocked.

THE PARADOX OF THE DAEMONIC

PRELUDE

I have been struggling to put into words something about the Daemonic, but did not know at all consciously what lay in the heart, hidden from sight. It tortured me for some time. In my usual custom, I circled round it, trying to get closer to 'the heart of the matter' with each circuit, but I was not getting there, it seemed.. It felt urgent, but why I do not know.

With all the other stresses and difficulties in life currently, 'I could do without this.' I felt like the Israeli nurse we once met who told us her daily prayer was, 'God, don't notice me today.' She was praying Jewishly to the Daemonic God, but it is the Daemonic God who does notice, and gets involved, all too often in ways that humanly seem pointless, strange, hurtful. This God noticed Hosea one day, and asked him to marry a prostitute. Because Hosea loved this 'sacred whore' passionately, putting up with her old ways nearly broke him. It tore his heart into pieces. Yet he never condemned her, nor rejected her. This endurance was to show the prophet how Yahweh felt about the Jews whoring after strange gods.

Thus did the penny drop.

I wanted to write about the paradox of the Daemonic, and at last the way in seized me, and gave my moribund state a good shaking, like dogs do with a bone.

1,

There is no true love apart from pain. Yet, the converse is more subtle, and also true. There is no pain of the deepest kind without love.

Consequently, all the severe and terrible wounding that God inflicts on the Jews, and by extension from their fate, also inflicts upon us, is a pain connected with love. This is the mystery of the Daemonic; there is a connection between deep pain and deep love. Actually, the first side of this equation is rather paltry-- no love without pain. The equation's second side is far more significant-- no deepest pain without the deepest love. Where pain becomes deep, there is found the deep love. Only where pain is at the deepest is love at the deepest..

This means that when we have 'descended' into the depth of the heart, where we are driven and brought down by the real pain of existence, only two options remain operative: one is that we are destroyed, killed off, annihilated, in some final sense from which there is no return; the other is that, at last, we find love, the deep love, the love fashioned in a furnace, the love so deep, nothing undercuts it but on the contrary, it undercuts everything.

This deep love undercuts everything, it is the only reality that goes deeper than everything, and as such, is 'the last man standing.' It even undercuts, and out profounds, the most subtle, potent, spiritual evil that sneaks up on us in the hard place where we are bound 'hand and foot', and offers us a 'get out free' card. In a sense, the evil that is spiritual, and wants to lodge itself in the depth, operates through providing us a way out of the hammer blows of Daemonic fate which immerses us in existence's profound pain; this is the appeal of the evil voice that may come to the heart in a seductive whisper, like Lucifer the Flatterer, or ranting and raving in a hoarse diatribe, like Satan the Accuser. This voice of the evil spirit will, in one way or another, 'lift' us out of 'the deep place', the place where 'deep cries to deep', the place where the human deep, out of its torment, calls out to the deep of God, asking God to be in the place of dereliction where the human venture has come to a terrible end, asking God to be with us when the day of trouble comes. In this place and on this day, heaven is no use; the crying pleads with God to depart heaven to come to us in hell; it asks, let go the impregnable heights in order to join us in the vulnerable depths; give up the 'non passible' and unchanging to dwell where we are at risk to the 'passible' and the changing. And God does this. God is with us where we are abandoned of everyone and everything.

Where the deepest pain is, there the deepest love is, because God is involved in that deepest pain. This is the paradox of the Daemonic.

2,

It is not that we fall far down into the heart, and cry out to God. It is that God, and the existential precariousness of existence, combine to make 'the black inexplicable pain', as Lorca calls it, the prod we need to enter the heart. Both when we are morally blasted by God, but also more especially when existence does not add up, and God provides no comforting rationale but only ups the ante of the absurdity, are we brought down into the heart. The Sufi poets say there are times when God needs to kick us like a football, if we are to face our alienation from our heart, but we leave town to escape that 'wake up call.' The text in the Old Testament we cannot stomach because it is too harsh on us, the shifting of the earth's plates necessary for life on this planet which nevertheless kills thousands of people every time it occurs, the historical situation in the world that places us between a rock and a hard place-- all these are 'God.' The point is, the Daemonic God seeks us, and drags us into the depths, before we turn in our distress to God.

What we don't realise is how far from the heart we are, and what it takes to return us to the heart. Moral blasts force us to consider motive, and see the difference between good and evil, love and indifference, in the heart; it tells us that our action has consequences, and that freedom implies assuming responsibility. Indeed, in Hebrew, even the word for 'to know' does not mean a sort of neutral acquaintance with facts of no relevance to us, but implies a concern for what has come to our attention. Suffering, however, takes us deeper than the necessary division into good and evil, especially the unchosen suffering, the suffering that is fated to befall us, and which we

cannot escape-- this takes us deeper than good and evil, and brings us to the ultimate heart ground, the ground poised over an Abyss.

The pain that takes us far down into the heart separates us from all things, and brings us to a state of aloneness that is radical. Here there is only our heart, God, and the Evil One. But here is where we 'search out God' in the very midst of the difficulties, reversals, setbacks, down fallings, evils, that beset our heart. God loves to be searched out, but cannot be searched out in this existential way in the heights; it only happens in the depths, because it concerns the fundamental questions without any answer provided by reason, without any answer provided by any illumination, or enlightenment, which is less deep in the blackness of pain.

When the Bible speaks of the Spirit searching out the deep things of God, and the deep things of humanity, it is referring to the pain which leads to love, and thereby brings about 'change of heart.' The love which emerges from suffering is greater than good, and deeper than evil; it undercuts both. But the evil spirit seeks to derail this profound outcome, and trap us in 'good versus evil', by distorting what counts as good, as much as by tempting us into evil. It is mostly not understood, but for the heart caught in the throes of the tussle in the deeps it is crucial to know that 'evil' is 'The Lie.' It is not the absence of good, as many theologians in Judaism and Christianity asserted; and it is, in a less obvious but important sense, not the opposite, or converse, of good. As my mentor E.G. Howe, part Buddhist and part Druid, used to teach, 'evil' is The Lie, and as such is not part of the yin/yang polarities of the universe, but stands outside all of them [sun and moon, sky and earth, day and night, and so on]. It is more like a parasite, feeding off the good, and twisting it into distortions, in order to block love. Thus the most insidious, and pure, assault of evil is that which creeps upon the heart when in deep pain. For it is at this moment that the devil tempts us to make pain the 'deal-breaker' with God.

It is therefore crucial to the human heart to discern the difference between the voice of the Lie that seeks to become enshrined in the deeps, and the presence of the Daemonic God who is our only help in this place where no other help reaches.

3,

But if so, then this is why Yeshua is the Messiah. All the moral kickings, and irrational sufferings, undergone by the ancient Jews at the hands of the Daemonic God point to a Messiah who does not use good to vanquish evil, but in marked contrast, passes through the deepest pain to reach, and unleash, the deepest love.

The power to love cannot be reached just by observing the difference between good and evil; that may be necessary, but it is not even remotely sufficient. The real deep power of love, its more radical extension, is only to be attained through suffering-- through the suffering that is never voluntary, but is always unchosen, inflicted as a fate that comes unbidden but cannot be escaped, and wrestled with for acceptance or denial, and searched out so it

can be accepted. What the Jews did not realise, and why they denied Yeshua as the Messiah, is that this suffering that is the hidden road to love binds God, not just binding humanity. The sacrifice the Daemonic God asks of humanity is made even more deeply in heart by this 'dark' God, for only the Daemonic God of dark, and pain, is the God of the Fire of Love that will redeem all the world from its beginning to its end.

The Daemonic God of the Old Testament becomes the Suffering God of the New Testament.

If you had ever understood the Daemonic, you would have known this was always where it was headed. We are asked to suffer for God; then, as the culmination of this, God suffers for us. God suffers what we cannot suffer, God endures what we cannot endure, in the depths, to pull us through.

In the end, the depth proves too deep for us. It is not enough the Daemonic God be 'with' us; the Daemonic God must step into the breach, and do something 'for' us that we cannot do by our own effort of passion in the heart. Where we are truly done, the Daemonic God steps in, and takes the hit we cannot bear, to sustain us through it, to get us through the deepest pain into the deepest love.

This is the Christ.

4,

No one can name the place in the deep heart where humans balk, and stumble, and utter like Roberto Duran on his stool, unable to get to his feet for the next round, 'no mas.' No more, enough, I am done, I cannot do it. Christ suffers this ultimate defeat of the human venture, he pays its price, and this is not 'atonement' as the West interpreted it, but it is the supreme love of the Daemonic God, taking on the burden he put upon us, so that with God's suffering decisively added to our human suffering, we can after all get through.

Christ's deed, out of love, is for his friends, threatened in a depth they cannot navigate. He does not 'save' them, for they still have to pass through to the far shore, in their own heart. But he goes with them, and by this, gets them through.

To say anything else is a Lie. Satan twists the Cross into a moralistic scenario of good and evil, missing its depth entirely, when depth is its whole thrust; and Satan manages to turn the sacrificial deed of divine love in the human that will redeem everyone and everything into an exclusionary tale where there are still winners and losers, saved and damned, those let in and those left out. There is no 'God of Wrath' who remains permanently angry with humans, and seeks to punish many and reward a few. This is the Satanic Lie. Do not let it grip your heart. Its poison is loveless, and shallow. Thus it seeks to undo Christ's deed of love in the depth.

Lucifer, of course, rises above the whole sordid mess, because he is not interested in love, or depth, but with Blake's 'no bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.' Lucifer seeks the best, the most exalted, the charismatic, the glorious, the shine. But his gifts of creativity and intelligence are cold. So Lucifer spends his days 'growing', expanding, developing, increasing his riches, perfecting himself-- polishing the diamond which is his wonderful selfhood, so talented, so lovely, so colourful, so textured, none are like him. Nietzsche, Jung, parts of Blake, the Gnostics, are all Luciferian. The self is a god, by right and by nature. It needs no external God, much less one who morally criticises, or who has mercy on vulnerability, fragility, malleability. Lucifer is strong, as well as gifted, and needs neither help, nor advice, from any source not his own rarest of 'innate potentiality.' All he requires is the freedom to spread forth his wings, and fly.

Satan= politics and religion. Lucifer= art and spirituality.

4,

The Daemonic is a paradox, and unless this is accepted, it will remain a closed book.

Our problem with the Daemonic is not just that it gets mistaken for the Satanic. It is the ultimate koan, the ultimate two horns of the dilemma, and we do not accept such paradox; still less do we accept a paradox addressed centrally to the life, and action, indeed the very ground, of the human heart.

We are crucified on a paradox, torn in a dilemma, in our deeper heart, and this is the source of our aversion to the Daemonic. We flee the Daemonic. But if we want our heart back, which we have thrown away in the dust, then we must embrace the Daemonic: 'not my will, but thy will be done.'

Submitting to God is not obedience to an External Authority, it is accepting the Daemonic, and having faith where it will lead. It leads us, eventually, to a new land of heart, a passion so on fire with God's love that it would go to any lengths to heal, to contest, to redeem, the entire world.

The Daemonic God wounds the heart, to rekindle its passion as the co-sufferer, the co-bearer, of God's passion for redeeming the world.

This is the final love. It is tough on us, but at the same time, the way it is changing us and the way it is changing the world is more worthwhile than any ethical rectitude, or any mystical oneness of light and bliss.

Given all this and much more, including the stupid waste of human possibilities and the obscene suffering of so many, including children, then isn't Ivan right in 'The Brothers Karamazov' to dismiss the whole of existence as a cruel joke? Yet, as we come through, and come to the faith of the heart that humanity will come through, so nothing will be more exulting for the heart. We will come to an exulting, a rejoicing, unknown to those who do not

suffer in, and fight for, the depth where all is lost, and paradoxically, where all that is lost can be regained.

The love burnt into us, and reforging us, makes us a Christ, undefended, unrelenting, willing to die for the sake of the world.

This is why there is a continuity between the Daemonic God of the Jews and the Suffering God of the Christians, for those who have kept faith with the hidden, but profound, link between pain and love.

We are forced by the Daemonic God to go back to the burden we put down, and face our abandoning of it and inability to lift its weight; then, as the culmination of this, the Suffering God picks up this burden, so that we can carry it.

How could God hit us with the impossible, without himself becoming the one who takes the hit?

If we cannot pay the price God asks of us, to have a heart, then God pays it for us, that we can reclaim the heart, and by leaning on God's sacrifice for us, relearn the heart's sacrifice for the world.

The movement from the Daemonic God to the Suffering God, from the unknown father to the incarnate son, is a movement of love becoming ever more extreme, until it reaches the end of how far it can go, whilst still respecting human freedom, and personal responsibility for choice. God does not do everything, but leaves a space, a dangerous open-endedness, where we can use our freedom to surrender to love's dramatic story, or try to rewrite it in some less exacting but less profound form.

God is going for broke. It is all, or none. It is the depth of love, and the pillar of truth, or nothing.

Sin is ugly because it is the betrayal of love. But the human heart-cry for love, even in the midst of failing, or rejecting, love is the beginning of our change. For this is the sacrifice that the Daemonic God requires, 'a broken and contrite heart', a heart softened by 'holy sorrow'; this beginning of change of heart will lead us farther down the line to the final sacrifice of Christ, which becomes decisive for the turnaround in our depths.

JEREMIAH'S DISAPPOINTMENT

More Daemonic from the Old Testament= Jeremiah, 20, 7-13.

This starts with the prophet being mocked, on account of God, and perhaps feeling God is not doing enough to back him up. He would like to never mention God again, or speak in his name, given what he is subjected to by the people around him.. But, when he tries to give up on God, "there is in my heart a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." Yet the people go on whispering against him, and hope it will be revealed that he is deceived; then they can overthrow him, getting revenge on him by silencing his prophetic voice forever.

Then he recovers, realising that the Daemonic Flame of which he is the prophet has not, and will not, abandon him.

"But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, they will not overcome me."

He realises that those who dishonour the Daemonic will themselves end up dishonoured; they will not prevail.

The prophet prays to God as the Daemonic Fire that tests the righteous, and sees the heart; he wants to see the Daemonic pay back those who disrespect it, "for to thee have I committed my cause."

Only someone who has committed their flickering human spark to the Daemonic Fire will know how hard, and stretched, that deed of risk is= to commit one's cause to this, and to submit to the results that flow from that leap of faith, is an ultimate bravery, and give away.

The Jewish holy people are always human, intensely human.. No play acting with the human clay, no pretence to rising above it..

Yet God does not grant the understandable vengeance that the prophet requests. Indeed, his suffering is a foretaste and prevision of the unjust suffering heaped on the Christ who is to come. Thus, the prophet's request that the dishonourable be shamed is not answered= because Christ is the answer.

God is with those who foolishly, by the world's standards, commit their very life, and all their cause, to the honour of the Daemonic Fire "as a dread warrior."

God is a dread warrior= this is the Daemonic.

It is this warrior God who loves, and makes sacrifice. Such is his way of honour.

Let Christians wake up to this God, for Christ is the ultimate of this dread warrior. In him, what God is gambling on and fighting for reaches its apogee.

Dread warrior, be with us all. The gamble and the fight is for us all. This is Christ's love, and its sacrifice.

The dread warrior does not favour his servants.

“A MAN WILL COME WHOSE HEART IS DEEP”

PRELUDE

I read this line in Psalm 63 for the first time on the way to my grandmother's funeral, because I wanted to kiss her head and feet, and speak some prayers, Celtic and from the Psalms, over her body. They had kept the body in the mortuary, so I could do this. In the airport, before the flight, I was leafing through the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Psalms used by the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, and suddenly Psalm 63 [King James 64] loomed up, and when I saw its title, it was like a visceral blow.

1,

The Psalms of David are poems, and they were originally sung. They are an intimate conversation between the human heart and the sought for, but struggled with, heart of God. The human deep cries to the divine deep [Psalm 41]. In the Psalms we cry out of our truest and profoundest heart to God. But we also do more than cry. We put God on trial, as the Jews did at a Nazi extermination camp. Both the human heart, and the heart of God, are existentially 'on trial' in this world.

As Bishop Basil once told me, such crying, screaming, raging, complaining, blaming, and even hating, of God is the world's prayer. These 'profane prayers' are often more sincere than the words of praise which always absolve God. One of the secret teachings of the Psalms is that God cannot be absolved if humanity is convicted; thus in the coming redemption the Messiah will prove the case both for God and for humanity.

The Psalms are particularly important because they portray, honestly and not piously, the depth of the troubled relationship between humanity and God. It is in the deep place that there is contention and strife, and it is in this very difficult place, of both heaven and hell, where it can still go either way.

In the deeps of the heart is the 'wailing wall' where human passion fails, comes so far, and cannot go further. Human passion comes to an enforced, but ancient, limit, and at that limit it stops. At that limit, it is defeated, and lays in the dust, derelict, and utterly forlorn, comprehensively desolate. We cry and rage at our own ruination, in the heart's passion. That God has no heart for us is hard to bear, but that we have no heart for existence is equally heavy. We despair. It is this weight the Messiah shoulders, as no prior human being, even with spiritual guidance and help, could.

All this is hinted at, and even disclosed, in the poetry and music of David. These things cannot be stated by philosophy, nor by any theology.

All this is mystery, thus only poetry and its music, conveys it 'accurately.' Any other attempt to speak of it will almost inevitably become, as my grandmother

used to put it, 'just goin round and about, like those old preachers.' She did not like the Fundamentalism of America, because the Spirit's work in her fidelity to Christ made her soul an open space welcoming one and all. She had no time for who was 'in or out.'

Christ's deed is universal, because it addresses the deepest heartbreak, and most fundamental failure to hit the mark, in every human heart.

The Messianic deed frees a path from human depth to God's depth, thus reigniting our passion in God's passion.

2,

The Psalms are amazing because over the span of their entire length, David is 'wave tossed.' Hidden things, outer and inner, are exposed. Impediments, inner and outer, are confronted. Only through much Sturm und Drang does a picture of who and what the Messiah is gradually crystallise.

The Messiah must be human, or the human problem is not really locked horns with by God. A divine avatar 'just visiting', and sprinkling some angel dust, cannot shift the impediment by lifting the load. But David, though presenting the Messiah as flesh and blood, embodied, fully human, with all the God-given gifts and Spirit-inspired dynamisms of the human, steps out onto much more dangerous ground for a Jew, and in fact transgresses the dualistic boundary between divine and human. For the Messiah becomes something more than human, at certain key points. The Messiah is also divine. This is not, however, Oriental merging or oneness any more than it is Occidental separation or twoness.

The 'divine-humanity' is the new mystery of the Messiah.

The blurring of any clear-cut, hard and fast, line between divine and human in the strange figure of the Messiah occurs mainly, if not exclusively, in regard to the Messiah as 'king', not prophet, not priest.

The Messiah is a special king, chosen and empowered by God to bring God's kingdom to earth, so that it does not remain confined in heaven, and to establish God's justice through-out the world, "from sea to sea, and from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the ends of the earth" [Psalms, 71, 8]. As in the case of the Celtic high king, when the chief ruler is upright, the land itself flowers and is fruitful. An unrighteous king is a curse on the land= "the land mourns, the pastures of the wilderness are dried up" [Jeremiah, 23, 10]. Thus the Messiah, as the true king of kings, brings universal abundance.

God's kingship is actualised through the instrument of the Messianic kingship. Yet sometimes they are hardly distinguishable= any differentiating of them disappears. Psalm 71 seems to be extolling the kingship of God and then, suddenly and seamlessly, this becomes not the divine king, but the Messianic king whom the people pray God to send them, so he can stand up for God's righteousness, and incarnate its efficacy and benefits among the people

[Psalms, 71, 1-2]= “O God, give to the king your rulership, and your justice, so that he can give the poor their rights.” In this vein, the Messiah is spoken of as the Divine King’s Son. Jesus Christ’s remark, ‘if you see me, the Son, then you have seen the Father’, does not seem very out of step with certain of David’s psalms.

None the less, the Messiah will arrive unheralded= “He will come down like rain on wool fleece, like the drop of dew falling on the earth” [Psalms, 71, 6]. Once here, he will dig in and never be removed= “He will continue as long as the sun, and beyond the moon, throughout all generations” [Psalms, 71, 5].

Moreover, Psalm 71 indicates the way in which the Messianic kingship -- derived straight and unmediated from God’s kingship -- differs from the run of the mill, corrupt, worldly political and business leaders who run things for their own advantage, and the advantage of their wealthy and privileged allies, to the disadvantage of the common people. Thus, the Messianic king will “do justice to the poor of thy people, and save the children of the needy, and humble the oppressor” [Psalms, 71, 4]; he “will deliver the poor from the tyrant, and he will deliver the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight” [Psalms, 71, 12-14].

This is identical to Jeremiah who blasts the false king of his day= “But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence” [Jeremiah, 22, 17]. A tyrant was never supported by Yahweh, simply on the basis that he was a king; any king false to his calling should be cast out of Jerusalem, according to Jeremiah. There is no European ‘divine right of kings’ in Jewish tradition. This applies, with equal venom, to false prophets who were the puppets of the power-lusting leaders of either the royal court or the ceremonial temple. Yahweh will not preserve either the monarchy or the priesthood, if they become ‘adulterous’= not faithful to God, and thus not faithfully serving humanity for God. The false prophets have ‘visions of their own mind’ not inspired by God, for they invariably falsely tell people “everything is all right” as it is, and invariably claim monarchy and temple will be preserved because they have the sanction of God. Where is the monarchy and the temple among the Jews today?

David calls the Messiah, in Psalm 44, the Warrior King, for it is evident that ‘wickedness in high places’ will not ‘go quietly.’ The Messianic kingship has human enemies who profit from injustice in society and the blighting of nature; they will resist. Hence= “O mighty warrior, ..draw your bow and prosper and reign in the cause of truth and modesty and justice.. Your arrows are sharp, O mighty warrior, in the heart of the king’s enemies” [Psalms, 71, 4-6]. God is addressed= “Your throne, O Yahweh, is forever and forever”, and then it switches to God’s Messiah= “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God, your God, has annointed you..” [Psalms, 71, 7-8]. But, if the enemies of the Messianic kingship accept its arrows of truth shot into their hardened hearts as flames of compunction, then the burning

becomes a purgation, and even the exponents of wickedness can be won over.

There is a beauty about the heart of the Messianic Warrior King not usually apparent in people= because of his love of justice and goodness, he knows a joy not ordinarily experienced. Such joy is the consequence of 'fighting the good fight', not evading it in some spurious 'peace.' There can be no peaceful coexistence with a world where injustice rules, a world where goodness is lacking.

Yet, the Messiah is not simply a powerful force for justice and righteousness, mercy and compassion, abundance spread to the four corners among all. "A man will come whose heart is deep" [Psalms, 63, 7]. The Messiah comes not to be exalted, nor as one who is exalted. He is not exalted as the 'representative' of God's exaltedness. Paradoxically, God is exalted through the Messiah's depth. This is 'the secret hidden from the very beginning.'

His depth of heart empowers a different greatness.

David struggles with this depth, in God and in humanity, without fully understanding it. He lives it, he wrestles in its grip, he has no trite, pat answer= some formula that can be comfortingly and comfortably trotted out to dispel doubt, wonderment, hurt. David goes through a journey and battle in the deeps, in his own existence, as he wrestles with outer troubles and hardships and pains, and searches the truth of these events and the truth of his own life inescapably caught up in them. It is this that 'leads' him to the depth in the paradox and dynamic of the new divine-humanity.

3,

The 'striking and mysterious figure' of the Messiah looms up out of David's hard times. This Messiah gets larger and larger, it says in the Introduction to the Septuagint, taking on more definite shape, as the Psalms go on. Paradox upon paradox piles up as he intrudes upon David's awareness. Nothing systematic is presented; nothing is argued. The Messiah is painted in a varied way, as the Impressionists added dots upon dots. Only at the end is the whole picture more apparent.

[1] The Messiah is first mentioned in Psalm 2. God has initially laughed to derision the kings and rulers of the world who take their stand against Yahweh and his Messiah, and refuse to be yoked to them, but then God has turned on them in his fury [Psalms, 2, 2-5]. Finally, God will send his annointed king, who will "proclaim Yahweh's decree." The Messiah says, "Yahweh said to me, 'You are my Son, whom I have begotten. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your sovereignty..' And now, you kings, understand; all you rulers of the earth take warning.. Embrace correction and discipline, lest.. you perish through leaving the way of righteousness" [Psalms, 2, 7-12].

This announces the universal kingship of the Messiah, and grants to the Messiah the identity of being 'begotten' by God. The Christian creed echoes this in speaking of 'the only begotten Son of God, begotten, not made.' You make something outside yourself; you beget something from inside yourself. That the Messiah shares the very throne of God -- the same mystery is revealed in the vision of Daniel -- and therefore co-exercises a radical divine power, throws into doubt the often repeated claim that the Messiah is just 'a good, or enlightened, man.' If Jesus is the Christ, then he has to be, on David's witness, something very different from, and much more than, a spiritually evolved example of humanity. It is interesting that in the Christian Bible, Jesus is called both 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man', and prefers the latter to the former, as if Sonship of divinity is taken for granted, and Sonship of humanity is the extraordinary step. He is chosen to step into our troubled waters, and to take on the hardest task in the human predicament.

Psalm 2 confirms the often reiterated claim that the Messianic king will chastise, and overthrow, the rulers of 'dirty politics' who conspire with each other to evade any ethical yoke that could keep their activities honest. The fury of God will be released on these amoral high ups, if they do not accept 'correction.' This psalm serves a warning on the false rulership of worldliness that their time is up. Since Satan the Accuser is prince of this world, the kingship of the Messiah declares that the world is not going to be meekly handed over to the Evil One. The Warrior King will fight the devil for the world. His Anger for Truth will not surrender the world process to the Lie that has always possessed it.

This Warrior King and his fight for the sake of the world, is also in 2 Kings, 22, and in 2 Samuel, 22.

[2] The human condition in the world, both personally and communally, is one of being in chains, held captive, oppressed, by evil forces working in evil men, especially powerful and wealthy men; in this context, redemption takes on the colouring of 'deliverance', like setting a prisoner free from jail. David constantly asks for deliverance= whatever his losses and pain now, one day the Redeemer will come, and then it will all change. Psalm 30 is called 'a passion psalm', and it is 'for a time of trouble.' In line 6, David cries to God the famous words Christ uttered as he died on the Cross, "into your hands I entrust my spirit" [these words are repeated in Luke, 23, 46]. The spirit given back to God, as we die, is our passion; and the next line, 7, states why we can entrust our passion to God= "for Thou hast redeemed me, God of truth." The truth referred to is the truth of heart, depth, passion, between God and humanity; but only in the redeemed state can we fully trust this, and hence trust God in the death, the loss, of our passion. Even as our fire goes out, we die for God, in God. The connection between the Cross and Psalm 30, 6-7, is therefore saying more than is usually realised. A statement is being made about giving away our passion, when it is restored to God's passion. In God's passion, our passion knows no impediment. Even crucifixion cannot stop it from going all the way.

[3] The evil forces, spiritual in origin but at work in humans, have to be fought, without let up or compromise. Psalm 4, 5= "Be angry, yet do not sin" [also quoted by St Paul, Ephesians, 4, 26]. Psalm 10 is unequivocal about the need for a war in regard to what sort of heart, true or false, rules the affairs of humanity in the world= "For, the sinners bend their bow; they have arrows ready in the quiver to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart. They destroy what you are building.. Yahweh tests the just and the godless; ..Upon sinners he will rain snares; fire and brimstone and a tempestuous wind will be the portion of their cup. For Yahweh is righteous and loves righteousness; his countenance beholds justice" [Psalms, 10, 2-7].

However much some Christians have distorted this fight into something it is not [a damnation of those who cannot accept Jesus is the Christ], there is no question that the Messiah, as the king and judge of the world's heart, fights for the world to have a royal heart, and thus fights against the world having a venal heart. The Messianic Warrior King wields the Sword of Truth. But this truth, when it comes, is restorative, not punitive. God's wrath has always been hopeful that things can be changed, that their slide into more and more evil can be halted and turned around. Thus the prophet stands close to the Messianic Warrior King in this fight, in that his warnings and announcements often paradoxically both aggressively blast the world, throwing it into crisis and bringing it to judgement, and creatively promise regeneration for the world.

Thus the 'spiritual warfare' is not just within each of us, but in fact is between all of us in the world. There can be no dismissing of the need to fight. There is only a question of how to fight= the fight against hell risks itself becoming hell. The fight must redeem, not destroy, the world. Thus Christ comes not to judge, or ultimately condemn, but to repair and redeem.

As a fighter for what heart rules the world, upright and divinely big or fallen and demonically shrivelled, the Messiah is called "the lion of the tribe of Judah" [Psalms, 22]. Yet once victory is won, the Messianic Warrior King enters into a wedding with his people, and a time of joy begins [Psalms, 44].

Thus, through the fight in the Daemonic, the marriage in Eros.

[4] The power active in the Messianic king is Daemonic. Its wrath upon wickedness, its anger for truth and against the lie, is likened in Psalm 17 to earthquake, smoke and fire, darkness, thunder, hail and lightning, a mighty storm. "In my distress I..cried to.. God. He heard my voice.. Then the earth rocked and quaked, and the mountains shook to their foundations and rocked.. because God was angry.. There went up a smoke in his wrath, and fire burst into flame at his presence. Coals were kindled by it. And he bowed the heavens and came down, and thick darkness was under his feet.. He swooped on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his hiding place.. Dark thunder clouds hung in the sky. ..there broke through the clouds hailstones and coals of fire. Then Yahweh thundered from heaven.. He shot his arrows and scattered the foes; he volleyed his lightnings and routed them" [Psalms, 17, 7-15]. This Daemonic downcoming is so powerful, the beds of oceans are

exposed, and the foundations of the world are uncovered= in both soul and heart the basic truth is revealed, in a moment of truth. Without God, David confesses, his enemies would overwhelm him in “the day of my adversity” [Psalms, 17, 19].

The Septuagint describes the extraordinary symbolism of Daemonic deliverance of beleaguered humanity, beset on all sides by evil, as 'a war-song of Christ the Warrior King', fighting his way through a world given over to falsity, injustice and corruption, with the weapons of love and faith= the weapons of passion. Until his kingdom is won, he will have to go on fighting.

In Psalm 28 the blow of the Daemonic is described graphically and dramatically. God's power “peals over the waters, ..thundering.” God's voice “shatters cedars”; “bursts out in flashing lightning, ..whirls the sand of the desert, ..strips the forests bare.” God “inhabits the flood.” God will give this Daemonic power to his people, and only this fighting spirit will bring the real peace [Psalms, 28, 3; 5; 7-9; 10; 11].

But to fight the world for God, we must accept the wound of the Daemonic as it reduces us to ashes before, in its redeeming power, it remakes us. Thus David says= “For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us as silver is tried [in a furnace of flame]. You did bring us into the trap; you did lay afflictions on our backs. ..We passed through fire and water, but you have brought us to revival” [Psalms, 65, 10-12].

David says to God= “But you see [the heart], for you behold pain and passion [or ‘trouble and anger’] that you may take them into your hands” [Psalms, 9, 35].

It is the Spirit who tests and proves the deep things of God and the deep things of humanity. This is not simply to purify us, as many religious people mistakenly claim. David's terrible struggles in the deeps of the heart are the sufferings Jesus the Christ embraced and had to pass through to make redemption real.

The Psalms of David are the expression of the heart of the true human being.

The test, the trial, is of passion; which means it is the heart which will be proved of worth, it is the heart which will be acquitted of blame.

[5] Many other remarkable things are said about the Messiah in the Psalms. He ushers in many ontological shifts in the very nature of things, once the protracted redeeming of the world is complete. His reign will last forever, for his kingdom has no end.

Yet to become the Redeemer, and to redeem everything and everyone, the Messiah will have to go through terrible sufferings. He will be treated as an outcast, will be despised and spat on by men [especially those in seats of authority, secular and religious]; he will be thrown to men who have become crazed, like being among [enraged] bulls, [vain] lions, and [rabid] dogs. These

men will strip him and pierce his hands and feet, and then will sneer and gloat over him [Psalm 21]. "Where is your God now?", as David's enemies say to him. None the less, when redemption is won, the kingly and warrior Messiah, flanked by prophet and priest, will come to claim his kingdom, and it will be an assembly of the entire world, where rich and poor stand together, and all will honour his supreme sacrifice, by granting him worship and partaking of a sacrificial meal [Psalms 21, 93, 95]. The Messiah, as John later says, is both king and lamb of sacrifice [John, 1, 36; 18, 37].

The main Messianic Psalms are arguably 2, 21, 44, 71, and 109. In Psalm 2, again we find words Christ cried on the Cross, just before he died. "O God, why have you forsaken me?" These words of Christ, echoing David, demonstrate the ultimate solidarity of the Messiah with our lostness [Mark, 15, 34; and Mathew, 27, 46]. This moment of final defeat for the human venture risked by God which David searingly experienced, and recorded in his deep song, is not magiced away or triumphed over by the Messiah; rather, the Messiah enters it, shares it, and only changes it from within the full impact of it upon him. Like us, he too is forsaken of God.

Thus Celtic Christianity=

'Beautiful.. keeping company with a king.
The beauty of a hero who does not shun injury.

God proved himself our liberation by his suffering,
Terrible grief, God defended us when he took on flesh,
Through the Cross, blood stained, came deliverance to the world.'

[6] Near the end of the Psalter, in Psalm 117, a 'processional song of praise for the great redemption' is offered as a thanks. The Welsh Celts call this 'gorfoleddu', an ecstatic rejoicing, exuberance, exultant praise of the Creator who restores the world he has made. And St Blathmac's term for Christ's love for and faith in the human being is 'kin-love.' In Celtic, the Father is 'God who sought me', the Son is 'God who bought me', the Spirit is 'God who changed me'-- the God who searched and checked me out in the depths where all is lost, and where what is lost can be regained.

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On the plane back to England, after my grandmother's funeral was completed and we held an Irish wake on what would have been her 103rd birthday [she died 8 days prior to it], I opened one of her books which I was taking home. On her bedside table she had a pile of books she would dip into. My mother offered these to me, but with one piece of hand luggage, I could carry only two of them. I chose one of Esther's Rumi books, a collection of his poems, and a book by the Protestant existentialist theologian Paul Tillich. As I squirmed in the even smaller seats now offered to the peasants in economy, and realised I would not be able to sleep, I opened Tillich's 'The Shaking of the Foundations.' It turned out to be a collection of sermons he gave at a seminary in New York, published in 1948. In these, he deals with the way in

which the Daemonic God 'shakes the foundations' we take for granted, in order to overturn our flimsy security, and bring down our unrighteousness. In the terms of a dream I had in my 20s wherein I saw a Tower built over a Pit as the truth of America, God strikes the Tower and brings it crashing down, to reveal the Pit beneath and liberate those imprisoned there. There is a sermon in which Tillich takes on the existential theme that Judaism was the first religion to make primary in the spiritual life= 'the depth of existence.'

"Depth is a dimension of space; yet at the same time it is a symbol for a spiritual quality" [p 52]. Tillich finds two meanings to depth. Both are relevant to the Psalms. Though it helps to differentiate them, they do not occupy separate compartments, but flow one into the other, in human experience.

[1] Deep is the converse of shallow.

[2] Deep is the converse of high.

[1] This refers to truth, and means that truth is deep and not shallow.

[2] This refers to suffering, and means that suffering is depth and not height.

At a conference discussing Bishop Anthony's legacy, I pointed out that he always spoke of depth. He dealt neither in the height, nor in the surface. Like many notable Russians from the 19th Century, his focus was on the mysterious, strange, dark, troubling and troubled, deeps of life. My comment elicited two responses in the discussion.

The first response said 'height and depth are the same.' This is totally mistaken. Height and depth are different. Psalm 138 says that God is in all the differing places of the creation, and thus there is nowhere humans can go to escape him. Moreover, 'ascent' to the height is clearly marked out as contrasting with 'descent' to the depth. "Where can I go from your Spirit, and where can I escape from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I descend to hell, you are present" [verse 7-8]. Even if we go to the sunrise in the east or dwell in the farthest reaches of the sea, "even there your hand will guide me" [verse 9]. And if we were to believe that "surely darkness will hide me" [verse 11], it turns out God is there as well. Nowhere is without God, but that does not support confusing above with below, or sea with land, or day with night.

Clinging to the height in order to evade the depth is a common religious stance. Such a stance misunderstands the existential dimension which the God of the Jews insisted upon, and submitted himself to, as well as forcing upon us. This height stance comes in many forms, some mystical, some philosophical, some monastic, some simply 'other worldly' in a manner that is more than a little unhinged. Whilst Shamanism has a sense of depth -- "Our pleasures are shallow, only our sorrows are deep" [Cheyenne Indians] -- it is never the less fair to say that only Judaism has risked everything in God and in humanity, and in every other dimension, to depth. If depth fails, as it can do, all else is forfeit. This is radical, frightening and yet oddly wonderful. It also means there is no salvation through mind alone, through soul alone, or a

combination of mind and soul. The heart must be involved. The heart is crucial. For the heart must be won to redemption.

The second response said 'depth is the underlying', as in a text where you plumb it for its core, or essential meaning, and do not get stuck on the mere surface meaning. This is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Psalm 138 also says, "You have created my heart, O Yahweh" [verse 13]. The heart is not simply the origin of affectional bonds. It is that in us which is deeply, and powerfully, affected by existence, for better and worse. Referring to depth only as the 'undergirding structure of meaning' is too rational, and is equally a manoeuvre designed to extract the real sting from depth. We speak of deeper meaning but leave out its insecurity; this meaning is in fact impassioned, full of striving and strife, pained and stricken.

Yet, it is a common secular stance not even to admit any depth at all, but to prefer to keep meaning entirely on the surface. Nothing deeper must ever intrude. So, we eat on the surface and this indulgence deadens us, but at least we can sleep through life relatively unroused. Our meanings are kept trivial, so we won't have disturbing dreams in our life long slumber. Positivism, in philosophy and psychology, tries to eliminate the roots of meaning, by giving accounts of it that seek to define and confine all meaning to the surface. Yet existence itself, in its meaningfulness, constantly troubles us to wake up, and plunges us into depths where we cease to be in control or know what is what anymore. Victor Frankl, who learned what truth was, and what suffering was, in the concentration camp, said only three things have meaning in this life= human relationship [the I--Thou of Martin Buber]; suffering; action that serves vocation, calling, mission.

The truth that is lost in the depth by the heart's betrayal of it, laziness in acting on it, fear of its consequences, and all other fallen motives, is only regained by suffering.

Thus heart truth and the heart's depth are linked, in suffering. Even to go beneath the surface of things, in sense [1], is a suffering, though the suffering in sense [2] is far more profound, basic, searing.

Tracking Tillich is helpful..

[1] All things have a surface, says Tillich. Surface is that side to things "which first appears to us" [p 53]. This is what things 'seem' to be, without going into them further. And so we try to penetrate below the surface in order to uncover what things really are. Tillich adds, people have always been disappointed with the surfaces of things, and have sensed that the truth which does not disappoint dwells below in the depth. Consequently, people have always dug through one level after another.

This is especially so with other persons, where we get an impression on the surface, but if we do not pierce to a deeper level of their interiority, we become disappointed. The surface of people is soon exhausted. What we

know about people has always got to be deepened, or our anticipations smother their capacity to surprise us.

Tillich is urging in sense [1] that the world itself, and everything sailing in its frail ship, has hidden depths. Getting to these is like peeling back layers of the onion, or descending through strata in the earth to get to more fundamental 'ground.' In all human endeavours some urge in the heart toward the 'real' truth beneath the surface drives us on, in our searching for it.

Tillich points out that getting to deeper levels of truth often causes earthquakes, or only comes about through earthquakes, at the shallow place where we try to ground ourselves, hoping for certainty, but invariably losing it. Persons and their cultural activities advance via these earth shaking moments.

Tillich says it takes 'great and daring steps' to leave the superficial in anyone, or anything, and approach "toward the deep things of our world" [p 54]. This challenges us to look harshly at our assumptions and expectations, and what we think we know. Descent is an earthquake in which these securities and certainties, with their spurious guarantee, are crushed to pieces. Similarly smashed are prejudices, opinions, narrow and ungenerous attitudes, prideful boasts of superiority, and much we cling to in order to buttress us, or raise us up. All this comes 'down', fragmenting into dust. When the Tower falls, all our identifications with its grand power are destroyed. The Pit that swallows us is more real.

Tillich sees in this collapsing the way of creativity, and the mark of genius. Humanity would stall without such times when the foundations shake. Jeremiah [4, 23-30] and Isaiah [54, 10; 24, 18-20] speak of times when 'all is chaos', when 'the mountains are trembling' and 'the mountains will depart', and 'the earth will reel like a drunken man.' Yet God declares to these prophets that his covenant, mercy, righteousness, and redemption, will not depart in such times. In reality, the ultimate things are more clearly revealed at such earth shattering moments.

But religious people are no different to secular people in living in cosy bubbles. Tillich rightly doubts that much of this "would be able to withstand a serious blow" [p 54].

Tillich also points out that even the deepest truths can seem to wear out, but this is "because there can be no depth without the way to depth" [p 55]. If we do not live truth, suffer truth, in the depth, but merely focus on some words or ideas that express it, then the latter cut off from the former inevitably become superficial, mere abstractions owned all too comfortably by the mind but no longer linked to the heart's insecurity on the edge. Knowing the depth means confronting it, being affected by it, being caught up in its danger. To state depth, or to read statements on it, from the Bible, Dostoyevsky, Tillich, we must be in that place; to be in that place, we must find the path that goes there, and actually walk it, day in and day out.

"Look at the student who knows the content of the hundred most important books of world history, and yet whose spiritual life remains as shallow as it ever was, or perhaps becomes even more superficial" [p 55].

Even to ask, why do I do this?, what is the meaning of my life?, is to begin steps into depth. Questioning begins the journey.

But we often end up going round in circles. We are frantically busy and "never stop to plunge into the depth" [p 56]. We accept ourselves and others, and everything around us, as it appears, and do not care what any of it really is. In regard to ourselves, the nub of this evasion, it is only when our picture of ourselves breaks down completely, like a car that will no longer run, "that we are willing to look into a deeper level of our being" [p 56].

The spirituality of all religions that value the existential provides "a road to our depth" [p 56]. Tillich lists some of the things needed on that road. Confession, lonely self-scrutiny, external or internal catastrophes, prayer, and meditation, are among these. So too are all the horrendous struggles, outer and inner, evoked by brave and generous action. The journey of descent is described by Tillich in this way= the people who make it "have found that they were not what they believed themselves to be, even after a deeper level appeared to them below the vanishing surface. That deeper level itself became surface, when a still deeper level was discovered, this happening again and again, as long as their very lives, as long as they kept on the road to their depth" [p 56].

Modern 'depth psychology' gets some distance down, but nothing like all the way down. Psychological damage to the child is certainly part of the underlying. But the more mysterious reality the Bible calls 'sin' is deeper, though these two combine and inter-weave in ways that have never adequately been unravelled. Deeper still is Hades, and Hell. Myths round the globe have provided a storied and rich account of underworlds, cavernous places, down in the earth where various adventures and battles occur. All this is found, and experienced, in descent. But many people do not descend at all, intimidated by the layer, or strata, where childhood damage dwells.

There is a deepest ground of our being, but it is an absence of solid ground. It is an abyss underneath all ground. At the outset a certain ambiguity about the abyss is penetratingly and painfully evident. The abyss is our moment of choice when we are left free by God, and therefore it can divide or unite our depth and the depth of God.

Ecclesiasticus, 15, 14-15= "Yahweh made humanity in the beginning, and then left him free to make his own decisions."

Jose Ortega Y Gasset= "I am free by compulsion, whether I wish to be or not.. To be free means to be lacking in constitutive identity.. Man has no nature." No nature, or constitutive identity, is found at the base of the heart= nothing more basic determines it. Hence Ortega Y Gasset adds= "Whether he be an original or a plagiarist, man is the novelist of himself."

God is our risk. We are God's risk. This is the abyss. Depth risks it all, yet only depth confirms it. That is the supreme and final Messianic paradox.

There is more to forging the divine and human relationship than merely giving a philosophical definition that rules out the 'fear and trembling', the 'sickness unto death', the profoundest revulsion and despair, in this deepest place.

Therefore it is necessary to dispute Tillich's name for God as 'the ground of all being and the depth of all life.' This is not true, as well as true. The situation is more paradoxical, and hazardous, than Tillich describes it.

The abyss stands between the human heart and God's heart. It can be the place of their uniting and indwelling, at the end of a dynamic process, but it starts initially, before that process knits the two depths together as one, as the place of awfulness and awe, because the abyss becomes the place where God is not, and as such depth takes on a colouring for us worse than any Pit or Hell; it becomes the place of endless falling, with no way to stand. Everything falls through, endlessly.

None the less, even if Tillich does not acknowledge the fear and wonder of the deepest level of God's and humanity's mutual risk, he is surely truthful when linking God with depth, and contending that God is inevitably involved, whether we are aware of and acknowledge this or not, whenever we touch upon the depth of meaning in life. In a different language, when our human passion is sincere, God's passion is bound to it; passion is what Tillich calls "your ultimate concern, what you take seriously without any reservation" [p 57]. Tillich adds that many traditional images and understandings of God are not helpful, in blocking us from depth.

In the depth we lose the god of idols, of doctrines, of notions and words, to find the true God, the living God, the terrible God who is fighting fair to win his bet with Satan, in the Book of Job; for Satan wagers that God and humanity cannot come through, cannot plumb the ravine, cannot cross the gap.

Tillich is therefore not wrong to say, "...if you know that God means depth, you know much about him" [p 57]. And= "he who knows.. depth knows.. God" [ibid].

The un-named and non-imaginable God haunts the depth. This is why people avoid it.

Our depth and God's depth are lived out in community, in the common life, in the risk of inter-action. The God of history is in the comings and goings, the encounters and the clashes, of people striving to live together. The Cross of Christ addresses the place where all roads inter-sect, for ill and for good. The abyss we feel in our own heart is met with, outwardly, as common to all humans. We descend personally, but we live the depth out communally. The 'kingdom of God' is corporate, not the-individual-on-his-own.

[2] Tillich affirms that "the depth of suffering.. is the door, the only door, to the depth of truth" [p 59]. "It is comfortable to live on the surface so long as it remains unshaken. It is painful to break away from it and descend into an unknown ground" [ibid]. "The pain of looking into one's own depth is too intense for most people. They would rather return to the shaken and devastated surface of their former lives and thoughts" [ibid]. "The prophets of all time can tell us of the hating resistance which they provoke by their daring to uncover the depths of social judgement and social hope. And who can really bear the ultimate depth, the burning fire..., without saying with the prophet, Woe unto me! For I am undone. For my eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts" [p 60]?

Defences against the suffering that leads far into depth are many, and quite natural. Going deeper, like the suffering that provokes it, is forced upon us; it is not what we would choose. We accept it, but only after resistance, and much wrestling.

Some people say the depth is sophisticated, not for the uneducated. That is a joke! The educated, living in abstraction, happy with the egoic use of mind, are more resistant than 'ordinary people' who just take the blow, because they have no means of avoiding it. "...the mark of real depth is its simplicity. If you should say, 'This is too profound for me, I cannot grasp it', you are self-deceptive. For you ought to know that nothing of real importance is too profound for anyone. It is not because it is too profound, but rather because it is too uncomfortable, that you shy away from the truth" [p 60]. In fact, simplicity arrives only after going through hideous complications and complexities, immense doubts, hurtful sufferings and ravaging depletions. It sums them up, but in coming through to the other side, it answers them, deals truthfully and honestly with them. In finding the way through -- not above, or around -- it comes up with ground out of the abyss. Mountains are not mountains, everything is upside down and inside out, before mountains are mountains again.

Many people, and all too many Christians, do not go through the process of suffering in the depth. Thus whatever is said, or done, by those who have gone through it is of little use to them. 'You gotta go through that lonesome valley yourself.' We can be greatly encouraged by others in the valley. But if we are not in the valley ourselves, that encouragement cannot help us. We falsify its hope, by using the end-point others have reached as a pseudo guarantee for us, and so we don't actually make any descent. We are saved all too fast-- we are saved before we are lost. Such salvation is bogus. It does not stand up when the Daemonic wound inflicted by God bites. The 'god' we want must 'save' us from the deep place. The real God won't do this.

Perhaps the biggest excuse for not descending, and the total misunderstanding of its necessity, is the traditional association of depth with the demonic. Evil spirits, devils and demons, live below the surface ground, lurking in dark passage-ways and dank caves. Hades and Hell are below, death and evil lurk underground.

There are two points about this. First, a piece of psychological reductionism is needed. Some -- not all -- of our lurid imaginings about devils and demons is just a projection of our own childhood damage into a mythological form. So, depression is a pit that is dead, paranoia is a burning hell, and so on. The Middle Ages portrayed angels and devils in a manner that suspiciously resembles nothing more than Freudian 'super ego versus id', or Object Relations 'mental idealisation versus split off and throbbing emotional sores.'

Second, despite the confusion, there is a level beneath childhood damage where sin, evil, and death, take on a more spiritual meaning. That spiritual people have sometimes confused the childhood level with the place in the heart ground where evil spirits can work is undeniable; yet it is also the case that psychological people, including modern therapists, have confused the heart arena of 'inner spiritual warfare' with unresolved childhood problems. Either of these positions can be one sided, and reductive toward the other. Spirituality has not given enough respect to our damaged child, but psychology and therapy has not given enough respect to the 'hidden man of the heart' who has to fight invisible forces as part and parcel of prayer, and meditation, and all the rest of the things that facilitate descent.

Apart from early damage, there is a place in the heart where there are elements of more serious destructiveness and morbidity. Interestingly, the monastics of the Desert Tradition [400 AD] do not deny the existence and influence of evil spirits, but they spend much more focus and time grappling with their own inherent human motives which are fallen. These are the so called 'fallen passions' which distort, and indeed prevent, the true and singular passion from stepping up. There is a fight within passion, in short, necessary to release the arrow from the bow. The alternative is that the bow snaps and the arrow flops into the mud.

Passion is striving for the truth only forged in the pain of depth.

But the most important factor about the deeper suffering that leads to the deeper truth is that it puts us on a road of 'reversal', since 'My ways are not your ways, My thoughts are not your thoughts.' To draw nearer to God, the human must be reversed. Tillich puts it like this, "the road runs contrary to the way we formerly lived and thought" [p 61].

Tillich says this is why Isaiah praises Israel in the depths of its suffering; "and why Jesus calls those blessed who are in the depth of sorrow and persecution, of hunger and thirst, in.. body and spirit; and why He demands the loss of our lives for the sake of our lives" [p 62].

Tillich sums up= "The paradoxical language of religion reveals the way to the truth as a way to the depth, and therefore as a way of suffering and sacrifice" [p 62].

The final paradox is that out of suffering is finally born joy.

Tillich concludes= "The moment in which we reach the last depth of our lives is the moment in which we can experience the joy that has eternity within it, the hope that cannot be destroyed, and the truth on which life and death are built. For in the depth is truth; and in the depth is hope, and in the depth is joy" [p 63].

What does suffering kill off in us? Our attachment to the self.

What does sacrifice accomplish? Letting the self go into the world, redemptively.

The Way of Eros= fulfilment of self, wholeness of self.

The Way of the Daemonic= emptying of self, abnegation of self, giving away of self.

Which is closer to God?

The first is what God provides as a gift, but only the second is what God does, from the heart.

THE FIRE OF TRUTH AMONG THE OLD CELTS

In the process of cleaning out my study, I came across a store of Celtic books, and found a number of prayers from the old Celtic church, the primal and indigenous form of Christianity in the British Isles, predating by many centuries the Roman Catholicism gradually more and more enforced by the Anglo-Saxons. Celtic Christianity teaches many things that Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican/Episcopalian types of Christianity abandoned, or never knew. This is partly because the old Celtic Shamanism and Celtic Christianity melded together in a creative synthesis= thus in the Celtic Christian Tradition there is a Shamanic relationship with nature. But the other reason for this synthesis was because Celtic Shamanism contained not only the Wounded Healer, but more importantly, the King-Warrior who sacrifices himself for his people. It is the old Celtic heroic tradition, celebrated by the bards in epic poetry, that was transferred onto Christ, even more than the Mystic and Prophet and Wise Sage constituted by the Druid.

It is the understanding, and the living out, of Christ as the sacrificial King-Warrior, the warrior chief, that all forms of Christianity, West and East, have betrayed. This has entailed that Christianity has no heart for its true mission to the world. Christianity has abandoned Christ's Passion as the challenge to and redemption of the world. The world, not the ascetic desert nor the worshipping temple, is where the Cross stands; Christ is called to the terrible place in the world where the good road and the bad road cross. This is the place of sacrifice. This is the place of existential decision and existential drama. This is make or break. This is it. In this place is death and the life only won from death. In this place is the final Reversal. Here, everything is turned upside down-- defeat is victory, and victory is defeat. Only here is something ultimate tested and something ultimate proved. Here is where the Spirit of God tests and proves the deep things of God and the deep things of humanity.

This Celtic Christian prayer has a direct bearing on Christ as the fulfilment of the ancient heroic Passion-Bearer, the Fire-Bearer.

"It is a flame of fire from midmost heaven that came down into the world, fire that will kindle my stubborn nature, fire that will fill my whole life; it will not fail while God remains in being.

I shall never be able to declare.. how sweet, how strong, his love is: it is an endless flame that came from midmost heaven to earth.

Thou hast kindled fire in me-- the most perfect fire of heaven, which the great seas cannot quench at all.

O, a passionate, powerful, strong flame of fire has been kindled in everlasting heaven; everlasting love it is, that has made a union between God and me."

[From 'Threshold of Light, Prayers and Praises from the Celtic Tradition', ed. A.M. Allchin and Esther de Waal.]

The fire coming from heaven to earth, to unite heaven and earth, indeed to make an earthy heaven and a heavenly earth, is 'passion.' We are made of earth, light, water, fire. The earth gives solidity to possibility. The light brings forth all beings and things, they "come to light" means they are unhidden and revealed. Light makes present. The water nourishes, connects, transforms. Water holds possibility before it becomes real. But the fire stakes itself to the ground, to kindle everything. Its burden and its honour is redemption.

This fire is truth, and it dwells in and works through the heart. Because of this fire, God is united not only with 'me', but with all of us as a community, and in fact, with the whole world process, from beginning, through middle, to end. Redemption is greater than any kind of mysticism. The fire's staking to the ground declares it will suffer a great wound, bear a great weight, pay a great cost. This deed -- and the mysterious paradox and dangerous risk it embraces -- is the truth. Truth is what is, and what God will do about it. Truth is what is, and what redeems what is.

For the ancient Celts, truth was not some abstract proposition, to be debated by academics. Nor was it something to be altered to suit one's needs, or taken up and put down as a matter of convenience; nor was it just morally desirable= it was not merely one virtue among many other virtues. Rather, it was a sacred quality with a spiritual power. S. Eddy and C. Hamilton [p 70] point out= "The.. weight of Celtic belief in the power of truth is summed up in the words= 'By Truth the earth endures'." In the old Gaelic, the root for the word 'truth' and the root for the word 'holiness' are the same. In the old tradition, it was said of people who had died, "They have gone to the place of Truth."

By Truth the earth endures.

This truth has to be planted in the earth of the heart, so that it can then be planted in the earth of the world. In the former we sweat white beads, like Bodidharma, but in the latter we sweat blood, like Christ. Truth is the pillar. Truth is the fire. Truth is the despair in the heart that no ascetic desert and no worshipping temple can remove, because it is the despair in the human heart toward the world, and thus toward the deepest purpose God had in creating the world and placing human destiny squarely and inescapably in it. Only in the world can this despair be fully embraced, and only in the world can this despair be fully overcome. Redemption will plunge us into and it will plumb the deepest despair, because only in that place can the turnaround come. Hell is coming, for all of us, in the deep heart, because only in hell can heaven really come to earth, stake itself to the ground, and go into the abyss on which the heart—world axis rests. Christ is the warrior of the abyss, the one foretold by the Chinese book the 'I Ching' when it says, "God toils in the sign of the abysmal." The heart, given to and wholly bound up with the fate of the world, is where God and humanity really meet, and here both God and humanity toil in the abysmal.

God will not give up, or give in, toiling in the abysmal, and what Christ's Passion tells us is that it is possible for us to do the same. A battle is being fought, in the world, for the world.

Truth is action, not words. Truth is struggle, not accomplishment. Truth knows the despair in the heart that the fight in the abyss is all over and has been lost. Truth lives in the black inexplicable pain in the heart, but is kindling fire in the dark depth. Truth is a fire born of great tears, great sweat, great blood, poured into the earth. Truth is a fire still flickering under a crust of dead ash, which one day will leap into raging flame.

By Truth the earth endures.

This truth steps into the gap of what is not yet, what can be lost as well as won, what can 'go either way', to stand firm, to remain strong. Truth bears what cannot be borne, truth endures what cannot be endured, to stay in the journey and to stay in the fight. Even when the journey is over, and the fight is lost, truth remains in despair without despairing of it. This is the heart's doing, this is done by heart passion in search of heart truth. The heart cannot give in, even when it wants to, because the heart cannot give up on the truth that moves it, that causes its grieving and its hope, and for the sake of which it sheds its tears, expends its sweat, gives its blood. Truth is the Daemonic fate that befalls the heart, and it is the heart's honour that it continues to serve truth, no matter what. Honour reminds the heart of its destiny.

Honour has been confused, and degraded, by many persons and by many cultures, as a kind of glory seeking, as a kind of superman. The ancient Celts, like many Shamanic peoples such as the Red Indians, knew it had nothing to do with this. Thus, the old Celts said, "the basis of honour is truth."

This is exemplified in an exacting way by the heroic King-Warrior, but it applies to every man and every woman whose heart hungers for truth in its depth, and lives by truth in the world. A human being of heart, as distinct from mind or soul, has to be true to God, to all their promises, and to their own spark. Truth is a sword that cuts the heart, but only when thus penetrated can the heart wield the sword of truth in the world. This sword signifies a promise. The heart is called to be true, and it promises that it will be true. In being true, it upholds the honour of the fire that acts through the engine of the heart; and in keeping its promise, it fulfils that honour. Truth vows the heart to a hard road-- truth stakes fire to the ground, where it will suffer, grieve, lose, make sacrifice. This suffering and rapture of fire, as it struggles and contends, as it wins over and kindles, is the Truth-- the Truth of who and what God is, the Truth of who and what we are meant to become. God is, and we will be, the heart on fire with Truth-- the heart that will give away and endure anything and everything for the sake of what it loves.

By Truth the earth endures, because Truth is the vow, the promise, God makes to see it through, and never abandon it, even when the going gets tough and even when all is lost. Truth is given, truth is sacrificed, but nothing holds it to this. It is a free give away. By honour is this vow, this promise, of

God kept. I give my word, and I commit my spirit: this is the action of God's Truth, which is the pillar and is the fire, on which everything rests. To 'give your word and commit your spirit' is passion, and it is by honour that passion lives.

God is a mystery of Fire= not an abstract, impersonal spirit, into which we will safely disappear. Fire coming to earth, staking itself to the ground, taking on any and every pain, including the humiliating of that which is the supreme honour-- this is the deepest heaven, because it risks the deepest of the earth.

WHAT IS THE SWORD?

A Friend's Haiku

he put the sword to me,
in correct haiku syllables:

a ray of light cuts the gloom of confusion,
the mirror of the soul.

I offered him an alternative,
with incorrect haiku:

no light, no mirror,
heart the forge
of sword's flame.

fire from abyss
penetrates an ancient despair
about depth,
on its edge.

THE FIRE OF TRUTH IN MANY PLACES

“It is the natural beating of our heart to want to conquer the world. This has to be purified, so we conquer by love” [St Maximos].

“Blessed be Yahweh my strength, which teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight” [Psalms, 144, 1].

“And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth..” [1 Samuel, 7, 31]. David’s reply to Goliath’s incredulity, and taunting= ‘Yahweh has trained me for battle.’

“They asked him, ‘when does a man become a man?’ He said, when he knows the mistakes of his self and he busies himself in correcting them” [Abu Yazid Bustami].

“How few there are who have courage enough to own their own faults, or resolution enough to mend them” [Ben Franklin].

“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare” [Mark Twain].

“Mine may today be a voice in the wilderness, but it will be heard when all other voices are silenced, if it is the voice of truth” [Mahatma Ghandi].

“I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again” [Mahatma Ghandi].

Abba Elias speaks of the dark night of the soul in Eros= “Whoever loves tribulation will obtain joy and peace later on.” St Isaac of Syria speaks more Daemonically= When someone has no more “hope of life”, then “no one is more daring than he, no foe can face him, no ..affliction can weaken his purpose, for he has resolved to accept death for himself.”

The theme of ‘taking a stand’ is important, because it implies making a declaration that is socially visible. You tell others what your stand is, what your intention in a situation is, and this is the converse of hiding away, going behind people’s backs, sneaking round corners, keeping your head below the ramparts, etc. By making this declaration, you become an inspiration to some, a rebuke to others, a threat to still others. But everyone knows, this is your sticking point. They know, you won’t be moved from this place where you stand.

This is very powerful, because it cuts right in the face of all the mutual manipulation people usually engage in, bending each other. To stand does away with the social embarrassment and the shyness that freezes people, but even more radically, it declares you won’t be seduced, intimidated, bent out of shape, in order to ‘play ball.’ You won’t give away what you are standing up

for, just to fit in and be accepted. Thus passion breaks ranks with the herding together of people in society, it stakes out a more principled, a more profound, a more loving, basis for action, than simply kow towing and going along with what the majority of people do together, in collusion, precisely to avoid any and all of the issues passion raises and puts right on the table, in everyone's face.

This is why many cultures regard passion as 'wild.' A stand from within, sparked by something that matters to the person without, is unpredictable, and you cannot stop it. The only way to stop real passion is to make a martyr out of the person moved by it. A person 'staked to the ground' declares they are not leaving their sticking place unless dead. This ups the ante in social situations, and cuts like a sword through all the endless social lies and evasions. It comes from a place of moral integrity, and of self-transcendence, which 'serves' something greater than the self. Thus you cannot use threats to the self to stop it, change it, snuff it out. No one knows 'how far passion will go.' The implication is, it will 'go all the way down the line', and will put itself 'on the line' to do so. This makes passion the 'wild card' in the jaded deck of conformist social cards..

WARRIOR STAKED TO THE GROUND

MAORI WAR DANCE= The 'Haka'

Ha= breath,
Ka= to energize,
HAKA= to energize the breath.

This is the traditional tribal war chant, accompanying the war dance, before battle.

Nowadays this is enacted before every rugby match of the all-conquering New Zealand 'All Blacks.' A leader leads the shouting, and the dance, which ends with a loud cry, and sticking the tongue out!

LEADER=

Slap the hands against the thighs!
Puff out the chest!
Bend the knees!
Let the hip follow!
Stamp the feet as hard as you can!

LEADER= I may die, I may die.

TEAM= I may live, I may live.

LEADER= It is death, it is death.

TEAM= It is life, it is life.

ALL= This is the man, the fierce powerful man.
It was he who captured the sun and caused
it to shine.

It rises and sets.
It rises and sets.
The sun shines.

KOREAN CODE OF CHOI KWANG-DO

Humility
Honesty
Gentleness
Perseverance
Self-Control
Unbreakable Spirit

JAPANESE CODE OF JUDO from the Budokwai in London

1= Politeness is a universal respect for all.
2= Courage is to do what is right.
3= Sincerity is to express oneself without disguising one's thoughts.
4= Honour is to be faithful to the promise one gives.

- 5= Modesty is to speak of oneself without pride.
 6= Without respect no confidence can be nurtured.
 7= Self-control is to know when to be quiet when anger rises.
 8= Friendship is the greatest of all human things.

JAPANESE SAMURAI SWORDSMAN

A certain person said, "In the saint's tomb there is a poem=

If in one's heart
 he follows the path of sincerity,
 though he does not pray,
 will not the Spirit protect him?"

A samurai answered him by saying, "you seem to like poetry.
 I will answer you with a poem=

As everything in the world is but a sham,
 death is the only sincerity.
 Becoming as a dead man in one's daily living is
 the following of the path of sincerity."

[Yamamoto Tsunetomo, 'The Book of the Samurai: Hagakure']

CANTE TENZE WARRIOR SOCIETY

The ground on which we stand is here
 The universe is also where we stand,
 Strong Heart stands on the ground.

Welsh= "The weapon of the brave is in his heart." [Anf gluy n ci gallon]

Old Gaelic= "Friends are good on the day of battle."

Aristotle= "Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy."

Berdyayev= "Truth is not a useful and serviceable thing in this world; it renders no services. It may even be destructive and ruinous to the ordering of things of this world; it demands sacrifice.. and can lead to martyrdom."

The Whirling Dervishes do a flowing, and fluid, circle dance of Eros. Recently I witnessed something very different.

The Hasids do a trance song of no words. They sit together at tables, very bunched close, so that arms and bodies touch, and sing these no words melodies, repetitively over hours, banging the tables as they sing and sing. A wave of power sweeps through them all. There are no leaders and no followers. They are like wax melted by fire and melt into each other, making a

oneness of all the persons taking part. This ecstasy, they believe, unites them with God. This is clearly not an Eros ex-stasis of Light, but a trance-like and Dionysic ex-stasis of Fire. They can do it for hours without pausing. Watching the Hasids reminded me of how Red Indians can drum for days without let up. The heart is seized 'violently.' It produces a different togetherness, and a different rejoicing. A rejoicing exulting, that we have come through the journey and battle of the Daemonic. We celebrate the Daemonic trials as the proving of Fire in the world and in us, its servants. We thank God for the Fire..

Passion is very personal-- the person giving their heart to the world, which no one else can do in their stead, because God calls each heart to a specific place and time of trouble and a particular Cross there which no other person's heart can 'assume.' Yet, the flip side of this radical personalness of the one person is a radical solidarity among several persons. Passion creates a different kind of friendship, the friendship of fellow sufferers of fate, of fellow battlers with fate. This friendship is the closest of all, in some ways. For, passion creates 'a band of brothers' that is not reciprocal, as in Eros, but promised, pledged, by honour. This creates a fundamental togetherness= sharing the wound of existence, thus sharing that we all carry each other – 'bear the brother' – in different ways. My strength carries your weakness, your strength carries my weakness. In warrior societies, this brotherhood cannot be broken.. A degenerate version of this reality is 'you cannot leave the gang.' The true version is, once you vow to put your shoulder to the wheel, joining with others who have vowed to put their shoulders to the wheel, there is no going back. There is no disgrace worse than turning back from this deed of vowing the heart. Bound together, for better, for worse, in weal and in woe. Some brothers will have to carry more than others. In this way, we bear it together, and none of our failures causes our solidarity to break apart.

Serving something greater, and deeper, through the way of passion, gives extra power to the person, but binds together persons in a communion of human tragedy and human heroism otherwise simply non-existent.

The Greek term in the gospel that Christ uses at his final parting from Peter does not ask Peter to build, or oversee, a church, temple, synagogue= a House of God of any description.

The Greek term refers to the Daemonically forged brotherhood= 'those who are with us because they are for our cause.' Christ is asking Peter to call together such persons.

THE WARRIOR'S SECRET

Only when there is truth in the heart can it stand on the abyss, and thus stand with intent toward the world, not fearing the world's abyss.

JAPANESE SAMURAI TEACHINGS

PRELUDE

The following quotations are selections from a book given me by a friend who is a student of the martial arts. Written by a master swordsman who lived in the late 1600s/early 1700s AD and ended his warrior life by becoming a Buddhist monk, the book is interesting. Not everything in it is immediately accessible, or even congenial, but some of the thoughts that are parallel with other ancient warrior roads are helpful.

‘The way of the Samurai is the way of dying.’

From ‘The Book of the Samurai, Hagakure’, by Yamamoto Tsunetomo=

It is natural that one cannot understand deep and hidden things. Those things that are easily understood are rather shallow.

In the judgement of the elders, a samurai’s obstinacy should be excessive. A thing done with moderation may later be judged to be insufficient. ..When one thinks he has gone too far, he will not have erred. This.. should not be forgotten.

Master Ittei said, ‘if one were to say what it is to do good, in a single word it would be to endure suffering. Not enduring is bad without exception.’

What is called generosity is really compassion. In the Shin’ei it is written, ‘Seen from the eye of compassion, there is no one to be disliked. One who has sinned is to be pitied all the more.’ There is no limit to the breadth and depth of one’s heart. There is room enough for all. Whatever you do should be done for the sake of.. the people.. This is great compassion. The wisdom and courage that come from compassion are real wisdom and courage.. Doing something for one’s own sake is shallow and mean and turns into evil.

When reading something aloud, it is best to read from the belly. Reading from one’s mouth, one’s voice will not endure.

Living without mistakes is truly impossible. But this is something that people who live by cleverness have no inclination to think about.

In martial valour, merit lies more in dying for.. [those one protects] than in striking down the enemy.

The Way of the Samurai is one of immediacy, and it is best to dash in headlong.

A warrior should not say something faint hearted, even casually. He should set his mind to this.. Even in trifling matters the depth of one’s heart can be seen.

..In peaceful times words show one's bravery. In troubled times, too, one knows that by a single word his strength or cowardice can be seen. This single word is the flower of one's heart. It is not something said simply with one's mouth.

..Lord N. said, 'When matters are done leisurely, seven out of ten will turn out badly. A warrior is a person who does things quickly.' ..With an intense, fresh and undelaying spirit, one will make his judgements within the space of seven breaths. It is a matter of being determined and having the spirit to break right through to the other side.

When one's attitude on courage is fixed in his heart, and when his resolution is devoid of doubt, then when the time comes he will of necessity be able to choose the right move. This will be manifested by one's.. [action] and speech according to the occasion. One's word is especially important. It is not for exposing the depths of one's heart. This is something people will know by one's everyday affairs.

It is spiritless to think that you cannot attain to that which you have seen and heard the masters attain. The masters are men. You are also a man. If you think that you will be inferior in doing something, you will be on that road very soon. Master Ittei said, 'Confucius was a sage because he had the will to become a scholar when he was fifteen years old. He was not a sage because he studied later on.' This is the same as the Buddhist maxim, 'first intention, then enlightenment.'

Lord N. said, 'The Way of the Samurai is in desperateness. Ten or more cannot kill such a man. Common sense will not accomplish great things. Simply become insane and desperate. In the Way of the Samurai, if one uses discrimination, he will fall behind. One needs.. simply to become desperate in the Way. Loyalty and devotion are of themselves within desperation.

Calculating people are contemptible. The reason for this is that calculation deals with loss and gain, and the loss and gain mind never stops. Death is considered loss, and life is considered gain. Thus, death is something that such a person does not care for, and he is contemptible. Furthermore, scholars and their like are men who with wit and speech hide their own true cowardice and greed. People often misjudge this.

The proper manner of calligraphy is nothing other than not being careless, but in this way one's writing will simply be sluggish and stiff. One should go beyond this and depart from the norm. This principle applies to all things.

When you would see into a person's heart, become ill. When you are sick or in difficulties, many of those who were friendly or close to you in daily life will become cowards. By such things the consideration of others can be seen. In this world the people who rely on others when they are in difficulties and afterwards not give them a thought are many.

In China there was once a man who liked pictures of dragons, and his clothing and furnishings were all designed accordingly. His profound affection for dragons was brought to the attention of the dragon spirit, and one day a real dragon appeared before his window. It is said he died of fright. He was probably a man who always spoke big words but acted differently when facing the real thing.

If by setting one's heart right every morning and evening, one is able to live as though his body were already dead, he gains freedom in the Way. His whole life will be without blame, and he will succeed in his calling.

A certain swordsman in his declining years said the following. In one's life, there are levels in the pursuit of study. In the lowest level a person studies but nothing comes of it, and he feels that both he and others are unskillful. In the middle level he is still useless but is aware of his own insufficiencies and can also see the insufficiencies of others. In a higher level he has.. [respect] for his own ability, rejoices in praise from others, and laments the lack of ability in his fellows. This man has worth. In this highest level a man has the look of knowing nothing. ..but there is one transcending level, and this is the most excellent of all. This person is aware of the endlessness of entering deeply into a.. Way and never thinks of himself as having finished. He truly knows his own insufficiencies and never in his whole life thinks that he has succeeded. He has no thoughts of pride but with self-abasement knows the Way to the end. It is said that master Yagyū once remarked, 'I do not know the way to defeat others, but the way to defeat myself.' Throughout your life advance daily, becoming more skillful than yesterday, more skillful than today. This is never ending.

Be true to the thought of the moment and avoid distraction. Other than continuing to exert yourself, enter into nothing else, but go to the extent of living single thought by single thought.

People with intelligence will use it to fashion things both true and false and will try to push through whatever they want with their clever reasoning. This is injury from intelligence. Nothing you do will have effect unless you use truth.

Feeling deeply the difference between oneself and others, bearing ill will and falling out with people-- these things come from a heart that lacks compassion.

To tell others will not do. When your own heart asks, how will you respond?

There is nothing felt so deeply as 'giri.' [Giri= literally obligation= duty= vow.]

A warrior has courage on the outside and within enough compassion to burst his chest.. The holy man learns courage from the warrior, even as the warrior learns compassion from the holy man. Courage without compassion is merciless, but compassion without courage is weak and cowardly= the holy man, not taught courage by the warrior, desires to be 'laudably gentle', but this is evasion.

This is among the sayings of the priest Bankei= 'Not to borrow the strength of another, nor to rely on one's own strength; to cut off past and future thoughts, and not to live within the everyday mind. Then the Great Way is right before one's eyes.'

[Yamamoto Tsunetomo says his life of warriorship is founded on 4 vows. The first 3 are very Japanese, but the last is universal.]

To manifest great compassion, and to act for the sake of mankind. If one dedicates these four vows to the gods and Buddhas every morning, he will have the strength of two men and will never slip backward. One must edge forward like the inchworm, bit by bit. The gods and Buddhas, too, first started with a vow.

[Four ultimate vows= to God, to spouse, to the earth, to the brothers and sisters.]

A warrior is a man who does not hold his life in regret. This enables him not to be reduced to trembling by doubt.

Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily. And every day without fail one should consider himself as dead. There is a saying of the elders that goes, 'Step from under the eaves and you're a dead man. Leave the gate and the enemy is waiting.' This is not a matter of being careful. It is, consider oneself as dead beforehand.'

"In the midst of life we are in death."

WARRIOR WAY AND THE GREEK 'THYMOS'

PRELUDE

A friend has drawn my attention to two books on 'the warrior's struggles' by Jonathan Shay= 'Achilles In Viet Nam', and 'Odysseus.' My friend says, the first is about thymos, and the damage arising from the violation of thymos. The second is about metis or cunning and the threats to returning home psychologically and spiritually from war. He adds that, Shay sees thymos as 'character', and asks, does this fit with what the older warrior way calls 'heart'?

The short answer is, yes and no..

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Thymos in Greek is an energy. It goes back to, or was formulated by, Plato in the 'Republic', where he divides the soul into the 3= reason, desire, spirit. Thymos is 'spirit.' When Greeks have translated its root for me, they stress a three-fold kind of energy= [1] 'life force', or vitality, [2] 'fighting passion', [3] 'spirited.' [So if a person said 'my spirits are low today', it would say that their thymos is 'down.'] What my Judo teacher used to call 'fighting spirit' is obviously implicated= the Greek thymos must be close, even if not identical to, the Japanese 'hara' located in the solar plexus.

Thus= passion of life, passion of fighting, and a passion which is opened up to spirit working through its passionateness ['enthusiasmos'= to be possessed by a god]. Thymos is all that. In the North American Indian way, thymos would be linked to 'strength.' The litany in the Cante Tenze is 'be strong.' Without thymos, no strength. Even this phrase in Lakota can mean both 'Brave' and 'Strong' of Heart. These days the preference is to translate it "Strong Hearts", rather than "Brave Hearts." But the two descriptions are part of one and the same thing= the thymos.

In fact, thymos= balls, guts, spirit -- for hard action.

A 'spirited' person has the energy 'to take it on.' Being down about it, or backing off from it, and refusing to endure and bear what must be carried to see it through, is a failure of thymos. Not surprisingly, thymos is worthy of 'respect', because it signifies that energy/spirit in us not afraid, not weak, not lazy, in taking on hard action. Though we have to learn to respect people for just being human, and for all the pain they invariably go through, nevertheless we instinctively find it difficult to respect people who are giving in to fear, weakness, laziness= taking the easy way out. Thymos, then, is vitally connected to 'respect', perhaps most importantly 'self-respect.' We know when we are funking it, and thus our thymos reproaches us. 'You can do more', it says.

Modern Greeks use thymos for 'anger.' But the older roots of the term seem to carry that expanded Daemonic meaning of anger crucial to understanding passion of heart= 'anger for truth', and thus 'to do what is right, without regard to consequences.'

Thymos= courage; and toughness and resilience; and openness to divine inspiration in battle frenzy. [An altered state of consciousness= just as desire can be swept away in ecstasy by Eros, so the Daemonic can seize thymos and inform its battling. The Viking warriors known as 'berserkers' went into trance, and were possessed by the spirit of the Bear, giving them the ability to go forward without anything being able to stop them. Wounds are not felt until much later.]

Thymos is an aspect of the Heart -- as desire is clearly an aspect of Soul, and reason of Mind. But the heart is 'pathos and thymos', and they have a mysterious link. A true warrior cannot have thymos without the wound of pathos. Both soldier and thug are in denial towards pathos, so use thymos in a more shallow way. Pathos=black; thymos=red. The red comes from the black.

Greek warriors had a false notion of glory seeking, wanting to be immortal. Thymos made them strong, and lifted them up, out of the ordinary run of ball-less, gut-less, un-spirited men= without courage, weak. Greek warriors saw 'honour' as this courage/strength that raises you to immortality= your name lives forever, after you die. Ordinary mortals die and are forgotten. Thus glory is a sort of superiority, an excellence, that raises the mortal to the level of the immortal, almost a god..

This is not the true warrior. Plains Indian 'honour' is different. Crazy Horse said, "I love the ways of war, but the ways of war are hard to live up to.." Honour in this culture serves something fundamentally different to the individual's glorification/elevation out of the run of the mill mediocrity, his 'excellence', which makes him very individual, and special. Honour signifies keeping a vow, a promise, that the person declares publicly and visibly, to friend and enemy alike. Living up to honour can still be called excellence. In old China, 'excellence' is the best translation for 'character.' So, true excellence is an existential, and ascetic, struggle to live up to something hard, and this is a struggle for 'uprightness.' Rising to the task, standing for something, is what a warrior does. He stands on heart in himself and stands up for heart in the world.

We grow in 'integrity', we can keep our promises, keep our vows, without betraying them-- which would betray not only the truest the world can ever be but also the truest we can ever be. This growth in integrity means becoming more constant and reliable in the hard way, hence it creates strength both existential and moral, and it can therefore be seen as acquiring 'virtue.' The backbone we grow is that virtue, and it is an 'excellence', and it does correspond to what the older cultures [and Victorian England] called 'character.' Not= "what a character!", rather, "that guy has character, he will see it through." My 101 year old grandmother calls such character 'sand', as

in 'he/she has sand.' So, 'weight', 'gravitas', 'won't be pushed off and blown away', is also implied. This is not just blind obdurateness, nor does it preclude cutting your sail to changes in the wind; but once you are 'staked to the ground', like the Cante Tenze sash wearer, you cannot ever yourself take the stake out of the ground. A brother has to, life has to, God has to-- because once you are staked, you are there, and not leaving, unless dead.

In this way thymos does indeed become linked to "integrity, virtue, backbone, excellence, character."

However, there is another dynamic that adds to the difficulty.

"He who knows himself is greater than he who raises the dead" [St Isaac of Syria].

It is necessary to master 'fighting ourselves' before we can master 'fighting the world.' Consequently, backbone has an inner, not just an outer, aspect. The old Chinese said, he who masters himself is greater than he who masters the world. But of course, the former is necessary to the latter. You overcome yourself to be able to overcome in the world.

This point shades into another= in dramatic hero stories, the hero's enemy is often a mirror of his own shadow, his own unacknowledged 'dark' side. So, there is a sense in which every warrior's greatest enemy is himself; and often the enemy he faces in the outer world is just like the enemy in the inner world who is a different aspect of himself. This wisdom guards against the primitive idea, recently pushed by Bush and Blair, that the 'bad' is all outside me, over there, while the 'good' is all inside me, in here. This dualism is childish; "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" [1 John, 1, 8]. Only when we face up to the distortion and corruption hidden in our shadow does God "forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" [1 John, 1, 9]. The evil in us that is not acknowledged by us continues, underground, unchallenged..

Those who least fight the enemy inside are the most keen to go to war to fully annihilate the same enemy outside.

Thus does moral 'crusading' arise.

A warrior, unlike a soldier or a thug, knows that he must fight the enemy within, because he has a different relationship to the enemy without. He realizes at a certain point in his wrestlings with his own dark side that he is condemned to remain blind to the real enemy who is 'other' until he can differentiate that outside reality from his own shadow self which is constantly being projected outward. Yet, conversely, this does not imply we don't have an enemy in the world whom we may well have to fight, and fight ferociously. In Hinduism, the famous story in the Bhagavad-Gita tells of the deity Krishna who forces the prince Arjuna to fight his own family in a war to the death-- violating a huge social taboo against breaking up the family. Yet the hero has to go to war, and with 'his own', and this is divinely required.

But, if thymos is given over to the wrong notion of honour [not unlike the wrong Eros seducing soul desire], then all this subtly changes. The same terms acquire a different meaning.

Therefore, anyone who roots their understanding of thymos in Achilles runs the risk of distorting honour, and producing the wrong 'excellence' or 'character.' This might show up as an arrogance in our strength such as gripped Nietzsche, looking down on weaker people, rather than using strength to serve them, in their weakness, to try to raise them. Warrior strength is to encourage the people's strength: this hero says to the people, "I am what you can be, and really are." It is a different dynamic. The Medieval knight is in feeling closer to the North American Indian-- because of the sense of the greater serving the lesser. This is chivalrous, compassionate, 'patronage' in the best sense. Even Japanese samurai were much too obsessed with serving their feudal lord; hence Japanese militarism eventually went into fascism. A film that did reveal a truer honour in 'giri' was 'The Yakuza', with a Japanese actor who is in reality an expert swordsman and Robert Mitchum, set in Tokyo. Almost the most moving film on the warrior ever..

It is significant that in many ancient Indigenous and Shamanic cultures round the world, it is in reality the war gods who are the most protective, helpful, and beneficial, toward early humanity. These war gods are also more involved in a personal way with humanity's fate. The Daemonic is tough, and can be harsh at times, yet it is never mean spirited, judgmental, perfectionist. Rather, it is radically chivalrous. This is why strength goes with tenderness, the savage with gentleness.

There is, then, a vast gulf between the honour that is tied to a hyper individualistic power lusting and the honour that is rooted in the truth of heart. A warrior's heart will make sacrifice for other hearts, and this expresses a very different ground for the honour that must be struggled with if it is to be lived up to. This is the real 'uprightness.' This is Jewish 'righteousness.'

A warrior is driven by honour, and the honour always at stake in his battles is the honour of God, and the honour of the people. What heart do we follow? This is the question of whether we have any honour worthy of respect in ourself and in others.

2,

The importance of the link between pathos and thymos, which is the black--red of passion, is mostly over-looked in accounts of the warrior.

There is a moment where Achilles touches pathos, not just thymos.

Do you recall the story of the Trojan War in Homer's Iliad? Achilles first sulked in his tent and wouldn't fight for the Greeks, having been slighted by their king

Agamemnon, then his cousin is killed in his place, and finally he goes out in a battle frenzy and slaughters hundreds of Trojans and at last kills Hector, the Trojan champion. After this 'victory', he drags the body from the back of his chariot, in front of the Trojan walls, to show total disrespect for the Trojans and their war leader. Achilles is insane with grief and rage. Later, however, king Priam of the Trojans risks his life to sneak at night into the Greek camp, and appears in Achilles' tent. The old man simply begs Achilles for the body of his dead son Hector. And because Achilles is still hurting over his loss of the cousin, he actually empathizes with the old man's pain. They meet human to human, despite being sworn enemies fighting to the death.

Aristotle says much about this incident, it almost forms his central thesis about 'drama.' Certainly it is a moving moment, full of pathos, not just thymos; Achilles grows in this moment of encounter, and his warriorship shifts, out of compassion for his enemy. Because he feels for Priam, he also feels for the fallen Hector. He hurts in a different way. He undergoes that mysterious' descent into the deeper ground of heart that gets you beyond personal grief and opens you to the universal grief in all humanity. It is only at this point that Achilles -- the supreme fighting hero, literally an unbeatable warrior -- becomes something more, the real warrior of heart, not just the fighter from the stomach 'hara.' We do need balls, guts, spirit, in order to fight; but these must also be 'filtered' through the heart. It is just here, at this late moment in Homer's Iliad, in this mutual weeping of enemies, that Achilles acquires his heart.

The 'uprightness of character' is certainly laudable, and worthy of respect, but it is not the same as what many older warrior traditions call the 'heart.' David, ancestor of the Messiah, has a powerful thymos initially -- as a youth he defeats in battle the giant Goliath -- yet his betrayal of his friend by sending him to certain death in battle in order to steal away the man's wife indicates a weakness of character, a lack of uprightness, and so a severe deficiency in passion; yet, through his suffering over this and his deep delving into the heart through the troubles, and torments, of his life as it continues, David becomes a true king, a royal heart. Perhaps he finally regains a certain 'standing', but if his thymos returns to him, it is only after dark times of wrestling with his own failure of heart. Pathos 'schools' his thymos, and makes it not just sweat, but ready to weep and to bleed.

This anticipates the Messianic, by uniting strength of character with the suffering that alone can deepen the heart. In Yahweh, 'justice' and 'mercy' are conjoined.

So, the question to put to any account of warriorhood is, [1] does it link pathos [suffering] to thymos [fighting]? and [2] does it differentiate the honour that is the fighter's heart, not just his balls, guts, spirit?

If the answer is 'no' to either or both questions, then such an account is not talking of the truer warrior way that is lived still here and there in 'remnants' round the globe, and anticipates the Messianic, since Righteousness anticipates Redemption.

3,

The Greater protects, and in the end even sacrifices itself for the sake of, the Lesser. This is its 'honour.' The Greater declares its strength in service of the lesser, and once this pledge is solemnly given, it is never betrayed. Honour is to keep the pledge you freely make. Thus honour, in this two-fold sense, reveals a royal heart, a heart genuinely noble, a heart great in standing and a heart deep in what it will suffer, carry, pay.

Hoka hey!

THE WARRIOR AS A THIRD WAY

“The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.”
William Blake

“For.. he is coming to judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.”
Psalms, 96, 13

“In times of universal deceit, telling the truth is truly a revolutionary act.”
George Orwell

I do not believe in ‘Christian non-violence’, as I think it has mostly been just a cover up for timidity and cowardice. Christ was a warrior, and there is a place in Christianity – no, a crying need – for a warriorhood that ‘fights’ on so many levels. It is naïve, childish, and just plain ‘heartless’ [in the sense of heart as passion], to imagine we can have justice without fighting, a fighting that is on all levels, physical to spiritual, and encompassing moral and psychological and political.

Justice has a cost. Words are cheap. Only action pays the cost.

Between ‘Jesus meek and mild’ pacifism, on the one side, and John Wayne militant and pseudo-messianic ‘nuke the followers of the devil for God’, on the other, we have a problem.

There has to be a Third Way, in which warriorhood in its true spiritual meaning is regained. Without it, the world will continue to be handed over to the devil.

It is a matter of the real meaning of the word ‘heart.’

Soul= does works of goodness in the world.

Heart= takes a stand on truth to fight the devil for the world.

FLAMENCO IN 2009

1,

In the last week, we saw three performances of flamenco dance, and singing, at the old Sadler's Wells theatre in London, near the Angel, Islington. I always go to these performances in hope, looking for those moments when the dark spirit of duende will unaccountably rise from the depths, and drag everyone, performers and audience alike, down into those very depths. But it doesn't happen much. I wonder why. Is it, as I often feel, because modern people are just too lame and flabby, too safe and secure, for the Daemonic Spirit to break through all the layers of their comfortable indifference?

At one point in one of the performances, I wanted to jump up and shout what a friend of Lorca had once thrown at a lack-lustre fandango put on by the famous gypsy singer Nina de los Pines [Child of the Combs]= "This is a spectacle that would not be out of place at the Paris Lido." Nina was so stung by this rebuke, she re-ascended the stage and gave one of the most electrifying performances of her life. The point is, it had suddenly become life or death.

In the more northerly traditions of Shamanism, the shaman must be ready to die in each moment. This is true of the warrior-- you must live each moment with the intensity of one who can die before that moment ends. It is not about being ready to die in the 'next' moment, for that would take a subtle pressure off this moment. No, you must live and die in this exact moment.

I found myself muttering 'vamos ya' in the performances, like the Lakota 'hoka hey' [both mean 'let's go'], wanting to encourage the performers to climb to the rim of the well, and dance and sing on its absolute edge. I was wanting to shout at them, as encouragement, 'inhabit the moment where you die as well as live.'

'Inhabit the moment.' This kept coming back to me as I watched.. It slowly dawned, as I witnessed the moments mostly being allowed to slip by, uninhabited, that we feel time's passing -- and that time is passing us by -- because we do not inhabit the moment. And we do not inhabit the moment because we are not prepared to live and die in every moment.

I suddenly saw the struggle, the fight, the terrible and beautiful battle 'on the rim of the well', in Flamenco differently. It was each moment being contested, with the powerful and pulverizing fight that is being sung, danced, foot stamped and hand clapped, being entirely geared to entering, claiming, and operating from within, that moment-- that moment where in order to live you must be ready to die.

In many of the performances I watched, no one was ready to die, at any moment, and so the moments of intensity, the moments so electrifying in Flamenco, slipped away. This left in me an inconsolable sadness.

2,

The first performance was a modern classic of Flamenco= the version of Carmen created by Flamenco's only great male dancer from the previous generation, Antonio Gades. I saw this wirey gypsy first perform the Flamenco version of Bizet's Opera 20 or 30 years ago, in a film directed by Carlos Saura. It was unbelievable. Even better was another film collaboration these men did of Lorca's 'Blood Wedding.' This has a knife fight at the end, in stylized slow motion, more heart stopping than a million Hollywood 'heroic' films, attaining nothing more than comic book violence.

I knew rationally Gades would be an old man now, yet hoped beyond hope he would appear. In the programme I learned he was dead. In the event, the company that he left behind made an honourable attempt, but it was not as close to duende's dark spirit as the original film. It had some good moments, but the story was just the story, it did not become Flamenco, for me anyway; and the irony of this is that Carmen was a gypsy.

I found myself remembering and mourning the loss of Antonio Gades, pale, thin gypsy, a wraith of the Daemonic.

3,

In real Flamenco, the human voice is central, and the earliest form of this music was just the singer's harsh voice, unaccompanied. The guitar came later, as did the dancing. Everything arrayed around the voice is merely its accompaniment. Maybe the problem in these performances is that they have tried to make Flamenco dancing into what it is not-- an end in itself, or the primary emphasis and focus. I'm not sure that works.

Some of the singing in the performances I saw was raw, and verged on duende, in brief flashes. But the guitarists -- and I don't care what their fame in Spain is currently -- did not even play real Flamenco music. It was far too upbeat, melodic, 'Spanish' not gypsy. I hated most of the guitar playing, however skilled.

4,

The second performance was billed as 'Flamenco Puro', and the 'pure' in Spanish was translated into English as 'raw.' That immediately appealed. If religious people realised that 'purity' actually means 'rawness', it would help them shed much false piety. Raw, naked, exposed, no pretence, no artifice, direct, immediate, true to what it is and nothing else-- this is purity.

In the event the raw Flamenco, a male singer, was cancelled and we got a rising star of the Flamenco world, a young female dancer called Eva Yerbabuena. I don't know if it is a problem that many of the younger generation of Flamenco artists are Spanish, not gypsies. At any rate, this dance performance was to me without any duende, not even the hint. Grace,

fluidity, skill, even beauty, yes; duende, no. Myfanwy could see how non-involved I was watching this. She said, you cannot have duende to order, in a large auditorium. Of course she is right on that point. The old gypsy singers and dancers and guitar players could never be 'booked' to give a concert at a certain time and place. They performed when the dark spirit called them, seized them, Shamanically possessed them. The best Flamenco took place in small bars in country villages; or in the poor and often dangerous gypsy zone of Granada, Seville, or [from the 50s and 60s] Madrid, or at family gatherings in small houses up in the hills. The very attempt to transpose this intimate gathering to a big event in public perhaps cannot work. During Eva's evening I felt something in the first and last numbers only. The first had an older woman under an electric light bulb on an otherwise dark stage; there was something in her that contained a memory of duende. Always the older people are nearer it than the youth.

Yet Eva does understand something about duende, for in the notes to her show she says that "the light illuminates, but it is darkness that intensifies." In descending to the heart depths of duende, our eyes are darkened to take in the world in a different way. As we ascend the rim, we see the world in dark eyes hanging by a thread, poised over the nothingness of the abyss, a heartbeat away from descending-- to death, or death and resurrection, we cannot know which. Eva rightly suggests that we need to acquire these dark eyes with which to see the world's underbelly, its groundlessness, for in seeing this precariousness, we also see the 'signs and wonders' that invite us into the very maelstrom of life and death; these signs and wonders tell us what is at stake matters more than the fact we are at stake in it. This changes our lethargy, and fear. We give ourselves to the rim, gladly. We fight, exultantly, to enter the moment and command it, for the fight that is life and death.

Some practitioners can do more than they can say; the old generation was like that. Some practitioners can say more than they can do; the modern curse.

5,

The last performance was the National Ballet of Spain [Ballet Nacional de Espana], a troupe of dancers not given only to Flamenco, but shall we allow, something that might be called 'Flamenco-inspired.' I was dreading going to this, and thought it would be the low point of the week.

After the first act -- there were going to be three, a long evening -- I was tempted to ask Myfanwy if she minded if we got up and left. In Carmen I was in the heart shouting encouragement; during Eva's evening, my heart lapsed into silence. The first act of this evening was just not happening. I no longer even knew I had a heart. Technically, as Myfanwy pointed out to me, these ballet dancers trying to reclaim Flamenco were perfect and adroit in a way not seen previously. Their lines were amazing, with arched backs, and curved arms. The effort that went into such precision had to have been protracted. But the first act had no tension, no pressure even to get near the perilous

moment. It passed in a twinkling. Every now and again some raw singing burst out, and that kept me awake. But hope was gone.

I was surprised by the second act, which gave up all pretence of trying to be Flamenco, and became just what it was-- Spanish dance. Spanish music was played, the guitars were mercifully silenced [Eva had even added a flute to her ensemble, to my utter disgust], and the 20 odd dancers swirled and clapped their very Spanish, and un-gypsy, castanets. And it worked. It was not duende, but it was something else. It was Eros, as the Spanish do it. I liked it. Maybe there was relief that no one was trying to reach Flamenco, and not arriving.

The third act took me by surprise. It had two bravura performances, the first by a woman [Elena Algado], the second by a man [Jesus Carmona]. Something approaching duende arrived, unexpectedly and inexplicably. The woman wore those dresses that trail 20 feet across the ground, and part of the dance consists in how she refuses to let it trap her, but moves it about, as she wants, like a horse throwing back the hair of its mane. In this dance you could see where the gypsies who created Flamenco started their long migration-- in Rajasthan, the northern deserts of the Indian subcontinent. For she had become a Hindu goddess, her arms snakes, but as her hands reached the highest arc of their flowing movement, a thousand flowers bloomed. Then came the man, the best dancer in the large cast. He reminded me of Antonio Gades the way he indwelt the silence and stillness, starting slow, and then building relentlessly over 30 minutes to a final climax, or rather, several climaxes, each topped by the next. The driving staccato rhythms of his boots on the bare floor created a drum beat in the heart unique to Flamenco; and I also suddenly realised from where Stravinsky got his driving rhythm for 'The Rite of Spring.' I once had a dream in which I heard this primitive music of Stravinsky's from start to end. The man dancing before us was like that, it was a ritual of the deep heart moving through a sacred ceremony of the Daemonic. At last the dark spirit had come, in what power I will not guess at, because it was enough to have me on the edge of my seat, and my heart exploding in my chest.

I wanted to shout loudly at him, go for it, claim this moment of life and death, be ready to die in what you live. Take it to the extreme. Go to the absolute extreme. We come with you.

He did.

6,

The applause was so thunderous at the end, the audience would not let the performers go. They had to keep coming forward to make their sombre, dignified bow. In the end, the theatre management just brought the stage curtain down, to get the poor exhausted dancers off the hook.

But that is the point. When duende comes, such is the intensity, the commitment, of the passion it raises in us, exhaustion is banished, and a

paradox takes over. By inhabiting each moment of time, time ceases as we normally know it. In each moment, eternity dawns. Nothing can stop that driving rhythm, nothing can stop that life and death fight on the rim of the well.

No one wants it to stop, once in it. Getting into it is harder than plucking hen's teeth, but once there, none of us wants it to end.

There is a reason for this. The rim of the well is where the heart lives, in the depth. To recover this stance in this place is to recover the real life we should be living, but are not living. Felix Grande= We walk "the dark line that runs from nothingness to nothingness through life."

We are not in the moment. We are not living ready to die. We are fallen out of the heart.

When it is invoked, and aroused, by the bitter gift and savage wound of the dark spirit, then we are heartened by this. Tia Anica Pirinaca= "When I sing as I please, I taste blood in my mouth." Our heart, literally, returns to us, and unaccountably, we are in the heart and living the heart. Estrella Morente, a Flamenco singer we did not see, the eldest daughter of Enrique Morente of Granada, says in her notes, "Flamenco opens the heart." This too is accurate. But even more precise, it is the Daemonic Spirit who knifes us with duende-- this tears open the heart, invokes and revives the heart. Suddenly we are in the heart, in its moment, fighting its life and death fight.

And we do not want to leave this moment.

For when we fall out of it, we go back to the living deadness most people endure, lifelong. The deadening of the heart, the closing of the heart, the tucking away of the heart. We all know full well what this is, and what this means. Our death, when 'finally' it comes, will be a mere formality.

Obviously we do not want the moment to end. We 'ole'! those who drag us into it, and can make our heart beat with their feet as they stand on the rim and fight the fight of life and death. To claim this moment is to reclaim this place, and to reclaim this place is to restore us to the heart.

We do not want it to end, we will it to go on. Our will and passion are one, and we want it to go on.

This is the real life.
In the moment.
Ready to die.
Alive, fully.

Eyes dark, heart dark, with fire.

DIONYSUS, 'the Twice Born'

Socrates describes qualitatively different kinds of 'divine madness.' Dionysus is the patron of 'ritual madness', which has four main functions= the first is wine as celebration and feasting that brings people to a state of conviviality, though it can also produce rage; the second is rituals involving uninhibited music and dancing which brings people to a state of trance-like spiritual and physical 'organismic relief' from all types of confinement; the third is the theatre, comedy and tragedy, which evolved from ritual and brings people to a state of catharsis; the fourth is death followed by rebirth.

The early Christian tradition used Dionysus as an ikon of Christ.

1,

Dionysus is arguably the most contradictory, and mysterious, of all the Greek manifestations of divinity. In reality, he was not Greek. He came from Thrace, and beyond there from Asia. He was recognized in Macedonia long before the Greeks admitted him. Homer is mostly hostile to Dionysus.. Dionysus challenges the whole Hellenistic 'set up' of the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympos. That he has a divine father and a human mother makes him a friend of humanity in some way impossible to the aloof Olympian deities. Yet he threatens human over-organization, falsity, artifice, and human self-managing. To those respectable and smug, Dionysus brings terror; to those down trodden and disreputable, Dionysus brings a new and incomprehensible encouragement.

Name= "a runner in the woods." Or, something to do with 'trees'-- maybe Dionysus is actually the mythological World Tree uniting the otherworld of spirit with this world of matter, space, time.

Karl Kerényi equated Dionysus with Life, or 'Zoe' in Greek. In his last book, he called Dionysus "the image of INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE." The 'Life Force.' This Life Force is paradoxical. The most 'alive' Force of Life does not avoid death, and simply continue unabated; rather, this life in Dionysus embraces death, is killed and dismembered, torn apart, eaten up by titanic forces, and then comes alive again [reconfigured from his still beating heart].

Hence, Dionysus is 'a dying god' who is resurrected. Dionysus is Life-Death-Rebirth. He is 'born again', or as his title put it, The Twice Born.

Some scholars say Dionysus has two origins, which are entirely distinct.

[1] Wine as the fertility of nature= REVELRY. Celebrate life, at some other level beyond its petty concerns and endless constraints, in order to get free of all self-conscious fears, and so as to throw off every day cares.. Freedom from inhibitions that deaden life= sterile, stale, stunted life. Freedom from all that imprisons life, stopping its flow, reducing its potency, injuring its vitality, destroying its élan. Wine is called by one commentator 'the medicine for

misery.' Life gets trapped in a prison house of small and crippling preoccupations and worries. Drunkenness, understood spiritually, is the attempt to 'let go' of all that diminishing of the life in us, so life can relax, expand, flow more freely again. Wine tells us life is good, against all the facts and figures that say otherwise, but its goodness is not easy to remember when so many factors contrive to corral the life force. We do not experience the full 'force' of life; we are half dead, more like zombies. An example of a Dionysically alive person, drunk on Life, intoxicated with Life, thus with a huge Life Force pulsing in him, was Zorba the Greek. In effect, no normal fetters can hold Dionysus. If you welcome his medicine for life reduced to a puny force, he gives you joy. If you disrespect his healing, you get his rage.

[2] The Mystery Religions= Ecstasy or personal delivery from the 'everyday world' through physical and spiritual RELEASE. An altered state of consciousness in which the person is possessed by a greater power. Dionysus entered into people, and at these times, the man becomes greater than himself, and becomes able to do works which otherwise he could never do. Getting into 'Flow' is Dionysic. Trance is Dionysic.

Whatever scholars may say, [1] and [2] seem necessary parts of a whole..

Through wine and revelry, and through religious ecstasy generated in wild rituals of music and dancing held at night, in uninhabited forests, mortals achieve a spiritual contact with Dionysus. The god enters them; they became not just like him, modelled upon him, but they are possessed and empowered by him. They became Dionysus. This was foreign to the Olympian gods and goddesses, who were always above and superior to mortals..

Therefore, Dionysus was the spark of divinity in the earth, in life, in the body.. Even when our life dies, and our body is ashes, a spark of the divine remains.. Dionysus signifies rebirth, because something divine indwells the earth itself, the body itself, life itself. THIS IS WHY LIFE IS INDESTRUCTIBLE.. Not because life is so wild, in drives and urges and impulses, compared with the puny reason. Only because the divine indwells the created and creaturely is it true that there is a Life Indestructible.. Dionysus transgresses the strict boundary between immortal/immortality and mortal/mortality.

Thus his 'orgiastic release' is two-fold= it frees us of material chains that blot out divinity, by granting a direct experience of divinely brought 'freedom', but it does not destroy the material, on the contrary, it indwells it and hence this release honours the flesh. The flesh is burnt away, like the melting wax of a candle, yet in another equally important sense, this is a transformation of bodily matter. Matter as prison is 'broken free from', we are released; but we remain in the body, yet a body transfigured by the taste it has been granted of divinity. Orgiastic release celebrates a different body, a body alive with Spirit; not the deadening, cramped body of restriction.

Dionysus is the 'protector' of the foreigner, the outsider, the mistrusted stranger= because he is seen in this exact way, as the dangerous intruder,

during his travels. He goes as far as India, converting every place he visits to his religion, or fighting all those kings and other 'dignitaries' who mock. Dionysus sends madness to those who cling to reason, denying he is a god, and therefore denying the Dionysic mystery= that the earth, the body, life itself, can be deified by the indwelling within it of divinity. The genuine Dionysic ecstasy, or intoxication, demonstrates and celebrates that mystery, that Orphic Mystery, that central theme of the so-called Mystery Schools. "The kingdom of heaven is inside you" is a wholly Dionysic statement..

Dionysus is a god of 'epiphany'= 'the god that comes.' Dionysus polymorphously unites divine, human, animal, because he appears in all modes. Whereas the Olympians are cold, forbidding, and distant, Dionysus lived with mortals, and concentrated on the earthly.. Olympic gods required temples, but Dionysus had no temple, and was worshipped in woods and remote uncivilized mountains.

Dionysic religion is about INCARNATION OF SPIRIT IN LIFE, in matter, in body, in natural process; it is not just about letting the innate 'natural' energies run free, by over-throwing rigid form/order/structure in order to achieve this. That is what Apollo versus Dionysus became in the modern West. Western Reductionism= Apollo personifies the cerebral aspects of humanity, Dionysus personifies humanity's libido and its gratification.

PARADOX of 'LIFE'= Dionysus is both grape vine and poison ivy. The grape vine itself must be severely cut back, and lay dormant in winter, before blossoming in spring. The Dionysic Festival is in spring time, but it emerges from the dying of the winter..

Not surprisingly, therefore, Dionysus was a communicant between the living and the dead; there is much focus in his mythologies on the dead. He was almost unique in being able to descend into Hades, the Land of the Dead= he did this to bring his dead mother Semele back to life. He was loved by women, because he is so obviously the spiritual enemy of patriarchy. He married Ariadne, the Cretan princess who had saved Theseus but then had been abandoned by him..

The maenads were themselves paradoxical as 'wild women'= though they ate animals raw, as part of Dionysic ritual, they also suckled animals on their own breasts. They banged their fronds on the ground, and springs of water, milk, honey, wine, poured forth. An entire subtext of revolt against Hellenism's upgrading of men – more celestial -- and downgrading of women – too earthy -- is tacit in such symbols.

In bringing divinity to mortal flesh, Dionysus is the advocate of the 'common man.' Where Apollo promotes the elite aristocratic individual, Dionysus comes to the gathering of the many. He favours the ordinary people in their nearness to the ground with its robust acceptance of life in the raw, and in their collective humanity.

Thus Dionysus is always ready to help ordinary people in need. But if you are one of the high and mighty who disrespects the sacred mystery he brings, the divine madness in which the divine enters the created and creaturely [the high coming down to the lowly], then he punishes you with ordinary human madness, real psychosis. In short, if you accuse Dionysic religious ecstasy of being 'merely' frenzy, obsession, mania, hysteria, then Dionysus sends that psychotic state to you, and you enact terrible crimes, not realizing what you are doing. Neither his revelry from wine, nor his trance from ritual madness, create destructive outbursts of untamed drives; but if that is all you see in these expanded states of the life force, then that is what you get sent upon your too narrow head.

For those too attached to ego control, and too given to order as the inhibition of energy, Dionysus just appears as everything chaotic, dangerous, unexpected. Yet the hyper controlled are the ones who go mad as a matter, becoming what they fear. Ironically, it is the hyper up tight who become the only ones guilty of acting out the mad energy they so condemn in 'unrestrained' people.

Dionysus was known as, The Liberator. Only two deities had this title in ancient Greece= Eros and Dionysus. Apollo was never called by this name, nor were any of the other Olympian gods and goddesses.

2,

But the West has reduced Apollo merely to ethics and reason, 'shaping' things from above them; Dionysus is reduced to the productive, overflowing and mesmerizing power of nature which 'carries man away' from his law abiding mode of living, by overcoming his culturally conditioned resistances. This does no justice either to the ancient Apollo, or to the ancient Dionysus, but it is especially misleading about Dionysus. Once the divine spirit disappears, first from nature, then from human nature, the result is inevitably a paltry opposition in human psychology between constructed order as opposed to spontaneous energy, conscious design versus unconscious instinct, 'civilized' versus 'natural.' Nietzsche fell into this trap. Nietzsche on Apollo= "...that measured limitation, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that philosophical calmness of the sculptor god" ['The Birth of Tragedy', p 25]. Nietzsche on Dionysus= "Let us imagine.. the ecstatic tone of the Dionysian festival sounded in ever more luring and bewitching strains, ..how in these strains all the 'undueness' of nature, in joy, in sorrow.. became audible.." [ibid, p 41].

This Western dialectic of 'Tame Form versus Wild Energy' is false to the meaning of Dionysus, because it leaves out the divine spirit, the spark of divinity, which he plants in the wild, to change the tame.

The tame is really our human attempt to wall in our life to protect ourselves, and the premise of this walled or armoured state is that no divinity exists, and certainly no divinity exists who can enter us, changing and transforming our very physicality. The over controlled and over controlling King Pentheus has

no divinity in his experience; he has to be a tin pot god, trying to run the show, to 'preserve' himself. Thus he distrusts the titanic forces of nature, and of God, and their reflection in himself.

Tame Form versus Wild Energy is a division which King Penthius generates by virtue of having no link with God. Dionysus turns this split back on its author, forcing the rational people to taste the ever brewing frenzy in themselves they block off by being rational in the wrong way. The wrong order creates the wrong energy.. Dam the water wrongly and the water will inevitably break the dam, wrongly inundating the land, drowning everything in its path.. Dionysus opposes both sides of this very Western split. Dionysus is not the latter, which is merely the shadow of the former. Dionysus overturns the entire split.

The Way of 'self-mastery', symbolized by the monastery high up a treeless mountain near the sky, has its own validity..

However, falling in love with Life, and putting all your eggs in the basket of Life, not hoping in anything beyond Life, is where the Dionysic begins. You reject any spirit, or spirituality, denuded of Life. You reject 'pure' spirit, or spirituality, that can only operate beyond Life. Dionysus tells us, trust Life, stay with Life. Our future, his oracle tells us -- Dionysus shared the Delphic Oracle with Apollo -- is with Life.

The Dionysic Way, its yoga or yoke of discipline, is two-fold. [1] Immerse in Life, with all its vicissitudes. [2] Stay in it, see it through without withdrawing, however puzzling that we must drink in the bitter lemons and the sweet oranges. Life is alive in living and in dying, for Dionysic Life is twice-born, it travels from Life to Death to Rebirth. A three-fold series of steps. Like the Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection.

Wherever 3 is the sacred number, not 4, we are in the Daemonic.. Eros is 4, the Daemonic is 3. Dionysus is not just Life; not even just Life and Death, in polarity, as a yang-yin. Dionysus is Life, Death, Rebirth, Born Again, Twice Born.

Trust Life. Go with Life.

The Dionysic Mystery is therefore the substrate, the living substance, of the Christian Mystery. Not removal to heaven. Life alive, dead, resurrected, restored to the earth. Dionysus, like Christ, honoured women. This masculine fire is 'through' the feminine valley..

3,

The onrush of Life rises, ceases, returns, in time. Dionysus has no spaciousness filled by a plenitude of gifts, riches, colours, subtleties; Dionysus is the rhythm of Life in time. Life has the Dionysic vigour needed to sustain the long journey and battle down through all of time. The Life Force comes, goes, returns, in each moment of time.

Life is 'right' before any questions of right and wrong, of moral choice, ever arise. The Life in the body is deeply right, just as it is, without straining to become anything more. The pith and the juice of Life, deeply right. The marrow and the bone, the blood and the sweat, the tears and the belly laugh, deeply right. The spit and the smells and the excretions, deeply right. The breath that goes out and comes in, deeply right.

To doubt Life itself, to reject the pulsing Life, the throbbing membrane, the beating drum of the heart, is to injure the vehicle of existing. You need the vehicle before you can go anywhere with it, or do anything with it.

With Eros, the ego is subjected to transcendent forces in a network, like the stars in their kosmic dimensions bearing down upon the world and re-ordering its egoic separateness in a larger perspective of unity. With Dionysus, the ego is subjected to the body, and the ego's pretense of being better than the body is ruthlessly attacked, the ego is humbled by the bodily life, made to surrender to the irrational rhythms, drowned in its fast flowing currents. The ego dies, swept away and consumed. This dying is to reconnect with the body and with the Life that fills it and passes through it, the Life it contains without being able to possess it.

The Dionysic is not mystical opening out, and up, but is the reverse ex-stasis, the ecstasy of contraction in time to the moment in time when Life is happening, and must happen again and again. This Life wells up from below, it has underworld roots; it is nailed to this exact patch of earth because it is here that the now of the pulsing, throbbing, drumming, heart takes its stand.

Dionysus, in Life, for the sake of Life.

Dionysus paves the way for the wine of Holy Communion which is at the same time Christ's blood shed on the Cross.

Dionysus, blessed and accursed, for Life.

Dionysus, alive and killed, for Life.

Dionysus, flayed and reborn, for Life.

Dionysus, separated from himself to return all things to Life.

Dionysus, the paradox, the contradiction, of the reversal needed to plant Spirit in earth and earth in Spirit.

Dionysus, the anticipation of the dark Christ.

THE TRUE HEROISM

The true heroism stands on the truth of the human condition.

PROLOGUE

Ernest Becker provides the most sustained, and extraordinary, account of human 'heroism' of any writer in the late 20th century.

He frames heroism existentially, interpreting Kierkegaard's work as the first, and in many ways still the best, account in depth of the human condition, including our vulnerability to neurotic avoidance of 'existential birth.' He is sharply critical of humanism, and self-realisation [he dismantles Jung's 'individuation'], as well as dismissing Freud's theories on infantile sexuality, though he thinks Freud's description of the neurotic mechanisms by which we 'get rid of' uncomfortable truths about our precarious position in existence to be very crucial.

Paradoxically, neurosis is the attempt to run away from a challenging truth, and when it fails, that truth is indirectly manifested in the symptoms of the disease; neurosis is the buried truth exposed. The repressed returns, to wreak havoc on our lives-- until we accept the truth from which we are fleeing.. Normality, by contrast, is the lie successfully covered over; its defense mechanism is 'denial.'

Neurotic people are closer to the truth – it has them in its existential jaws – than normal people. Becker is scathing about the phoney 'hero script' that modern cultures indoctrinate into their citizens= you must earn a lot of money, you must earn high status, you must keep busy and never let existence pose you the 'unanswerable questions' lest you have a bad hair day. The neurotics are adrift in, and tormented by, deeper currents which they cannot come to terms with; normals are happy, safe, secure, and confident, in the shallows. They master the superficial, and so remain 'undisturbed.' But the depths trouble their false equanimity at the margins of their life, and suddenly can come closer, the unwelcome ghost at the feast.. Then normality rapidly unravels, revealing its lack of inner resources to weather the outer storms of existence.

Becker's most powerful argument, coming from his perspective as an anthropologist, a student of human culture, is the assertion that without religion, there can be no heroism. This claim is almost unique in our post-modern age. Becker contends there are very powerful and elemental reasons – very good reasons – why no culture can recommend and sustain heroism for its members without religion. Religion operates in culture, its deeply-lodged rationale is not just to spark but also to substantiate human heroism. Religion gives the only back-story profound enough to keep heroism going in the face of all the existential exactions.. If 'true religion' departs from a culture, then 'true heroism' also departs. This is what is so visible in the modern West.

Clearly, Becker is not speaking of the well documented phenomenon of using religion as either a comfort blanket [maternal], or as a moral tyrant to boss over us and thereby take away our own responsibility for choice [patriarchal].

But, there is a kind of religion that faces the contradictions and uncertainties of existence, and despite this, indeed precisely because of it, calls the human being to heroism. Only religion can motivate and promote existential heroism.

This is, in some ways, a new kind of religion, the religion of the future, the religion that will come more strongly in the future, though as Becker shows, it has roots in the extreme past, in religion oriented to tradition, especially that of indigenous peoples.

This reframing of 'depth psychology' as existential leads Becker to regard Otto Rank as the most important psycho-analyst. Rank's account of the birth trauma, of creativity in the adult, and of the conflict in the child between regression and progression, is of fundamental significance for understanding the hazards of existence the hero faces, and overcomes, when he comes from an existential religious ground.

Becker, in his own way, is speaking of the heroism, and tragedy, inherent to passion. The religion he commends is Daemonic.

Some quotes from two of Becker's books..

[a] Ernest Becker, 'The Denial of Death' [1973]

"Our central calling, our main task on this planet, is the heroic" [p 1].

"It is natural for man to strive to be a hero. Nowadays the heroic seems too big for us or we too small for it" [p 4].

The mythical hero occupies a realm "in which people serve to earn a sense of primary value, of cosmic specialness, of ultimate usefulness to creation, of unshakeable meaning. They earn this feeling by carving out a place in nature, by building an edifice that reflects human value= a temple, a cathedral, a totem pole, a sky scraper, a family that spans three generations" [p 5]. What all this cultural creativity amounts to is= we hope that what we create in society will outlast death and decay, that man and his products count.

Hero= highest generosity and self-sacrifice.

We admire most the courage to face death. When we see a man bravely facing his own extinction we see the greatest victory. Our ancestors deferred to the extra powerful and courageous.

But death is 'denied' when we try to make ourselves immune from it.. This is precisely what 'cultural normality' is all about= a pseudo immunisation against death; pretending death will never happen, pushing away the reality of death

as not just the end of every person's story, but a constant and ongoing part of every person's story. All forms of the 'wound of existence' are banished to the margins..

Cultural programming gives a pseudo confidence [p 23]. "To live a whole lifetime with the fate of death haunting one's dreams and even the most sun filled days.." [p 27]. The social world seeks to deny this= "social games, psychological tricks, personal preoccupations so far removed from the reality of his situation that they are forms of madness, shared madness, disguised and dignified madness, but madness all the same" [p 27].

"..standardized cultural denials of the real nature of experience" [p 63].

"[Man] doesn't know who he is, why he was born, what he is doing on the planet, what he is supposed to do, what he can expect. His own existence is incomprehensible to him."

"This is one aspect of the basic human predicament, that we are simultaneously worms and gods" [p 51]. Maslow on Freud= "We protect ourselves and our ideal image of ourselves by repression and similar defences, which are essentially techniques by which we avoid becoming conscious of unpleasant or dangerous truth" [p 52].

Maslow continues= "the essential Freudian discovery is that the cause of much of psychological illness is the fear of knowledge of oneself-- of one's emotions, impulses, memories, capacities, potentialities, of one's destiny. ...fear of knowledge of oneself is very often.. parallel with fear of the outside world" [pp 51-52]. Maslow= "this kind of fear is defensive in that it is a protection of our self-esteem, of our love and respect for ourselves. We tend to be afraid of any knowledge that could cause us to despise ourselves or make us feel inferior, weak, worthless, evil, shameful.." [p 52].

Becker discusses the burdens on the growing child in fitting into the adult society= "Man.. must repress his smallness in the adult world, his failures to live up to adult commands and codes. He must repress his own feelings of physical and moral inadequacy, his guilt and his evil intentions" [p 52].

But worse than all this Adlerian 'striving for superiority out of the feeling of inferiority' are the looming existential threats. Even Freud, later on, recognised these hazards as carrying the greatest jeopardy= "human perplexity in face of nature's dreaded forces", "the painful riddle of death", "our anxiety in the face of life's dangers", "the great necessities of fate against which there is no remedy" [Freud, 'The Future Of An Illusion', 1927, ch.s 3 and 4]; and Freud's description of 'the fear of death' as "the state in which the person feels forsaken or deserted by the protective parents, abandoned by the power of destiny, which puts an end to security against every danger" [Freud, 'The Problem Of Anxiety', 1926, p 67].

These existential phrases of the older Freud are all referring to the human dread toward the Daemonic.

Because of death haunting every step we take 'out' into existence, so we become neurotically fearful of living.. We shrink away from 'real living', lest we lose our own life.. Otto Rank= 'the neurotic cannot embrace the loan of life because they will not pay the debt of death.' E.G. Howe= in running from the real crucifixion inevitable to existence, our evading becomes a restricted life, a curtailed life, a meanly guarded life, a 'shadow crucifixion.' He who rejects the real crucifixion is condemned to the shadow crucifixion. Only if we accept death can we really live life to the fullest.

Early experience is an attempt by the child to overcome the anxiety of his emergence from the mother, his fear of losing her necessary original support, of standing alone, and he needs the father as a mentor to strengthen him in his steps into an unknown future.. But, existential birth is more radical. It jettisons all parental aid. Its freedom, its aloneness, its responsibility, is radical.

The child does not want to be helpless and afraid. Thus, says Becker [p 54], the child's character, his style of life, is his way of using the power of others, the support of the things and the ideas of his culture, to banish from his awareness the actual fact of his natural impotence. Out of this 'borrowing' of the standardized supports of the culture is normality built. But, families that are socially broken, and individual lives of children broken early on, become neurotic or psychotic because they have no such recourse to 'borrowing.' Existential Reality invades too early. Psychological birth and existential birth become confused and converged. You are fighting for your life from the off.. In effect, the neurotic or psychotic have no clothes to wear to go to the party everyone normal attends dressed to the nines.

However, for every human being, leaving the parents and existential birth into this world means truly facing 'not only his impotence to avoid death, but also his terror of standing alone, firmly rooted in his own powers' [p 54]. That we cannot change death means we are frightened of standing alone in the face of death, and so we do not trust to rely on the fragility of our own powers. Thus do we become paralysed in choosing, and taking responsibility for our choices.

When this impotence toward death and terror of trusting oneself in the face of it is denied, by the acquisition of cultural borrowings, then our life becomes the cultural Game= 'a way of life that like a comfortable web keeps a person buoyed up and ignorant of himself'.. He thinks himself in control.

Becker dismisses the cultural Game as a Lie= "Man can strut and boast all he likes but he draws his courage to be from a god, a string of sexual conquests, a flag, the fetish of money and the size of the bank balance." Becker asks= "What would the average man do with a full consciousness of [Kierkegaardian] absurdity? He has fashioned his character for the precise purpose of putting it between himself and the facts of life; it is his special tour de force that allows him to ignore incongruities, to thrive on blindness. He

accomplishes thereby a peculiarly human victory= to be smug about terror” [p 59].

Becker concludes= “to see ‘the world as it is’ is devastating and terrifying. It makes routine, automatic, secure, self-confident activity impossible [p 60]. It makes ‘thoughtless living impossible.”

We want our world “safe for delight”, and want “to blame others for our fate” [p 60].

Existential birth= to become, for the first time, subject to the paradox of the human condition= a god-worm.

We cannot be cured from existence, as many existentialists point out. Thus our healing from neurosis, and/or our shedding the false clothing of normality, means embracing angst and letting it school us; to live with courage, and humility, is the mark of existential maturity. We give up something restricting and/or illusory, and we embrace something awful. This proves paradoxical. It disables everything false and empowers everything true.

Through David in the Psalms, God says to humanity= ‘I have made you like gods, but you will die like men, and fall like princes.’

[b] Ernest Becker, ‘The Birth And Death Of Meaning’ [1962/71]

“..man lives a series of paradoxes on which his distinctive humanity is based. So much so, we can say that his fate is to live in the teeth of paradoxes. ..what would his distinctive strength be? It would have to be the ability to support contradictions, ambiguities, since his own distinctive nature is based on them and is rife with them. Power for man.. is the ability to support contradictions, nothing less..” [p 177].

We need contact with the Invisible World, for it is this realm that sends us on a ‘mission’= “Life seems an accident, its span useless, death unfair. But this is largely because we live only in the vision dimension; our lives are an intensified self-seeking for fulfilment and possessions, largely because we believe there is nothing else, and life itself is so precarious” [p 128].

“..the function of culture is to provide the individual with a sense of primary heroism.. He must be able to answer the question= how the dignity, control, bearing, talent and duty of my life contribute to the fuller development of mankind, to life in the cosmos?” [p 29]

This is the key question, and only religion can answer it. Not by giving some stock easy answer, but by embracing the pain of it, and passing through it. True religion states, simply, that the power to carry on in the only mission with ultimate meaning – our heroism that seeks to contribute to the world process – comes from the Invisible spiritual domain. It does not come from, and will not continue on the basis of, anything secular, anything merely human, anything well intentioned, nice, decent, rational or moral, derived from human

ideas or strengths, on their own. It needs help, and this help comes from beyond us, and our world, narrowly and precisely 'defined.'

The power to become, and remain, heroic is spiritual-- and whether this is consciously recognised or not makes no difference. Victor Frankl points to humanity's 'unconscious religiousness' which is, in some respects, altogether more trust-worthy than his conscious religiousness ['The Unconscious God', 1975]. It is often far more sincere, and honest. It is less contaminated by social conditioning..

The power that makes a hero is the Daemonic, but this power needs no name to operate in human affairs.

However, Becker's subtle and perceptive point, as anthropologist of culture, is unless a culture openly acknowledges the mysteriousness of the origin of the power needed to spark and move heroism, the members of that culture on the ground will gradually retrench more and more into the belief in the merely visible origin of everything, and in such retrenchment they will in actuality lose what mysteriously 'empowers' heroism. On the ground, over time, people will in practical and existential terms, in their action, become more and more 'risk-averse' cowards.

This descent from nobility into ignobility accompanies, and is the direct result of, true religion ceasing to do its job in a culture-- calling people out, by telling them to trust the invisible, the unknown, the non-definable, the 'other world' spiritual basis for their deepest goodness, generosity, bravery, sacrifice, of heart. Art cannot do this job; the Romantics are foolish.

Science cannot do this job; the positivists like Richard Dawkins are childish. Politics cannot do this job. Economics cannot do this job. Family life, however healthy, cannot do this job. Having friends cannot do this job. Lovers and spouses cannot do this job. Only religion, true religion, can do this job.

"The tragic bind that man is peculiarly in -- the basic paradox of his existence -- is that unlike the animals he has an awareness of himself as a unique individual on the one hand; and on the other hand he is the only animal in nature who 'knows he will die.' ..one pole gives him a feeling of overwhelming importance and the other gives him a feeling of fear and frustration" [L. Perls, 1970, p 128]. Becker comments= "...he is an emergent life that does not seem to have any more meaning than a non-emergent life -- in fact, that seems 'all the more senseless' to have emerged at all, since it is equally mortal. And so despair and the death of meaning are carried by man in the basic condition of his humanity" [p 143].

"The problem of despair can be met only in one way= by being a cosmic hero, to make a..[real] contribution to world-life 'even though one may die.' [This] is the only rationale one has, the only bulwark against the despair that is.. inherent in man's condition.. [This is why] there lurks constantly on the fringes of heroism the doubt and discredit of that heroism" [pp 143-144].

The child “does not want to be obliterated and abandoned, or remain small and helpless” [p 144]. But the adult facing up to existence, and venturing heroic action towards its abyss, struggles with an ultimate despair. Kierkegaard said despair is not wanting to be a self, it is a repudiation of our having a unique, personal ‘heart.’ In despair, we despair of the heart, and throw it away. We turn against our passion, as it is called out, and want to kill it for trusting the summons of fate. This turning against the heart is very painful in the heart.

To change -- to become in actuality not in theory or vainglorious imagery -- more heroic, we must renounce the kind of ‘comfort and rescue’ that has become woven in with the entrenched values which are in the muscles and nerves of our organism.

Becker distinguishes, ala Kierkegaard, real despair from neurotic despair.

‘Neurotic despair’ is triggered by losing the protection of one’s life style, and all the identifications that go into it. ‘Real despair’ is the existential cutting edge that is make or break for heroism.

We have to shed neurotic despair, and struggle truthfully with real despair, to resolve our life creatively, in freedom.

To accept existential reality, we must die and be reborn.

Becker approvingly quotes from Fritz Perls, who spoke of this dying and rebirth as a protracted process [‘Gestalt Therapy Verbatim’, 1969, pp 55-56]. People living on the surface of existence resort to glib cliché, but as the Daemonic becomes their ‘undoing’, so they reach impasse, and feel empty and lost-- the very feelings the ‘character defences’ of normal people try to banish. We must come to our authentic core, a raw nakedness without sham, without pretence, without disguise, without defences.. This process is hard. It makes us tremble. It makes us scream, and cry, and then reduces us to silence.

Becker does not necessarily grasp all of the spiritual elements in the dying and rebirth process needed to reach existential maturity, and the possibility of heroism, yet he is astute on all the phoney social and cultural props we must lose in this pained transition of radical change. It is “..the going through hell of a lonely and racking rebirth where one throws off the lendings of culture, the customs that fit us for life’s roles, the masks and panoplies of our standardized heroisms, to stand alone and nude facing the howling elements as one’s self-- a trembling animal” [p 147-148].

You cannot be an existential adult unless you go through the hell of the banishment of your self-respect= the disintegration of the self-esteem that maintains one’s character. Becker calls this ‘a suicide crisis’, because ‘one has no strength left, no root in a sustaining source of power.’ “When a person has thrown off his cultural lendings, he is as weak and helpless as a new-born babe” [p 150]. The wire is unplugged from all the false power supplies;

there is a hiatus, a gap, between unplugging and re-plugging into the true power supply. The unplugged state is hard to bear.. It is the true powerlessness of the human, subject not only to all the childish complexes that come roaring back, but the sober existential sufferings..

Without this dying, we are doomed to play the Cultural Game, to act out the culture script as our only [pseudo] heroism, for the rest of our life.

What Becker terms 'cultural scripts' reflect the particular style that a society adopts to deny despair ever getting into awareness, the particular ways it lies to itself about the nature of reality. The false religion shores up this lying; the true religion attacks it, and counsels the integrity of wrestling with despair. 'With God, all things are possible.' But to experience the truth of that existentially, we must go the place where all possibility runs out. Few people travel that road to its end.

Eric Fromm, another existentially oriented psycho-analyst who broke from Freud, called playing the Cultural Game by its rules the "pathology of normality." Everyone lives the same lies about the same things-- so there is no one to call them liars. They jointly establish their own sanity and call themselves 'normal' [p 152].

The true religion must tell normality it is lying, and in the process, distorting our humanity. The job of religion is to "tell us why a society [is] not realizing its fuller humanity" [p 180]. True religion cannot endorse, or go along with, the 'normalised' social lying that kills off a culture's true potentiality to serve and enhance the world process. True religion ought to encourage people 'to reject the fixations of everyday life= preoccupations about what to eat, what to wear, how to succeed in society, preoccupations that debase us.'

The aim is an erect and dignified standing. We must separate every form of deception from the truth that proves itself in the living.

Our world is an open air lunatic asylum. It has gone mad with the mechanical, the external, the trivial, the illusory. We value mechanism over 'life.' This scientific positivism and technical obsession has led to a tyranny worse than any old religious tyranny, the new "tyrant who tries to stamp all humanity out of a mould and turn humans into manipulated objects."

The true religion demands we stop this exploitation, and using, of humans. Each human is a sacred centre, a free spark of spirit not measurable by any material yardstick.

The free person -- free of illusions -- is the new human being who can introduce newness into the world through his own inspiration and action. Ultimate Reality lives and breathes in such a person. It is necessary to see the Invisible God in other visible people. This too is true religion.

Anything less than the emergence of new sparks of active love in the world is the stagnation of humanity [p 162].

But today, in the West [and elsewhere influenced by its amoral lack of real values], where true religion is gone, and true heroism has disappeared with it, the human person “blindly follows.. his unconscious urges in the frantic activity of daily life, and gets his satisfaction and his self-esteem. He fits himself into the bureaucratic—industrial machines of our day and gives his uncritical allegiance to the [depersonalised] forces that run these machines. He is part of an objectified structure, an ant doing his small part.. He follows orders, keeps his nose clean.. And so the ...most ‘natural’ intentions work the great historical evil that we have seen in our time. ..the renewing forces have to break through the crust of character armour that the frightened and obedient homo sapiens has bottled himself into” [pp 183-184].

The question this raises= “To what powers has a man given himself to solve the problem of his life? On what kind of objective structure has he strung out his meanings and fenced off his own free energies?” [p 184].

Cultural conditioning creates for us a highest god, the most powerful unconscious idol to which we give our uncritical allegiance. So long as we continue to do this, we remain a slave, yet think we are living freely, creatively, lovingly. Idols hide the reality of the despair of our human condition. “All the frantic and obsessive activity of daily life.. is a defence against self-consciousness. It is this fundamental falseness at the heart of human striving that makes our world dance so frenziedly to such drowning-out music” [p 192].

Wrestling with existential despair has to face letting this god, this idol whom we are unconsciously glued to, be totally smashed. This is the un-bearable loss, the loss of our life, and all its hopes. For, once this god, this idol we worship as our guiding force, is gone, we are indeed left naked, and indeed must contend with despair with no lendings, no supports, no protective and elevating clothes.. It comes down to despairing over heroism, in its leap, or trusting it.

If we cannot die and be reborn existentially, then most of our life becomes a rationalisation for existential failure= failure to find our own unique heart, failure to go with its personal passion, failure to be undone and redone in the fateful fires of existence. ‘This world is a fire pit. With what attitude of mind do you think you can avoid getting burnt?’ We are existentially born, we die and are reborn, to go through the getting burnt.

We live in a world of idols unless we attain genuine heroism. “Do I ring true? I want to ring true..”

Becker concludes= “..true heroism for man could only be cosmic, the service of the highest powers, the Creator, the meaning of creation” [p 187].

By serving our Creator, we make a Give Away of our life. This is sacrifice. The heart’s Give Away of its life to all other life, for the future, for what matters finally.

The hero lives with courage, forbearance, dignity. We need to accept a last 'not knowing.' The Creator makes good our service.

If we die for this, we die well.

Becker arrives at a stunning conclusion.

The calling to heroism "can only be formulated mythically because it encroaches on what man can never know= where the help for his despair is to come from and how it is to come" [p 193].

"Genuine heroism for man is still the power to support contradictions, no matter how glaring or hopeless they may seem" [p 196].

What calls us out is Invisible; what empowers us is not Secured, not Guaranteed.

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. In the doing of our heart action, this paradox is lived, suffered terribly and profoundly, and resolved by trusting it beyond hope, and trusting it beyond despair.

Passion goes on where both hope and despair end.

WHAT MANNER OF HUMAN BEING IS A PROPHET?

[from Abraham Heschel, 'The Prophets', 1962]

[1] THE BLAST FROM HEAVEN

“To a person endowed with prophet sight, everyone else appears blind; to a person whose ear perceives God’s voice, everyone else appears deaf. No one is just; ..no trust is complete enough. The prophet hates the approximate, he shuns the middle of the road. ..There is nothing to hold to except God. [Deuteronomy repeatedly says, ‘cleave to God.’] Carried away by the challenge, the demand to straighten out humanity’s ways, the prophet is strange, one-sided, an unbearable extremist.

..the prophet is overwhelmed by.. divine presence. He is incapable of isolating the world [from his experience of God]. There is an interaction between [humanity] and God which [cannot be disregarded]..

Where the idea is the father of faith, faith must conform to the ideas of the given system. In the Bible the realness of God came first, and the task was how to live in a way compatible with his presence. [Humanity’s] coexistence with God determines the course of history.

The prophet disdains those for whom God’s presence is comfort and security; to him it is a challenge, an incessant demand. God is compassion, not compromise; justice, though not inclemency..

The prophet’s word is a scream in the night. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven” [p 19].

[2] CALLOUSNESS AND AUTHORITY

“The prophet faces a coalition of callousness and established authority, and undertakes to stop a mighty stream with mere words. [The purpose of prophecy is not to express great ideas.] ..the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as revolutionise history.

It is embarrassing to be a prophet. There are so many.. predicting peace and prosperity, offering cheerful words, adding strength to self-reliance, while the prophet predicts disaster, pestilence, agony, and destruction. ..Jeremiah proclaims [at a time when Judea is encircled by the Assyrians]: You are about to die if you do not have a change of heart and cease being callous.. to God..” [p 20].

[3] LONELINESS AND MISERY

“None of the prophets seems enamoured with being a prophet nor proud of his attainment.

Over the life of a prophet words are invisibly inscribed: All flattery abandon ye who enter here.

To be a prophet is both a distinction and an affliction. The mission he performs is distasteful to him, and repugnant to others; no reward is promised him and no reward could temper its bitterness. The prophet bears scorn and reproach [Jeremiah, 15, 15]. He is stigmatised as a madman by his contemporaries..

Loneliness and misery were only part of the reward that prophecy brought to Jeremiah: "I sat alone because Thy hand was upon me" [15, 17]. Mocked, reproached, and persecuted, he would think of casting away his task [29, 9]:

'If I say, I will not mention him,
Or speak any more in his name,
There is in my heart.. a burning fire,
Shut up in my bones,
And I am weary with holding it in,
And I cannot.'

God told Jeremiah [15, 20]: 'They will fight against you, but they will not prevail over you.' The prophet is a lonely man. He alienates the wicked as well as the pious, the cynics as well as the believers, the priests and the princes, the judges and the false prophets. But to be a prophet means to challenge and to defy and to cast out fear.

The prophet's duty is to speak to the people, 'whether they hear or refuse to hear' [Ezekiel, 2, 6; 3, 8-9; 2, 4-5; 3, 27].

[God says to the prophet]: 'So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me' [Ezekiel, 33, 6-7; 3, 16-21].

The main vocation of a prophet is.. to let the people know 'that it is evil and bitter.. to forsake.. God' [Jeremiah, 2, 19], and call upon them to return.

Yet being a prophet is also joy, elation, delight [Jeremiah, 15, 16]" [pp 20-22]. [Joy and delight belong to the soul, elation belongs to the heart.]

[3] THE PEOPLE'S TOLERANCE

"The ..surprise is that prophets.. were tolerated at all by their people. To the patriots, they seemed pernicious; to the pious multitude, blasphemous; to [those] in authority, seditious.

In the language of Jeremiah, the prophet's word is fire, and the people wood, 'and the fire shall devour them' [Jeremiah, 5, 14; Amos, 2, 5; Hosea, 6, 5].

It must have sounded like treason when Amos [3, 9] called upon the enemies of Israel to witness the wickedness of Samaria" [pp 23-24].

[4] SENSITIVITY TO EVIL

“Instead of dealing with the timeless issues of being and becoming, [with the prophets you are] thrown into orations about widows and orphans, about the corruption of judges and [nefarious] affairs of the market place. Instead of showing us a way through the elegant mansions of the mind, the [prophets] take us to the slums. The world is a proud place, full of beauty, but the prophets are scandalised, and rave as if the whole world were a slum..

The things that horrified the prophets are even now daily occurrences all over the world. There is no society to which Amos' words would not apply [8, 4-6].

'Hear this, you who trample upon the needy,
And bring the poor of the land to an end,
Saying, ..when may we sell grain?
That we may.. deal deceitfully with false balances,
That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals..?'

..To us a single act of injustice -- cheating in business, exploitation of the poor -- is slight; to the prophets, a disaster. To us injustice is injurious to.. the people; to the prophets it is a deathblow to existence; ..a threat to the world.

..They speak as if the sky were about to collapse because Israel has become unfaithful to God.

The prophet's words are outbursts of violent passion. His rebuke is harsh and relentless. But if such deep sensitivity to evil is to be called [excessive, out of proportion, over excitable], what name should be given to the abysmal indifference to evil which the prophet bewails?

The.. incapacity to sense the depth of misery caused by our own failures, is a fact which no subterfuge can elude. Our eyes are witness to the callousness and cruelty of mankind, but our heart tries to obliterate the memories, to calm the nerves, and to silence our conscience.

The prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden on his soul, and he is bowed and stunned [in heart] at mankind's fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, [a voice against] the profaned riches of the world. It is.. a crossing point of God and [humanity]. God is raging in the prophet's words" [pp 3-8].

[5] ACTUALITY IN ITS PARTICULARITY

To the prophet.. no subject is as worthy of consideration as the plight of [humanity]. Indeed, God.. is described as reflecting over the plight of [humanity] rather than as contemplating eternal ideas. His mind is occupied

with [humanity], with the concrete actualities of history rather than with the timeless issues of thought.

[Humanity] is.. full of iniquity, and yet so cherished is he that God, creator of heaven and earth, is saddened when forsaken by him. Profound and intimate is God's love for [humanity], and yet harsh and dreadful can be his wrath" [p 6].

[6] LUMINOUS AND EXPLOSIVE

[According to Flaubert, really great works of art have a serene look.] "The very opposite applies to the words of the prophet. They suggest a disquietude sometimes amounting to agony. Yet there are interludes when one perceives an eternity of love hovering over moments of anguish; ..but above the whole soar thunder and lightning. [The thunder and lightning of the storm are primal symbols of the Daemonic.]

The prophet's use of passionate and imaginative language, concrete in diction, rhythmical in movement, ..marks his style as poetic. [But] far from [manifesting] a state of inner harmony or poise, its style is charged with agitation, anguish, and a spirit of nonacceptance. The prophet's concern is ..with history, and history is devoid of poise. ..He is one not only with what he says; he is involved with his people in what his words foreshadow. This is the secret of the prophetic style: his life.. [is] at stake in what he says..

Prophetic utterance is rarely cryptic; it is urging, alarming, forcing onward, as if the words gushed forth from the heart of God, seeking entrance to the heart.. of [humanity], carrying a summons as well as an involvement. ..The language is luminous and explosive, ..harsh and compassionate, a fusion of contradictions.

The prophet.. does more than translate reality into a poetic key: ..his images must not shine, they must burn.

The prophet is intent on intensifying responsibility, is impatient [with] excuse, contemptuous of pretense and self-pity. His tone, rarely sweet or caressing, is frequently consoling and.. designed to shock..

The mouth of a prophet is a 'sharp sword'; he is a 'polished arrow' taken out of the quiver of God [Isaiah, 49, 2].

Reading the prophets is a strain.. wrenching one's conscience from the state of suspended animation" [pp 6-8].

[7] WHAT YAHWEH WANTS AND DELIGHTS IN

"The prophet's ear is attuned to a cry imperceptible to others..

Human justice will not exact its due, nor will pangs of conscience disturb intoxication with success, for deep in our hearts is the temptation to worship

the imposing, the illustrious, the ostentatious. Had a poet come to Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, he would have written songs exalting its magnificent edifices, ..temples, ..monuments.

Yet when Amos.. came to Samaria, he spoke.. of moral confusion and oppression. 'I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces' [Amos, 6, 8].

[Ancient society cherished above all else three things -- wisdom, wealth, and might.] To the prophets, such infatuation was ludicrous and idolatrous. 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says Yahweh' [Jeremiah, 9, 23-24; Hosea, 9, 22-23].

'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit' [Zechariah., 4, 6]" [pp 8-10].

[8] WE ARE TOO GUTLESS

Heschel points out that to us, society is more or less all right as is. Look at all the deeds of charity, the ethos of decency. "...to the prophet [this] satiety of the conscience is prudery and flight from responsibility. Our standards are modest; our sense of injustice tolerable, timid; our moral indignation impermanent; yet human violence is interminable.. The prophet makes no concession to man's capacity. ..he seems unable to extenuate the culpability of [humanity].

..The conscience ..is subject to fatigue; longs for comfort, lulling, soothing. Yet those who are hurt, and he who inhabits eternity, neither slumber nor sleep.

The prophet is sleepless and grave. ..charity fails to sweeten cruelties. Pomp, the scent of piety, mixed with ruthlessness, is sickening to him.

'Yahweh made it known to me and I knew; then you showed me their evil deeds' [Jeremiah, 11, 18]. The prophet's ear perceives the silent sigh. [The prophet cannot compromise with] the unnoticed malignancy of established patterns of indifference. [The prophet picks up the hidden, subtle, under the surface, problems in a way impossible to] men whose knowledge depends solely on intelligence and observation.

This world, no mere shadow of ideas in an upper sphere, is real, but not absolute; the world's reality contingent upon compatibility with God. While others are intoxicated with the here and now, the prophet has a vision of an end [Jeremiah, 4, 23-26].

The prophet is human, yet.. he experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither a 'singing saint' nor a 'moralizing poet', but an assaulter of the mind. Often his words begin to burn where conscience ends" [pp 10-12].

[9] AN ICONOCLAST

“The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome. Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretensions [Jeremiah, 6, 20; Jeremiah, 7, 21-23].

The prophet knew that religion could distort what Yahweh demanded of [humanity], that priests.. had committed perjury by bearing false witness, ..calling for ceremonies instead of bursting forth with wrath and indignation at cruelty, deceit, idolatry, and violence.

To the people, religion was Temple, priesthood, incense.. Such piety Jeremiah brands as fraud and illusion. ..Worship preceded or followed by evil acts becomes an absurdity. The holy place is doomed when people indulge in unholy deeds.

‘Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, ..and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered! – only to go on doing all these abominations’ [Jeremiah, 7, 9-15].

The prophets.. proclaim that the enemy may be God’s instrument in history. ..Instead of cursing the enemy, the prophets condemn their own nation.

What gave them the strength to ..hurl blasphemies at priest and king, to stand up against all in the name of God?

The prophets must have been shattered by some cataclysmic experience in order to be able to shatter others” [pp 12-14]. [The shattering experience is ‘the wound of the Daemonic’; through this wounding, the prophet is Daemonically empowered to wound others.]

[10] BITTERNESS AND LOVE

“The words of the prophet are stern, sour, stinging. But behind his austerity is love and compassion for mankind. ..The prophet is sent not only to upbraid, but also to ‘strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees’ [Isaiah, 35, 3]. ..every prophet brings consolation, promise, and the hope of reconciliation along with.. castigation” [p 14].

[11] SWEEPING ALLEGATIONS

“In contrast to Amos, whose main theme is condemnation of the rich for the oppression of the poor, Hosea does not single out a particular section of the community [Hosea, 4, 1—2, finds no truth, no love, no knowledge of God, in all the land].

[But] the prophets have occasionally limited the guilt to the elders, princes, and priests, implying the innocence of those not involved in leadership. [To those given more, from them more is required.]

[Usually] the prophets challenge the whole country..

..What seems to be exaggeration is often only a deeper penetration, for the prophets see the world from the point of view of God.." [pp 15-17].

[12] FEW ARE GUILTY, ALL ARE RESPONSIBLE

"..Israel's history comprised a drama of God and all human beings. ..God was alone in the world, unknown or discarded. The countries of the world were full of abominations, violence, falsehood. Here was one land, one people, cherished and chosen for the purpose of transforming the world. *This* people's failure was most serious. ..Israel, holy to Yahweh, 'defiled my land, made my heritage an abomination' [Jeremiah, 2, 3 and 7].

[Truth is not] the conformity of assertion to facts.. [Truth is] reality reflected in the mind, [thus] prophetic truth [is] reality reflected in God's mind, the world [as seen by God].

Above all, the prophets remind us of the moral state of a people: few are guilty, but all are responsible. ..an individual's crime discloses society's corruption. In a community not indifferent to suffering, uncompromisingly impatient with cruelty and falsehood, continually concerned for God and every human being, crime would be infrequent rather than common" [pp 17-19].

[13] A WATCHMAN

"The prophet is a watchman [Hosea, 9, 8], a servant [Amos, 3, 7; Jeremiah, 25, 4; 26, 5], a messenger of God [Hag., 1, 13], an 'assayer and tester of the people's ways' [Jeremiah, 6, 27]. He is a person struck by.. God, overpowered by.. God, yet his true greatness is his ability to hold God and [humanity] in a single thought. ..the fact of his having received a power to affect others is supreme in his existence. His sense of election and personal endowment is overshadowed by his sense of a history shaping power [which can, bc it comes from God] 'destroy and overthrow, build and plant' [Jeremiah, 1, 10].

The prophet claims to be far more than a messenger. He is a person who stands in the presence of God [Jeremiah, 15, 19], [and] who stands 'in the council of the Lord' [Jeremiah, 23, 18], ..a participant.. in the council of God, not a bearer of dispatches whose function is limited to being sent on errands. He is a counsellor as well as a messenger [Amos, 3, 7], [and when the revelation is] one of woe, the prophet does not hesitate to challenge the intention of God: 'O Yahweh, forgive, I beseech thee; how can Jacob stand? He is so small' [Amos, 7, 2].

[When human life is at stake, the prophet does not say, 'thy will be done' to God, but 'thy will be changed.'] 'The Lord repented concerning this; it shall not be, said Yahweh' [Amos, 7, 3].

It is impossible for us to intuit.. the prophetic consciousness. A person to whom the Spirit of God comes, becomes radically transformed; he is 'turned into another man' [Samuel, 10, 6]. ..The gift he is blessed with is not a skill, but rather the gift of being guided and restrained, of being moved and curbed. [God said to Ezekiel], 'Cords will be placed upon you.. and I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, so that you will be dumb and unable to reprove them; ..But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, Thus says Yahweh your God' [Ezekiel, 3, 25-27].

As a witness, the prophet is more than a messenger [because he] not only conveys, he reveals. He.. does unto others what God does to him. ..in his words, *the invisible God becomes audible*. He does not prove or argue. The thought he has to contain is more than language can contain. Divine power bursts in the words. The authority of the prophet is in the Presence his words reveal.

There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses. ..The prophet is a witness, and his words a testimony -- to Yahweh's power and judgement, to Yahweh's justice and mercy.

[A hidden bond binds together] the word of wrath and the word of compassion, between 'consuming fire' and 'everlasting love.'

[Heschel calls this a 'contradiction', yet it is the paradox of the Daemonic God: the Daemonic power of God that contests history with evil, and human slackness. The Daemonic power that 'rules' history is tender and harsh, vulnerable and fierce, lamb and tyger, at once. The everlasting love of God is a Fire that seeks wood upon which it can burn, transfiguring the wood into flame, and incarnating flame in wood.]

..the prophet [does not deal with laws or principles], but.. with relations between God and [humanity], where contradiction – [paradox, absurdity, reversal] – is inevitable. Escape from God and return to him are inextricable parts of [humanity's] existence" [pp 24-28].

[14] THE PRIMAL CONTENT OF EXPERIENCE

"In a stricken hour comes the word of the prophet. There is tension between God and [humanity]. ..The prophet is not only a censurer.. but also a defender and consoler.. In the presence of God he takes the part of the people. In the presence of the people he takes the part of God.

The prophet does not judge the people by timeless norms, but from the point of view of God. Prophecy proclaims what happened to God as well as what will happen to the people. ..it is as if sin were as much a loss to God as to

man. God's role is not spectatorship but involvement. He and man meet mysteriously in the human deed.

[And this means, God and man meet mysteriously in the human heart from which comes all deeds.]

Therefore, the prophetic speeches are not factual pronouncements.. not objective criticism.. The style of legal, objective utterance is alien to the prophet. He dwells upon God's inner motives, not only upon [God's] historical decisions. [The prophet] discloses a *divine passion*, not just a divine judgement. The pages of the prophetic writings are filled with.. divine love and disappointment, mercy and indignation. The God of Israel is never impersonal.

This divine passion is the key to inspired prophecy. God is involved in the life of [humanity]. A personal relationship binds him to Israel; there is an interweaving of the divine in the affairs of the nation. ..The reaction of the divine [person].. its manifestation in.. love, mercy, disappointment, or anger, convey the profound intensity of the divine inwardness" [pp 28-30].

[15] THE PROPHET'S RESPONSE

[Heschel has his own 'interpretation' of the nature of the prophetic response to God. I agree with some of it, and not all of it. What is true is that the Spirit's inspiration does not work on the prophet's consciousness only unconsciously, and passively, by taking him over and dissolving him. The prophet retains his heart, and his personhood, in responding to the divine impetus. None the less, there are receptive, and implicit, levels, the event of human and divine meeting is not simply like a conscious process. Consciousness is altered. But what must be rejected is the idea that prophets were just 'mouthpieces', Heschel insists, for this would mean their hearts were unaffected. The prophet's heart is affected because it experiences and undergoes the way in which God's heart is affected by the stand and deeds of the human heart. God's heart reacts to the human heart, and in this reacting, decides its fate.]

"God.. asks not only for 'works', for action, but.. for love, awe, and [reverent respect]. We are called upon to 'wash' our hearts [Jeremiah, 4, 14], to remove 'the foreskin' of the heart [Jeremiah, 4, 4], to return with the whole heart [Jeremiah, 3, 10]. 'You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart' [Jeremiah, 29, 13]. The new covenant which Yahweh will make with the house of Israel will be written upon their hearts [Jeremiah, 31, 31-34].

The prophet is no hireling who performs his duty in the employ of the Lord. The usual ..definitions of prophecy fade into insignificance when applied, for example, to Jeremiah. ..the overwhelming impact of the divine passion upon his mind and heart, completely involving and gripping his personhood in its depths, and the unrelieved distress which sprang from his intimate involvement. The task of the prophet is to convey the word of God. Yet the word is aglow [on fire] with the passion [of God].. One cannot understand the

[divine] word without sensing the [divine] passion. ..one could not impassion others and remain unstirred [oneself]..

..the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, ..a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's ..participation in the divine passion. The typical prophetic state.. is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine passion. Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation.

[Heschel gets a little lost trying to flesh out this 'sympathy.' But he arrives at the right conclusion.]

[The prophet] lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God's voice and feels his heart. He tries to impart the 'pathos' of the message together with its logos" [pp 30-31].

[16] COMMENTARY

The first paragraph of section 12 made me burn inside, because it expresses – albeit in regard to Israel's failure – what is so desperate and terrible about the failure of historical Christianity, all the churches West and East, to respond truly to the calling of Christ.

"..God was alone in the world, unknown or discarded. The countries of the world were full of abominations, violence, falsehood. Here was one land, one people, cherished and chosen for the purpose of transforming the world. *This* people's failure was most serious."

Repeatedly Christians dismiss the failures of the past as down to inevitable human weakness. Such a reaction misses the point, and is a cop out, an evasion. To be called to a mission, and by genuinely trying it, to run up against the inherent weakness of the human clay, is one thing. That is what is seen in Peter, always jumping in impetuously over his head, and then failing, yet from within the failure, able to cry to Christ for 'the strength revealed in weakness.'

But to not even try to take on that mission, but just to funk it, is a more serious matter. It is not simply human weakness. It is a betrayal by those especially called to shoulder the burden; the very ones summoned to pick up the weight refuse, and put it down. *This* people's failure is serious..

The way of heart passion, deep and upright, grieving and fiery, was lost to Christianity early on. It is not that there was simply no philosophical or theological description of its summons to sacrifice our heart passion for the sake of redeeming the world process, but the summons was never the less answered in action. Here and there, it was. It was answered as much outside Christianity as inside it, by persons of other religions and persons of no religion. This is due to the 'Unconscious God', the Spirit. But overall, and in the main, the summons was neither understood nor acted upon. And that this happened in Christianity, which should have been the final and most extreme

step of God and humanity struggling together in the deep heart to resurrect its way of passion, is a tragedy. It should shame any Christian who is a lover of God and is, like Christ, the advocate for the ruined human possibility.

Heschel's daughter Susannah [2001] points out that her father was a thorn in the side of Judaism: "As much as he spoke against racism and war [Heschel was involved in the Black liberation movement, and the anti-Vietnam war protest, of the 1960s in America], he was equally critical of Jewish religious institutions. 'On every Sabbath multitudes of Jews gather in the synagogues, and they often depart as they have entered.' Prayer had become vicarious, delegated to rabbis and cantors who failed to inspire because they 'do not know the language of the soul.' He found fault as much with Orthodox as with Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism.. Worship had lost its fear and trembling and had become a social occasion, rather than a moment of holiness. [But more important even than all this]: Society was disintegrating, and Judaism was conforming, failing to convey its resources of integrity. Judaism, he wrote, had become a platitude, when it should be spiritual effrontery" [p xix].

Not surprisingly, Heschel was not welcomed in the Jewish community, and has remained an outsider to this day, because "many Jews prefer a message that is secular, not religious; one that presents Jews as victims, not actors with responsibilities to the political arena, and one that praises Judaism, not criticises it. My father did not tell his audience what they wanted to hear, but told them what they needed to improve" [pp xix-xx].

Telling people not what they want to hear, but what they need to take to heart to improve, is the summary of the prophetic voice.

In its very harshness is a secret gateway opening to renewal from a depth even the Evil Spirit, much less the whole of humanity, had thought ruined. This is the Messianic scandal, the shock and surprise, the final Reversal, of Christ.

This is why we cannot remain stuck on mourning the irresponsibility andfunking of the call that typifies too much of the past.

For, the Spirit is stressing the passional themes of the past, drawing them out of neglect, in order to prepare for their kindling in the future.

This is what matters.

If we sought salvation and neglected redemption; if the whole journey and battle for the human heart as the indwelling of the divine heart was allowed to lapse as Christianity forgot and indeed increasingly slandered its Jewish root, then it is the 'stricken hour' that is now, this desperate and terrible moment, that must become the spark for what was lost, to bring it back into raging life.

The rage over life's deadening, and the rage to live again..

WHEN WILL TRUTH BE LIVED AND DONE, RATHER THAN JUST ESPOUSED?

Today is the Sunday of the victory of Orthodoxy [in the war between the iconoclasts and the defenders of the icon].

Bishop Basil said= this is really the victory of truth.

He added= Christ wants every person to be what he is, 'the truth of God incarnate in humanity.'

This can be presented and kept at a purely doctrinal level, and then its real significance is lost.

To become what Christ was, we must go where he went, and do what he did.

This is why truth is not light; truth is fire.

Going where he went, and doing what he did, is passion.

Passion is fire.

GO WITH THE GARBAGE

When my mother and I stayed for a time in Laguna Beach with a mad Czech painter called Nelly, "Go with the garbage" was a phrase that often rang out. "Go with the garbage, Olga", to be more precise, since Nelly's daughter was usually the one ushering the stuff out.

The phrase stuck. At a certain point in my life I decided to stop going with the garbage, and to go with God instead.

'Go with the garbage' is sin= second rate, corner cutting, weak, the line of least resistance, the easiest way. You don't go with the garbage as an action; it is more like the absence of the true action you faked, and so the vacuum was filled by rubbish.

The monastics rightly said= we do not 'have' sin; rather, sin 'has' us. So, you don't elect to go with the garbage, it is more that one day you become more conscious that it is happening. The garbage has you, by the short and curlies, and you go with it. If it goes up, you go up. If it goes down, you go down. You are the slave of the garbage, so wherever it goes, you are swept along with it, wily nily.

'Going with God' is the converse. You have to choose to commit, and it gets harder and harder to stay with it, go further and go deeper into it, and increase the intensity to remain staked to it. Going with God requires passion= even to start, but more especially to keep going, because the going gets rough. Passion needs effort, it is something you do. In everyday words, it is 'give your heart to it.' Passion is what you give your heart to, but giving the heart to God is out and out unwise, foolish, and even crazy-- by any reasonable human lights. By human standards, God does not know what he is doing; he is a fool, and not wise; he is totally out of control.. But, there is a basic reversal, or inside out and upside down in passion, which it embraces, along with the truest paradox, and profoundest mystery, in life. For, if we persist in passion -- and this takes not just guts, generosity, and daring, but a protracted bearing and enduring that is hard, a fortitude, strength, patience-- then what seemed wise becomes foolish, what seemed foolish becomes wise, what seemed crazy becomes, if not sane, then victoriously barmy. A huge belly laugh may ensue, after so much sweat, tears, bleeding.

So, if sin requires no effort, then passion is the converse= it requires our total effort.

The teaching is= no one has a heart, for by virtue of just going with the garbage, they have thrown it away. Indeed, if we just weakly go along with what has got us by the balls, then we give away the heart. It takes no effort to get more into sin; with sin, all the effort is needed to resist it, and extract ourself. Obviously, no one ever gets out of its sweeping power, its power to sweep us away, entirely. We humans have no power to end the power of sin. Our power, which we must exercise, is in standing against sin, for the sake of

something first rate that we prefer to stand for, however hard, however costly, however heavy the burden, however ultimate the sacrifice. It takes no passion to keep going into sin; it takes passion to resist it. Why bother to come out of sin? It offers us so many human goodies. There has to be something meaningful, of value, of real point, to stand for, and we have to realise that sin is undermining our stand for what matters. The sinful cannot stand, even if they want to; their standing up, or standing for, anything is eroded, more and more. Sin puts you flat on your back. It eats away the muscles in your feet and hands, but especially, it prevents from getting going the muscle in your chest. The drum beat in Red Indian ceremonies= this is your heart when it is going. Sin silences the drum, and saps its energy.

But there is a more nuanced teaching= there is a 'deep heart' furthest and deepest in us, where we meet God 'person to person', but this heart we never had, and never lost. The deep heart is where no one goes. It is the Abyss within the human heart where we finally resolve our argument with God, and open the human heart to the divine heart, so that the two act in this world together, as one.

Thus no one just 'has' a deep heart= it must be searched for, worked for, and found.

In the existential arena of the Edge, the Gap, the Cross, deep things are decided.

WHAT IS SIN?

Kierkegaard= "sin is the untruth of our life."

The things we do that are inauthentic and false.

The lies we live.

The unreality that suffocates us.

You have to wrestle with sin to know your heart.

MOTHER MARIA SKOBTSOVA

1,

Looking at the book 'Essential Writings' [Orbis Books, 2003], and finding my reaction to her writing mixed= she is definitely a child of the Daemonic, a woman of passion of heart, yet the Eastern church's traditional theology is so biased towards Eros, and the soul, that Mother Maria creates a lot of confusion in trying to stretch Eros language to convey the truth of the Daemonic.

2,

Something Karin Greenhead said about many Christians is true of 'Lisa' as well. Her life began serving this worldly Eros -- referred to in the Chinese proverb, "If you give no help to others, you are wasting those prayers to Buddha" -- but ended being overtaken by the Daemonic: her daughter died and this wrecked her marriage, she re-examined her life and became more radical in 'love the brother as the self', and this produced, finally, her martyrdom at the hands of the Nazis. Her Cross came about because she was protecting, and saving, Jews in Nazi occupied Paris. She helped all the Jews who came to her monastery to escape by printing false documents for them showing they were Russian Orthodox Christians! To other Christians who described the plight of the Jews as 'not their problem', Lisa replied in her customary robust way, pointing out that intervening for the sake of the Jews at whatever risk to oneself was the only Christ-like thing to do. Naturally, the Nazis found out what the monastery was up to, and when confronted, Lisa made no secret of it, nor did she accept their offer to stop doing it and live. She told them she was doing what Christ would do in the situation, and could not desist-- to their jeers. The Nazi interrogators were offended by any suggestions that Christians should care about Jews, much less make the ultimate sacrifice for them.

Lisa understood the ontological roots of Eros as maternal, implicitly, in her interpretation of loving the neighbour as mothering them. But there was little in Eastern Orthodox tradition to support how she wanted to change the contemplative monastery into an active fountain caring for and seeking to nourish the dereliction of the city, except for a few scattered quotes from the desert ascetics [Macarios of Egypt; Ephrem the Syrian; St Isaac the Syrian] that she admitted were relatively rare compared with the avalanche of ascetic statements that exemplified the danger of 'spiritual egoism', pride about spiritual gifts and accomplishments, and indifference to the world and its injuries. Mostly she uses an Eros language-- urging us to engage in a total pouring out of the riches of the soul for the brother and sister who need them, rather than clinging to them as one's own possession and wealth of personality, and thus stressing giving away not only bread but also the very qualitative jewels of the soul to the impoverished world crying out for both; only occasionally does she refer to the heart as the organ of fire capable, in its kindling, of the ultimate sacrifice. She is passionate but has none of the

existential words required to convey the passion of heart enacted by Christ's Cross.

The words that convey passion are drops of blood on a white page.. This became her life, and thus as is always the ultimate with passion, her deeds spoke where her words could not. And like too many Russians, she veers slightly toward masochism in her attempt to portray the self-abnegating, humiliated, Christ. The Greeks, of course, do not do this at all, and the Russians overdo it. If you could put Kazantzakis and Dostoyevsky together.. The Russians are too influenced by the Roman Catholic kind of sick masochism, with more than a touch of Oriental fatalism; and Lisa's writings sometimes plunge into that murky pool. Understood from the nobility of heart, humiliation and abnegation is not something to be sought, or valued in itself, but is a cost to be paid, for love. Our love should not be fixed upon the Reversal necessary to achieve redemption; our love is for what redemption can accomplish, and because of love, we will pay the cost. The first is reversed, and becomes the last.. The ruler is reversed and becomes the servant of all.. The king is emptied, mocked, spat upon, and killed, because of his love for the people; because this love has no limit, and cannot be stopped, it accepts what must be inverted, turned upside down and turned inside out, to do its task. Anyone who starts loving humiliation, and abnegation, as 'glorious ends' rather than costly means, has entered the pathological illness of masochism.

The Reversal is a measure of how far kingly nobility will go, to die for the redeeming of the people. 'You don't take my life, I give it', is its spirit. This energy is pure, and clean. Masochism is impure and dirty. It distorts something clear, strong, and profound.

The truth about the Daemonic is, no one seeks it. The Daemonic finds us, against our desire and against our natural will. It shatters and destroys us, to remake us only by initiation into the deepest level of suffering in all humanity. Here is Lisa's account of the Daemonic, though she never uses the term; this comes after sitting in vigil with her daughter Nastia in hospital for a month, to no avail, for the girl dies=

After the death of someone you love, "the gates have suddenly opened onto eternity, all natural life has trembled and collapsed, yesterday's laws have been abolished, desires have faded, meaning has become meaningless, and another incomprehensible Meaning has grown wings on their backs.."

The 'Meaning' whose dragon wings grow on the backs of the futility of all meanings is Daemonic. Lisa goes on=

"Everything flies into the black maw of the fresh grave: hopes, plans, calculations, and above all meaning, the meaning of [one's] whole life. If this is so, then everything has to be reconsidered, everything rejected, seen in its corruptibility and falseness" [pp 17-18].

As with Job, this pulverizing 'wound of the Daemonic' leads to repentance, but not repentance as people usually understand and practice it, but a repentance that expresses a more radical plunge into the deep of the heart, as happened with the righteous Job who repented of not having had any heart in his previous life of the goodness and flowering of Eros. He gave it away, he shared it all, he knew the purified as distinct from the impure desire for the real Eros, yet Job still repented. He repented because he had never even remotely known the heart. Disaster drove him deep into the heart, and he repented never having known, nor used, the heart. Repenting was Job's first act of passion. So it was for Lisa.

In her desolation over her daughter's death, she came to realise that she had never known "the meaning of repentance, but now I am aghast at my own insignificance.." This means aghast at never having had, nor acted upon, the deeper heart. "I feel that my soul has meandered down back alleys all my life." This means that without the heart, there is no arrow in the bow to hit the real target of the purpose for existing in this world. "And now I want an authentic and purified road." This means, having confronted the absence of heart through the Daemonic blow that befalls us as a fate, the person wants to regain the heart and live out and act from its passion. Nothing flimsy will do, nothing contrived or half and half will suffice. The absence of heart reveals the powerful urge toward having, and doing, a heart. This becomes the first prayer of passion. Let me refind the lost heart, and I will not betray it, nor flee its exactions, as I did when not knowing..

Lisa continues, saying she wants this new beginning "not out of [any lingering] faith in life, but in order to ..understand, and accept, death" [p 19]. Eros: life, light, joy. Daemonic: death, dark, suffering. Lisa has plunged in. The Daemonic always destroys our 'faith in life', before it resurrects a different basis for loving life; it pushes us down into the 'black inexplicable pain' that embraces death as the constant companion, the pervasive darkness wherein nothing adds up, and the suffering that is harsh and inarticulate, strangled in the throat.

She immediately has a sense of the radicalism of love revealed only in the Daemonic= "No amount of thought will ever result in any greater formulation than the three words, 'Love one another', so long as it is love to the end, and love without exceptions" [p 19]. That is the heart passion, broken and reforged in the Daemonic, 'going all the way to the end of the line', and 'going all the way for all, with no exclusions.' Only the Daemonic can supply that muscle of love. Lisa hears her heart start to beat, like a wild music coming from far away, for the first time in her life.

3,

Lisa states the Daemonic again, and without naming it.

She refers to our age as one in which people are drawn to 'idolatrous charms', but goes on to the more fundamental reality of the suffering that consumes the world when you scratch the surface=

“But our times are firmly in tune with Christianity in that suffering is part of their nature. They demolish and destroy in our hearts all that is stable, mature, hallowed by the ages and treasured by us” [p 24]. The Daemonic destroys our hope in God, life, everything. This inaugurates us into a different path, a way of poverty, and a way of anarchy, where there is no ‘rule.’ This is the beginning of becoming a Fool for Christ, a reversal person, a sacred clown. After the Daemonic strikes, what was up is down, and what was down is up. There is no longer any up; it is fallen far down into the abyss. Only in the down do we feel intimations of a new rising, a new ‘stepping up’ for a new reality. In this reality, there will be “the complete absence of even the subtlest barrier which might separate the heart from the world and its wounds” [p 24].

This last is the second great revelation of the Daemonic. In the Daemonic, the heart and the world are bound together, and cannot be unbound. No world, no heart. If a heart, then the world.

Lisa realised, thanks to the blow of the Daemonic which ended her earlier life, that in each human being is the mystery of a spark of God, and only when this is felt, seen, understood, will another mystery be revealed, that in each human being the image of God in them is distorted, and held captive, by an evil power.

Upon this paradox is hinged the whole work, and suffering, of the Daemonic for redemption..

4,

Americans thought they could start from year zero and create a perfect nation. But you can't. It needs radical, fundamental, change of heart-- and that only comes through the Daemonic wound.. Communism was a good idea, and very close to the Jewish prophetic revelation on social justice-- but it failed because it could not, and did not, change the human heart at any underlying level. We try to live and act for the truth, and sometimes we attain some stature of righteousness, but until the Daemonic sword pierces our heart, we are not even aware of, and certainly do not repent for, the failure of heart that has let down our passionate calling to the world. This is more than repenting of sins, flaws, faults. We confront the stark reality that we have always been more shallow than we previously thought; we confront the painful reality that we have refused to take up the burden and honour of the heart because of seeking something we 'treasure' more than the way of heart in the world, and therefore will not let go.. The heart has an idol, a treasured idol, it holds on to, which blocks it ever coming to life in action. For some people, the treasure is something flimsy, just rubbish [like 'wanting to be a celebrity' nowadays]; for other people, it may be a more subtle block, like some kind of idealism, or romanticism, that prevents coming down to earth and confronting things as they are.. Indeed, it may be something 'good' that the Daemonic takes away from us because it obscures how terrible things really are at depth, and how marvellous they could become if transformed at depth.

In a very pure sense, the Daemonic stabs our innocence, takes away the child in us who will not accept the world just as it is; the ultimate death in us is that of the child-- for the sake of freeing a truer adult.

Passion is the existential 'growing up' most people refuse..

The Daemonic kills the child, sacrifices the child, for the sake of a new kind of adult rarely seen in the world, yet this spiritual maturity is more vulnerable than any child and more bold than any adult. The Daemonic's most unacceptable offence to us is its refusal to protect the childlike-- as we demand from all our gods as the sine qua non of their being any sort of divinity to us; instead, it permits innocence to be given away to worldly experience, for the sake of what William Blake called 'organised innocence', or holiness, at the end.

5,

There is a huge difference, despite a direct connection, between humanity as guilty, and humanity as tragic. Deeper than our guilt is our tragedy. The repentance in Job, as in Lisa after her daughter died, went beyond arguing over our degree of, and culpability for, sin; it recognised our profounder tragedy, and embraced it. For the heart which can easily be puffed up about nothing, this is a genuine humbling, a reduction to nothing. Yet from this we are initiated into the tragedy of all humanity, and end up weeping not for 'my' fall, but 'our' fall, the throwing away of our heroism of heart into the dirt, selling our birth right for trash. From this will be resurrected a different kind of fighting for redemption, a joining of Sword and Cross, of pathos and thymos, in a reforged passion that is 'confident of its foundations', and therefore can accept whatever hand it is dealt.

The key transition, however, is to accept our share of the suffering that afflicts all of humanity, and not to resent the Daemonic blow that befalls us, and initiates us into our portion of the common fate. What we have to carry, as our share of the universal suffering, is what we can redeem. The Daemonic is not to be sought, but as the Jews well understood, it is to be avoided at all costs for as long as possible. False seeking of the Daemonic generates that excessive humility, and sick love of taking punishment, so often noticed among Christians, but rarely seen among Jews. Nothing falsifies Christ on the Cross as much as pretending we want to be Reversed, and thus are seeking crucifixion, seeking sorrow, seeking heavy weights, seeking calumny from others, and the like. Even Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to be spared the Reversal of the Daemonic. No one can seek this Reversal, though Paul said he gloried in its infirmities and pains because it brought him closer to the mystery of the Cross. But he spoke as a learner, a person learning the Reversal who did not pretend to easily welcome it.

Many people stricken by the Daemonic resist its attack, and get stuck; they do not realise there is a way to work with it, from within its bleakness. This is what Job discovered, after coming through the ordeal of moral accusation

[you must have done something wrong, the Jewish judges insisted] and existential despair [curse God and die, his wife urged] that pulled him in different directions before he could finally acknowledge that his existence was in the hands of the Daemonic. None the less, Job arrived at a place neither of these judgemental, nor hopeless, stances could reach.

Thus, the Daemonic is not to be avoided once it bites, but it is not to be sought. The Reversal that passion accepts to make its sacrifice is to be borne, nobly, but cannot be turned into an excuse for adopting weak stances such as passivity, surrender to evil rather than fighting it, fatalism. 'Turn the other cheek' does not mean becoming the hundred pounds weakling on the beach who lets the bullies kick sand in his face. It means, rather: be so absorbed in and committed to the purity of what you are doing in the heart with your life's action, if people maliciously slander you for this, if people revile and renounce your love and want to punish you for putting your money where your mouth is, then do not react in kind, but if they hit your right cheek, then give them your left cheek also to be hit as a statement that nothing will stop you from accomplishing your heart's calling from God. The call to action is too vital to be distracted by defending yourself or replying in kind to people's misunderstanding and mistrust; just get on with it. Don't justify yourself; don't defend yourself. This is the inherent aggressiveness of turning the other cheek. You cannot stop me by one punishment intended to break my spirit, so by all means, I offer you the second punishment. Unbeknownst to us who 'care' so much about the reaction we arouse in other people, this is spitting in the face of the devil. Turning the other cheek, like the Cross, is an act of defiance in the face of intimidation, and every other evil that is heaped upon the heart when it really loves the world with passion.

6,

The way of passion, and the heart that is deep, is not for children.

'The Lamb of God sacrificed before the world was made' is the basic promise by God to redeem the world through the sufferings of the human heart, led by the Messianic example, and indwelt by the mysterious and powerful Spirit. God too, before we do it, has let his Child go, for the sake of something greater and deeper, on the far side of the child's injury, offence, moralistic judgementalism, and abject despair.

As ever, the Jewish rabbi Lionel Blue is soothing towards something that is in reality very raw. He recently said on the radio=

You might as well give God your problems-- he's got everything else.

NOTES ON DOSTOYEVSKY

PART ONE= RADICAL SOBORNOST

Fyodor Dostoyevsky is arguably the world's greatest novelist. His story telling -- his command of incident, pace, drama -- is marvellous; but even more amazing is his use of what Bahktin called 'polyphonic' characters, each given full reign to develop their own standpoint on life as they go through the ups and downs of the story, and all the standpoints given equal weight -- including the devil's standpoint -- and thereby creating a true portrait of life's clashing forces. He lets these forces at work in the 'stands' taken by persons in existence truthfully play out, and lets life demonstrate which are the tested and true, which are tested and crumble, which stand up, which fall down.. The author does not take sides, does not intrude, does not editorialize. But it is Dostoyevsky's almost clinical peeling away of layers of the personality, his ability to probe hidden deeps, that makes him a depth psychologist far ahead of Freud, Jung, Rogers, et al. No one is deeper than Dostoyevsky, in uncovering the irrational springs of human existence.

Dostoyevsky is one of the very few Christian novelists [William Blake was a Christian poet] in the world, and certainly among the select few worth bothering over. He struggled for his Christianity, going through distinct phases. It was always for him a problem, never an answer. There is nothing pat, self-satisfied, easy, in Dostoyevsky's struggle with Christ. The question, for him, posed by any and all religion is= can religion change anything on the ground? If it cannot, then what use is it?

Dostoyevsky worked through and rejected Christian Socialism, though he only developed a more radical religious communalism as a result, a communalism he saw in the Russian peasants and their 'folk' religiosity; this human solidarity, and interdependence, has obvious links back to the communalism of indigenous peoples round the world, and doubtless what Dostoyevsky saw, and esteemed, in the 'Russian people' was a vestige of the tribal way of holding together. 'Togetherness' was the primal manifestation of religious influence upon humanity, and thus should be the first priority of all religious initiative. There are no winners and losers in Dostoyevsky. All are saved, or no one is saved.

Thus, whether you call it 'Socialism', or prefer a different term, a more spiritual term such as 'Communalism', or the special Russian term 'Sobornost' [denoting a gathering of all the people where a conclusion is only reached if all voices are respected, expressed and listened to, and are in final total accord-- thus a Sobor is a Council, and represents the Way of 'Conciliarity'], Dostoyevsky remained firmly adhered to an anti-individualist, anti-collectivist, but radical togetherness of human beings. If Christian Socialism was dropped, it is because it is not radical enough. In real 'communion' one with another, we carry each other, suffer for each other, are helped and help, and most radical, we take the faults of others onto ourself, as if they were our own. Thus, in this radical togetherness we are also forgiven and forgive.

The 'spirit' of Dostoyevsky's 'gathering together' of humans in an unbreakable solidarity is that, as father Zosima says, "each is responsible for all." This is radical love, not legal rights; it is even beyond ethical duty. Its spirit is, each of us will do anything, at cost to himself, to keep the brother or sister part of the loving relationships. This goes beyond generosity, and needs humility toward others, because even in loving them, helping them, forgiving them, we must not further wound people's injured pride.

Dostoyevsky insists= 'we are in it together', and 'if one is lost, all are lost.'

A commentator=

"Belensky had taught him, and he never forgot it, that unless all could be saved, no one had a right to be saved" [A. Boyce Gibson, 'The Religion of Dostoyevsky', p 74]. And= "The only Christianity which appeals to Dostoyevsky at all is that which includes the wastrels and scoundrels and leaves no one out" [p 94].

"He had to select the dark corners of the world, ..to show that the light which could not penetrate them would not be worthy of worship" [p 75].

"God does not order things for the best, but is with us though we are gripped by the worst" [p 94].

PART TWO= WHAT SEALS US IN

1,

The last seal on our desperate condition is what Dostoyevsky's novels explore as 'hurt pride.' In hurt pride, we refuse any and all help. This is why those who realize how really broken they are at depth can only be helped by others who are equally aware they are broken at depth; for this cause, the Messiah had to be broken like us, disrespected like us, disbelieved like us.. In the most abject and full scale brokenness, we cannot be helped by the morally superior, the mystically illumined, the intellectually exalted, dwelling on a higher plane to us. Help from them merely humiliates us further, and there can be no accepting of help if it humiliates the already humiliated.. "...if one's sense of significance has been mauled or stunted or deformed it is bound to appear in an exaggerated form, and to be particularly intractable" [Gibson, *ibid*, p 53]. Only if we are all equally culpable, equally hurt and equally disadvantaged by our common destruction, can we help and be helped by one another -- without that so-called 'help' humiliating us further when we are already humiliated enough by existence, our circumstances, our history.

The unique insight of Dostoyevsky is that "...people can only remain in spiritual togetherness if there is absolutely no assumption of superiority.. and if all set to work with each other on the assumption that all crimes and merits

are shared out. Thus togetherness is combined with an acute sense of individual responsibility" [ibid, p 49]. The key to this solidarity where we are equally lost and equally found, with no one above and no one below, is that each person has to overcome self-will. Father Zosima, in 'The Brothers Karamazov', unpacks the full meaning of= "Each is responsible for all." This includes taking on oneself the sins and errors and faults of others as if they were really one's own, and ceasing to project one's own indolence and impotence onto others.. If we do not humble ourself, turning self-will on its head, we will end up in that pride of Satan that leads us, in some implacable way, to reject the Way of Love that God enacts. "You can be together with people [living in an organic communion with them] if you pull down your walls and so humble yourself that your help and availability will humiliate nobody" [ibid, p 48].

In short, for Dostoyevsky 'human failure to hit the mark' – sin in Greek -- starts with 'self-interest', individualism as greed, avarice, taking what you want at the expense of communion with others, but it does not end there. It progresses to that self-will which creates the locked-in -- impenetrable and invulnerable -- state of pride. "Even at the height of his crusade against bourgeois individualism, ...he realized that it was not enough to give oneself to another: the real problem was to do it without humiliating. For pride is perhaps all that the other has left to him, and in the name of all that he is he will stand out against the kindness which threatens to deprive him of it. As has often been pointed out, Raskolnikov does not commit his murder for gain, but to show that he is somebody.." [ibid, p 48].

To help someone, we must humble ourself. We must be as low down and derailed as they are, also as willing to change.. Consequently, we are as much helped as helping, in any redemptive deed for our fellows sharing the joy and pain of the human condition..

'Love of the neighbour' acknowledges the primal reality of human togetherness as a radical communalism -- 'Sobornost' in Russian: it means a gathering or council that excludes no one, but includes all, and rejects both absolutism from the top, and the majority vote from the bottom, but seeks, rather, a third way beyond both of these Western tendencies by virtue of reaching the accord of each and all. In fact, it is accepted that the Spirit has not spoken until unanimity of everyone, with no dissenters left out, is arrived at. This creates a 'unity-in-diversity' which protects against, and eliminates, either the tyranny of the collective over the individual, or the individual imposing his will in such a way as to fragment the collective.

For Dostoyevsky, the selfishness of the individual that generates greed, avarice, theft from the communion with others, and injury to its very nature of sharing, needs the radical generosity of love to overcome it. But harder to over-come is our self-will, the spiritual pride that means we do not know how to help without humiliating, nor how to accept help without being humiliated. The helping imperative of love is impossible to fulfill, whilst we remain

essentially proud in 'self-will', not simply mean and possessive in 'self-interest.'

Generosity is not enough.. Humility has to partner it.

'Emptying the will' [kenosis] does not mean total negation of our freedom. Nor is it subjugation to another's power. Dostoyevsky believed that without freedom, we cease being human, and freedom therefore has the connotation of 'not being interfered with', and a 'natural anarchism.' In emptying the will, we do not lose our freedom by entering some cosmically undifferentiated condition where we no longer have to carry the burden of choice. Emptying the will means restoring our will to love, as God loves, and as we are called to love one another. If God is humble toward us, to the extent of sharing in our nadir of humiliation, then this is the reality of love, and the only way we can really love other people. It is this peculiarly powerful mix of generosity -- willingness to go to any lengths for love -- and humility -- willingness to be as defiled and disregarded as those we love in order to communicate love to them -- that marks the divine-human love which can be called Messianic.

To help, and be helped, we must be emptied of self will, but our hurt pride blocks this. It is the last obstacle. 'Fear and Pride', a crazed friend once announced, are the last enemy of the human venture.

Fear can be overcome through deeper acquaintance with God. The pride that protects, solaces, and walls in, fear is harder to break. If your heart has not broken, it is not because you are so tough, so robust, as you probably believe, but because your pride has put your fear in a marble tomb. Proudly you sit on the cold stone, thinking its inflexibility is a sign of spiritual advancement. It is, on the contrary, the sign of advancement in the 'indestructibility' that is Satanically evil. The hardened heart, the Jews called this. The callous heart, they added, about it.

The issue of hurt and twisted pride subtly underscores our descent into hell. Our life cannot be changed, it is set on its ruinous course, because we cannot help, or be helped, by another human being.

Pride -- not just fear -- means the flight away from the Nothing becomes the descent into the Nothing.

2,

Again, hurt pride is implicated in our inability to forgive and be forgiven.

When we remain stuck in Satanic judgementalism, accusing and condemning others in their error of living, and absolving ourselves of the same error, this is also the result of pride. "As has often been pointed out, there is not much in the Gospels about sexuality.. but there is a great deal about pride, and especially about the moral self-congratulation of the righteous" [ibid, p 55].

"..religion not only enjoins humility on each of us individually; it also enjoins us to devote our humility to the service of our neighbour, especially if he is running into trouble. But to humble oneself without love may be just a complicated form of pride. From the other end, being [forgiven] may be felt as an insult; those set in their alienation will cling to it as the last remnant of their self-respect. Above all they will not consent to be forgiven. ..forgiveness is an unequal relation; even if the forgiven feels the need of it, he is humiliated in his own eyes if he accepts it. [Thus] it is harder to be forgiven than to forgive. The only people in fact who can be trusted with forgiveness are those who at the same time acknowledge their solidarity in sin with the forgiven. Otherwise, forgiveness, like justice, is an instrument of oppression" [ibid, p 57].

Lucifer was an angel of light who fell through pride; he was not a mud raker. He deals in false light, false illumination and false charisma. He can simulate any human excellence, and therefore there is no advanced spiritual condition where we are home and dry. Even Buddhists acknowledge that enlightenment can be infected by a subtle pride. If this spiritual pride can infect even our attempt to love, to the point of forgiving and being forgiven, creating "obduracy of injured pride in the forgiven, and.. clumsiness and insensitivity in those who forgive" [ibid, pp 57-58], then we need to remain vigilant, and continue struggling. We are not there yet, not at all..

To repent, to help and be helped, to forgive and be forgiven: this is the strong meat and drink of our spiritual struggling, and it is decidedly not pap for children. We are all in it together. When we embrace that, and do the homework on ourself needed to practice that-- then we are on the road out of hell.

Then we cry for others, and cry out of our self, and love can answer.

Failing that, we remain radically alone, abandoned, cold, for as long as we will 'hold out' against the heart break which, alone, can redeem.

If our heart is broken, and we know it is, and we cease hellish escapades and hellish escapes to cancel out its truth, we can be redeemed.

3,

To descend inexorably into hell is the falling down of passion. To come out of hell, little by little, through repenting, through giving and receiving help, through forgiving and being forgiven, working with God and working with other people on the way, is the muscle, and heart, of passion.

Only passion whose heart is more on fire than the desert can cross the empty wastes.

Pit= weak neglect of truth; deadness inescapable.

Furnace= strong betrayal of truth; burning unrelievable.

Void= cowardice before the truth, and indifference to its obligation to action;
falling without end.

Passion is what descends; passion is what can be reborn, ascending back up
from deeps to go back into the world, to confront deeps.

THE DAEMONIC GOD IS NOT A RESCUER

The Child in us wants a God who is 'The Rescuer', as the existentialist Irvin Yalom calls this deity.

The Rescuing God is, in so far as it has any validity, part of salvation. There is a divine Light that can rescue us from human – and demonic infested – 'darkness.'

However, many people who lose the Rescuer lose all faith in God as a result, without realising there is another side of this.

Losing the Rescuer is necessary to switch *from* seeking Salvation for oneself, and those close to one, *to* immersing in the Redemption that will include all, both those close to us and those remote from us, those who are friends and those who are enemies. Only redeeming includes all. Salvation is always dualistic, in whatever form it is articulated, Jewish 'saved versus damned', Buddhist 'enlightened versus ignorant', Greek 'whole versus fragmented.' Saving does not have the means, the spiritual clout, to save all, even if it is dedicated to this in some kindly desire to extend itself infinitely. It will always end up as some can be saved, most cannot be saved.

This is why the Rescuer God must go..

The Rescuer God is destroyed by the Daemonic God.

Losing God as any kind of personal Rescuer is the first wound of the Daemonic.

Many people at this point lose all faith in any kind of 'personal', and especially 'loving', God, and go no farther.

This is a pity..

Losing any Rescuer God is the first step on the path that leads to the Daemonic God.

If people stayed with the loss of the Rescuer God, however devastating, instead of bailing out on all and any God that has a claim on their personhood and their love, they would find this the moment they were initiated into the existence pain that is black and inexplicable. This is where the real God begins, and a false god is left behind.

This wound of the Daemonic is where the path of redemption begins.

Stay with the loss of God as a Rescuer to find the God who is a Redeemer-- of all.

This God of humanity's heartbreak asks us to put the Child away, to let the Child in us die, so that we can reground our heartbreak in the heartbreak of all of humanity.

This is when we join the human tragedy.

This is when different tears fall.

This is when Redemption does not rescue anything we wanted rescued, but starts to move through everything differently— and we go with it..

WHAT DOES THE HEART WANT?

Further to what a friend told me about the difference in Greek between *want* [thelisis] and *desire* [epithymia], I wrestled with it more..

1,

Though dictionaries aren't a guide to philosophy, I looked up 'want.'

---The link to **need** or **lack** is obviously there; in English, the term comes from the Norse for 'lacking.' **Requiring** something is implied; or= **to be short of** a necessary experience, or degree, of something. Thus need carries the implication of **impoverishment**.

Thus also a link to **inclination**, and hence to **intention**.

Then I looked up 'desire.'

---In English, desire comes from the French, and seems similar to **wishing** [as in Freud's 'wish fulfilment phantasy'= which is close to the Greek Fathers' 'thoughts'], **craving**, **appetite**, or most positively, **longing**. Virtually a **request**.

Some conclusions=

There is a sharper lack, or poverty, in 'wanting.'

In 'desiring', there is a sense of being drawn into something marvellous ['desirable'] that will enhance life, but it seems the pull is the felt, or imagined, increase of being, or expansion of being. What attracts, or draws, oneself beyond the self is a greater fullness, beauty, richness, outside the self-- thus the self yearns to be joined with it.

The vision, the promise, or just the sense of, an Enhanced Beingness draws, attracts, pulls, desire toward the Object that will grant this. Fullness comes through the longed for Object. Such is Eros, granter of ever greater fullness. Desire puts the emphasis more on The Desired, rather than the one who desires.

Wanting puts the emphasis on the poverty inside the self. It pushes the person back on the self, and forces them to face their Need, their Incompleteness. There is an emptiness in want that, in a more subtle sense, is never filled.

Thus desire belongs to soul, and wanting to heart. Soul is feminine, heart is masculine.

Soul= the wine of love intoxicates me.

Heart= the fire of love kindles me.

Desire speaks of a capacity in the soul for growth, expansion, enriching. The soul rejoices in, and celebrates, this very potentiality contained in 'her' being.

Wanting speaks of a 'hole in the heart' nothing can fill. This hole can make the heart aggressive in how he goes about securing what he believes will fill it, but his repeated experience is that little of what he chases after in the world fills it; many such things leave him more empty afterward than he was before. The question of what does fill the heart's profound lack, genuine need, and true poverty, becomes the source of the heart's restless search life long, seeking this and that, but never finding what is sought.

Indeed, most of the frenetic and busy rushing round after different things to fill the heart's want is a way of denying its irremovable hole in the heart too deep to fill. The pain in the heart, the really deep pain, is hidden and not faced in our endless but fruitless search for 'what we want.'

The inability of the heart to find what it seeks in its lacking, its emptiness, becomes a pervasive desolation. In desolation, poverty becomes acute, and turns into more than lack, becoming barren, a wasted ground, a desert, a wasteland unfit for habitation; and it is a short step from this barrenness of heart to its accompaniment-- to be forsaken, alone in a place of devastation. The heart is laid waste, and is abandoned, in that place.

It is close to the place of ultimate heart defeat, which is despair. In despair, there is no more possibility, all options are exhausted, all turnings in the road are used up. What the heart wants, what really at a deeper level the heart is seeking, no longer matters. There is nothing to want because there is nothing to find. All seeking ends. However, despair can be indulged, and its sense of checkmate used as a relief from the tension of living from the heart, in need, yet not knowing where to look, or what to do, to attain what Dostoyevsky speaks of= "I want to live life so as to satisfy my whole capacity for living." We can use despair as a get-out from the tension, and struggle, of wanting to really live life, and when this is so, then there lurks in despair a secret satisfaction, a sneaking escape from the pain in the heart that waxes and wanes as we search for the real life, live it, and then lose it again. Such giving in to the despair taking us out of that journey and that fight is the 'sinful sadness' which the Greek Orthodox monastics identified; this is the reason why certain people get imprisoned in a strangely comfortable despair for years and years, unable to break free, their vital sap, their thymotic energy and zeal for life, weakened fatally, more and more over time.

But this is not the clean, the pure, despair that is also a desperation, because there is no way out. In this despair a wall is reached, and a limit on all striving to blast through it is reached. This despair is sung about repeatedly by David in the Psalms, and it carries no connotation of a secret satisfaction and easy comfort, but of a frantic state where there is no possibility of 'resting.' This is because all these aspects of this place in the heart -- lack and poverty, desolation and barrenness, forsakenness and aloneness -- mean that the whole venture of the heart has failed. Anyone who still has a heart cannot

bear that failure of the heart. Despair, as distinct from 'sinful sorrow', can find no peace, no rest, because it has come to the place where the heart is finished, yet cannot be easy or comfortable with that. The heart cries out in this state, but the cry does no good. Nothing avails, yet the heart cannot live with that. The heart is finished, but the heart cannot finish with the heart. If it could, then there would be a peace, and rest, of the grave.

But even in the grave where it has all come to nothing, the heart cannot sleep. For this is the truth about the heart that no one knows. The heart can be finished, defeated, defunct, destitute and derelict, but it cannot give up. This is hell.

Most people would rabidly deny it, or just dismiss this as crazy, if it were said that at depth every human heart is in this hell.

None the less, it is so.

Every human being is, at depth, in despair about the heart.

This hell is in every heart, gnawing away. It cannot end, because the heart even in the place where it is finished, cannot be finished with the mystery of what the heart is, and what it is for.

This hell deep in each of us, and in all, is crucial to our relationship with God. For God put the heart in us, and the heart is the direct, unmediated, standing before God. Thus all the heart's troubles come from God, in the ultimate.

Only the Jews faced that our yes to God contains a no, and must do. Our affirmation that God is Lord of the Heart contains an implicit adversity and contention. No one says yes to the heart without also saying no. It is a long, hard road that brings us only 'in the end' to an unequivocal yes. For much of that road, it is our no that, if we can embrace it with truth, with grief and anger, binds us the most closely to God.

For between us and God there is a wound. This wound is holy. Our heartbreak is holy.

The heart's love for God is impassioned by this pain.

Our deep heart pain is holy.

2,

We search for the answer to our heart's lack, but we do not find it. For a while, this search plays out, and 'keeps us busy.' It distracts us.

But gradually it becomes evident, to any person of sincerity, that what we are really searching for is the heart itself. What does it want? really means, what does it want from us? We cannot find out, and sooner or later, we confess this. The Sufi poet says, why search for the heart?

“For I do not know where it is.
Tell me yourself, what is a heart?
I do not find its trace anywhere.”

The poet begins in such high hopes, as a youth, but if he matures he ends in despair, joined with all his brothers and sisters in the vast underground pit where the human heart cannot sleep, cannot rest, cannot find peace, because it is finished and yet cannot throw itself away, cannot be rid of the heart in its mystery.

It is in this hell where we all live, deeper down, that is contained the germ of our only hope.

Blessed are the poor in spirit..
Blessed are they that are hungry..
Blessed are they that weep..
[Luke, 6, 20]

3,

It is impossible for us not to equate cast off as cast out, beyond the pale, and therefore to conclude our bereftness is God’s punishment. Does anyone judge the human heart more harshly than those who have failed its way in their own eyes? We are all the accusers as well as the guilty in this strange drama.

Thus, our heartbreak at its deepest is never spoken, because it is too final to utter. We put our drama of being at once the accuser and the accused on the Messiah, on the Christ, who must bear it, pure and raw, as we cannot. The unspeakable truth of our heart is captured in what the Redeemer must bear and endure in our stead, because we have put it far away. “Thy rebuke has broken his heart, he is full of heaviness, he looked for some to have pity on him, but there was no man, neither found he any to comfort him. He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of thy people was he stricken. But thou didst not leave his soul in hell, nor didst thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption” [Handel’s *Messiah*].

Both the lost human heart, and the Messiah who plunges into its suffering to refind it, will not be left in hell.

What the Messiah does in the depth will restore the human heart to its true standing, and return it to its rightful search, and in consequence of this victory in the deep place where we were defeated, the human heart will find what it always sought-- the answer to its own mystery.

EROS AND THE DAEMONIC= A Brief Snap-Shot

1,

God has a right hand and a left hand; Eros is the right, the Daemonic is the left.

Right: light, joy, height.

Left: dark, suffering, depth.

Right: desire of soul.

Left: passion of heart.

Right: the height comes down, generously. The music of the fountain, overflowing.

Left: the depth stands up, sacrificially. The music of the black pain which can give birth to the red flame.

Both Eros and the Daemonic are ways in which God reaches out to what divinity has created-- on the Eros side, to indwell it, nurture it, bring its potentiality to realisation, and on the Daemonic side, to confront it, kick it hard to get it to go in a new direction as it heads for disaster, test and reforge it.

Eros bestows a gift. The Daemonic inflicts a wound. Both are a blessing, yet it is no surprise humans prefer the former to the latter.

2,

We hope in Eros, whose visitation to the soul can become a permanent indwelling, but the Daemonic befalls us, like a fate we cannot escape.

Eros opens the soul, awakening its longing. The Daemonic breaks into the heart, exposing its brokenness.

Eros: love as Goodness-- bottomless, infinitely outpouring, never ending. 'God will be all in all.'

Daemonic: love as Truth-- burning, cutting with a sharp edge, unrelenting. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Eros draws our longing, and we grow toward it, like a plant facing the sun.

The Daemonic afflicts our passion, like Jacob locked in battle with an unknown adversary through a starless night, by a fast flowing river.

Eros: longing seeking light and love.

Daemonic: passion thrown into a struggle for truth in the depth.

The former journey must learn many lessons, and let go of much, to keep going; the latter battle will require increasing integrity, sincerity, honesty, to stand up to the opponent with whom it strives.

3,

Passion is necessary for holiness. Holiness passes from God to those whom God wounds, to remake them fire; they are the 'Spirit-Bearers', when we understand that this means bearing the unbearable, and enduring the unendurable, because of the hardship involved in following this Holiness. It is a wound, a burden, even a curse. Holiness is 'Other' to us. Letting it ignite us has a cost.

Eros is the sacredness of all things created by God, and created to be 'God-friendly'-- inherently bathed in God's Energies and translucent to God's Presence, yet retaining their own freedom and identity; hence the created is neither cut off and separated from the divine, nor absorbed by and collapsed back into the divine. The 'ten thousand things' are the partner of God in creation's dance.

Eros is a special kind of light, warm and penetrating; clarity and love combine-- you see 'in' to things with love, and love reveals them as having inherent beauty, value, completeness in their own way of being. Eros is a light of love, a light that manifests and bestows love on all that it beholds. Then comes joining with the beloved. Eros gives life, and through union between Lover and Beloved, heals life's tendency to split into divided fragments, rather than work together as a complex and integrated whole. Division and fragmentation prevents the free flow of life, making for sickness.

Eros is not only illuminative and unitive, uniting the inner being as well as uniting the inner with outer being, but is ecstatic. A musical evocation of the ecstaticness of Eros is Qaw'wali, the Pakistani style of Sufi music sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. This ex-stasis welcomes any and all, has rumbustious joy, is loving rather than impersonal, yet keeps the balance and sacred geometry of an intricate dance where no one smashes into anyone else, but all interweave, seamlessly.

In Eros, things 'go together' for good. This is ontological= the way things are. It is 'natural' in the terms of Lao Tzu.

In the Daemonic, there is abrupt disjunction, violent clashing, which yet reveals what is true, and where we stand relative to truth. This is existential= the way things stand and fall, and the way we are faithful or unfaithful to them. It is 'personal' in the terms of Kierkegaard.

4,

The love revealed by Eros is like finding water in a desert after a long drought. Julian of Norwich, to whom God said, "all will be well, all manner of things will be well", also told Julian's soul something further=

"And with this.. [God] also showed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand. It seemed to me as round as a ball. I gazed at it and thought, 'What can this be?' The answer came thus, 'It is everything that is made.' I marvelled how this could be, for it was so small it seemed it might fall suddenly into nothingness. Then I heard the answer, 'It lasts, and ever shall last, because God loves it. All things have their being in this way... by God'."

The love revealed by the Daemonic is hard to take. We suffer in the wound. We sorrow and we hurt. Yet we also are moved. If we were not moved, accidie would take over, and we would remain paralysed, immobilised, listless -- as too many passionless people are.

Hafiz, the Persian Sufi poet, puts the impact of the Daemonic jokingly, but accurately ['Tired of Speaking Sweetly', in 'The Gift, Poems By Hafiz']=

Love wants to reach out and manhandle us,
break all our teacup talk of God.
If you had the courage and could give the Beloved his choice,
some nights He would just drag you around the room
by your hair,
ripping from your grip all those toys in the world that bring you no joy.
Love sometimes gets tired of speaking sweetly
and wants to rip to shreds
all your erroneous notions of truth
that make you contentious within yourself, dear one, and with others,
causing the world to weep
on too many fine days.
God wants to manhandle us,
lock us inside a tiny room with himself
and practice his dropkick.
The Beloved sometimes wants
to do us a great favour;
hold us upside down, and shake all the nonsense out.
But when we hear
He is in such a "playful drunken mood",
most everyone I know
quickly packs their bags and hightails it
out of town.

5,

Melanie Klein spoke of the way in which babies split 'the good breast' and 'the bad breast.' Many people perform a similar defensive act of primitive splitting in dealing with the contrast, even contradiction, between Eros and the Daemonic as both manifesting the one God, the God who 'is' Love. Whether this God gives or wounds, takes us up or plunges us down, delights or distresses us, saves us from drowning by dragging us out of the polluted water, or redeems the water by throwing us back in once we have some air in

our lungs, it is all the same God. But people try to 'pick and choose' in regard to God, as they do in regard to existence, preferring one aspect, trying to evade another.

Thus Eros is embraced as the apotheosis of the God of Love, but is kept well clear of the Daemonic which is repudiated as the apotheosis of the God of Wrath-- a deity of stringent moral demands who is profoundly angry with human transgression, and determined to punish us for it. This juridical deity keeps score, and lets nothing pass. There is a long tradition in East and West of asserting that the Old Testament God can be dismissed as nothing more than a primitive patriarchal bully, cruel and demanding, whose love is conditional, whilst by some magic sleight of hand, this father's son is generous, brave, and unconditionally loving. According to such a scenario, the son redeems the father, in effect. Even William Blake fell for this sentimental drivel, as did Jung, and many others down to the present day.

The irony is that when Eros and the Daemonic are spiritually revealed in their respective fullness, it turns out that, though a paradox, the Daemonic is more loving than Eros. It is easier to give a gift, and perfect the gift in its full flowering. The wound that hurts us, yet changes us at the core, and enables us to take this change we have gone through to the world, to change it, is far more costly. Ironically, in the Daemonic, God pays more, God loses more, than we humans do. The price we pay, the loss we suffer, is so as to become the co-bearer with God of what God bears. He carries the weight, so that we can assume the load with him. Ironically, the Daemonic proves to be the more radical, unconditional love, for everyone and everything.

6,

St Basil's prayer [from his Liturgy] is totally right side, Eros oriented=

"Receive us all into thy Kingdom, having shown us to be children of the light and children of the day. Grant us thy peace and thy love, O Lord our God, for thou hast restored us to all things."

No Daemonic in this prayer...

An alternative=

Bring us through hell, to become adults for the redemption of the world; let us not retreat into your kingdom while the world remains in hell; show us to be men and women forged through suffering to become deep, as deep as Christ on the Cross, and let us know his torment and his tumult, in order to win with him, the victory at the point of nadir.

God of the heartbreak, mend our heart only as you mend the world's heart.

Let that war of hearts be our only comfort, until it is won.

Amen.

EROS IN TAOISM

This is Eros as Taoism describes it ['Tao Te Ching', Lao Tzu, ch 77]=

The way of heaven is like the bending
of a bow:

What is high up gets pulled down.

What is low down gets pulled up.

Heaven takes from what has too much and
gives to what doesn't have enough.

Man is different:

he takes from those who have too little
and gives to those who have too much.

Who has a genuine abundance to give to the world?

Only a person of Tao.

He acts without expectation,
accomplishes without taking credit,
and has no desire to display his merit.

EROS IN 'THE SONG OF SONGS'

The markedly Daemonic religion of the Jews had an Eros side. The figure that Ezekiel saw on God's throne, often called in Jewish Tradition 'The Creator', is interpreted by many Jews as the same figure celebrated in the exalted love poem of Eros, 'The Song of Songs.' The Bride, who is the human soul, describes her Lover, who is the God of Eros, in these mystical--erotic terms=

My beloved is fresh and ruddy,
to be known among ten thousand.
His head is golden, purest gold,
his locks are palm fronds
and black as the raven.
His eyes are doves
at a pool of water,
bathed in milk,
at rest on a pool;
his cheeks are beds of spices,
banks sweetly scented.
His lips are lilies,
distilling pure myrrh,
His hands are golden, rounded,
Set with jewels of Tarshish.
His belly a block of ivory
Covered with sapphires.
His legs are alabaster columns.

The Eros imagery here, and throughout 'The Song of Songs', is subtle and far reaching. Eros reveals God as the Lover of his creation, seeking mystical, sacred, ontological, Union with his Beloved. Symbolically, God is 'He' and all of creation is 'she.' Thus God is divinity and creation is the 'soul' receiving divinity into her house, her bed chamber, her altar, her entire nature. All the imagery in this short passage speaks of and reveals the Eros--soul axis as fundamentally incarnational.

The liturgy says to God, in song, "with your right hand you have planted a vineyard." Only Eros plants a garden in creation and in humanity, and brings it to fruition.

Western Christianity, especially Protestantism, has forgotten and ignored the Eros side of God in the Old Testament. In that process, they have also turned the Daemonic God of the Old Testament into Satan the Accuser= a sadistic and cruel, bullying 'patriarch', who rules humans like an earthly tyrant brooking no questionings of, no deviations from, his iron fist that lays down the immutable rules and regulations; this hateful 'god' also regards humans as wholly fallen into sin, and thus worthless and ugly, but will allow his 'son' to take the punishment meant for humans, entailing humans must accept this 'let-off' bought for them by the one blasted and crushed in their place, or face

eternal hell. As a Greek theologian recently said, Western Atonement actually means God is the threat whom we must be saved from! This remark hits the nail on the head, and it is true because the 'god' of this branch of the Western Tradition is indeed Satan the judge and jury, Satan who uses morality to condemn humans forever. This is how Satan is portrayed in The Book of Job. If Satan tempts human weakness, it is only so he can then convict the human crime as irredeemable. Out of this Satanism at the heart of Western Christianity came rationalism, puritanism, and what an old friend once called the 'moralic acid' of harsh judgementalism. The God of Eros washes way, in a great wall of rushing water, all these false Western 'isms.'

Eros= 'the God of light and wine'; the Daemonic= 'the God of dark and fire.'

RUMI ON EROS

As everyone realises full well, Rumi is the poet of Eros. My friend Alex came across, and passed on, some further exemplary quotes from Rumi's spiritual poems..

Rumi is the paradigm of the 'way of union', the Eros by which the Ultimate lays hands on the Relative, and the Relative -- knowing the Absolute that takes it in its hands -- becomes a conduit for its Love, Light, Life. Such are the enlightened, the illumined, the charismatic. Others call this person Master, Guru, Staretz, Elder, Holy Man or Holy Woman, Teacher, but if they are genuine this is not what they call themselves; they call themselves learner, servant, friend of humanity.

Eros challenges "Ego, and Desire." You cannot 'melt' ala Rumi whilst your ego 'sticks out like a sore thumb' and your desire is high jacked by 'delusive cravings.'

1,

Last night,
I saw the realm of joy and pleasure.
There I melted like salt;
no religion, no blasphemy,
no conviction or uncertainty remained.
In the middle of my heart,
a star appeared,
and the seven heavens were lost in its brilliance.

2,

You have learnt so much
And read a thousand books.
Have you ever read your Self?
You have gone to mosque and temple.
Have you ever visited your soul?
You are busy fighting Satan.
Have you ever fought your
Ill intentions?
You have reached into the skies,
But you have failed to reach
What's in your heart!

3,

Tear down the mosque, tear down the temple
Tear down everything in sight
But don't break anyone's heart
Because God lives there

4,

Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of learning—it doesn't matter,
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vow a hundred times,
Come, come again, come.

Between Rumi, St Dionysus, Buddhism, et al. there is only a difference of emphasis, and nuancing; a difference of degree, not a difference of kind. The Benign Gift of Eros is much the same wherever it appears, even crossing the supposed divide between personal and impersonal stances toward Divinity. What does it matter what you believe 'about' God? If you can experience God, direct and unmediated, and if this experiencing includes knowing the 'way' God 'holds' the creation in his/its hands, then why argue over descriptions of the Real? As my friend Karin Greenhead once said in a different context, descriptions are only descriptions, they are not, and cannot be treated as, the Real. No words and no pictures can encompass the Real. Once fully in God's hands, once fully living the way God holds us in these hands, we will 'know.' In this existence, 'we see through a glass darkly', as Paul put it; but in eternity 'we will know as we are known.' That will settle all metaphysical differences, and arguments. Doubtless, in that changed situation, we will understand as we cannot now the coinherence of personal and impersonal aspects of God. It may turn out that this contradiction, like all the others, is no big deal once we are in God and God is in us, wholly. It may turn out that 'impersonality' just means God has other fish to fry besides us, and that 'personalness' means God is committed unreservedly and ultimately to how our cooking is going, and how it will turn out..

It is Rumi's voice I love, not always his metaphysics.

In Eros, 'to know' is 'to love.' If you are without love, you will never know.

EROS IS LIGHT AND WATER

1,

'Tao Te Ching' of Lao Tzu, ch 8=

"The highest good is like water.

Because water benefits all things
without contending with them,
and settles in low places everyone disdains,
it comes close to the Tao.

..it is because it does not contend that it is never at fault."

2,

St Symeon the New Theologian=

"God is light
A light infinite and incomprehensible
All that comes from him is light
And is given to us as arising from the light,
The light-- life,
The light is immortality,
The light is the source of life
The light is living water; love, peace, truth and
The door to the kingdom of heaven.
The light is the very kingdom itself.
The light is the heavenly bridal chamber, paradise,
And all the bliss of paradise."

EROS AND THE DAEMONIC AS PARTNERS?

1,

Nikos Kazantzakis expresses Eros ['The Fratricides'] and the Daemonic ['The Last Temptation of Christ'] with poetic accuracy.

This is Eros=

"I said to the almond tree
Speak to me of God
and the almond tree blossomed."

This is the Daemonic=

"The doors of heaven and hell are
adjacent, and identical."

2,

There are only three religious possibilities in the world.

[1] A religion focused on Eros; this is the Oriental Light, a Light of Love that bestows Life.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Greek Hellenism, Neo-Platonism, Sufi-ism, and similar, all exemplify it.

This is the religion people claim to be 'universal'; it starts in Mother India, and from her as the apex, then sends out one arm to the east in Japan, and sends out another arm to the west in Greece. This religion is RTa, Dharma, Arête. It has infiltrated many places, though little of it got from Eastern Europe into Western Europe; perhaps only in Roman Catholic monasticism, derived from the earlier Greek Orthodox monasticism, did a faint flicker of this light reach Western Europe, but once the Protestant Reformers smashed the monasteries, it was gone, or confined to small islands of mystical—ascetic practice that seem out of step with the modern West, whether Catholic or Protestant. Other remnants of RTa in the West are exemplified in esoteric and occult movements, such as the 'Sophia Perennis', though some of these veer toward the Gnostic and introduce Luciferian distortions. Lucifer is the false religion of the East, as Satan is the false religion of the West. Lucifer: 'man, the self-divinizing god'; Satan: 'man, the miserable sinner.' As Gnosticism is the religion of Lucifer, so Fundamentalism is the religion of Satan.

My Serbian friend Alex thinks it a wonderful thing that the Light of the East has almost secretly infused its living substance into so many ostensibly different religions. It is the nature of this religion to be happily revised and re-nuanced a million ways, for its core is always one and the same. This religion

severely relativises 'names, symbols, concepts', for it says, 'whatever you call the ultimate, it is still ultimate.' Indeed, in Hinduism, and even more so in Buddhism, all names, all symbols, all concepts, that purport to point to, and give any description of, 'ultimate things' are just equally inadequate ways of visioning, or portraying, a reality that cannot be visioned, or portrayed. This makes any and all attempts at visioning, or portrayal, equivalent, just as close, just as far away. So for example, the Logos of the Greeks is the same as the Atman of the Hindus, since both are the Primal Coming Forth of the Unmanifest Source; another example: the divine love that dawns as light and illumines, beautifies, enlivens, everyone and everything beholding it might equally be depicted in the Greek myth of Eros and Psyche or in the Hindu myth of Krishna and the Milkmaids, since in both cases divine Lover and human Beloved are the pair of lovers in mysterious, and sacred, 'conjunction.' All descriptions of the Ineffable fall short, and there is no way that the actual experience of the Ineffable and what it shows can be captured in the words of philosophical concepts, or even in the images of rich symbols. The Ineffable is not like anything we can compare it to in our world. Non-Duality cannot be reduced to the terms of reference key to Duality, yet it can shine through Duality and light up Duality in a new way that shows their mutual interpenetration. Thus Duality cannot, and in a paradoxical way can, reflect Non-Duality. The Relative is not the Absolute, and anything the Relative can say, think, imagine, about the Absolute is inadequate to it; but at the same time there is a Way in which, a pattern by which, the Absolute enters, upholds, heals, the Relative. We must avoid reducing the Absolute to the Relative; and we must avoid dividing them such that the Relative is right here, and the Absolute is over there. That too falsifies Absolute as well as Relative. The 'Middle Way' is indicative of actual mystical experience in which the Relative 'knows' not only the Absolute but also its place in, or link to, it; and this is cryptically alluded to in Buddhism as 'not this, not that.' If Duality blots out Non Duality, this is no good; if Non Duality blots out Duality, that is no good. Form is not Void, Void is not Form. Form is Void, Void is Form. The Nameless cannot be called by any name, and can be called by all names.

Eros is a whole marvellous path, full of goodness, beauty, value, intelligence, benign generosity, 'superior being' medicinally transforming 'inferior being', and much else. We should, as Alex contends, be grateful for the Light of the East, whether Indian, Japanese, Greek, Sufi, or anything else; its forms are endless, its essence always one, never changing, always constant: reliable, dependable, non-capricious, 'not altering where it alteration finds.'

God is 'reality', all beings are 'the manifestation of reality', the 'hand' of reality 'holding' its manifestation is God's love. In the root meaning of RTa, this holding hand has a 'course', a path, a flowing shape, that it always follows, and thus this joining of reality and manifestation is often described as Cosmic Law, or Universal Law, or Natural Law. It is inherent to everything and everybody: not an arbitrary order imposed from without onto beings, like a corset, but an organic and 'implicate' structuring arising from within beings, like a wave running through them.

There is a famous Zen declaration to this effect=

“To study the Way is to study the Self,
To study the Self is to forget the Self,
To forget the Self is to be enlightened by the 10,000 things.”

Given all the unenlightened, and venal, competition and strife between religions in our world today [usually conducted most fervently by people most untouched by the spirit of those religions], to find profound and innate commonalities – not engineered or contrived commonalities in a humanly constructed syncretism – among religions spread out from Japan to Europe is surely helpful. Not only is the Light of the East true to God and creation, or non-theistically, true to Reality and its manifestation, but it can unite seemingly disparate ‘accounts’ by affirming they are all equivalent ways of trying to reach the one spiritual truth differently mirrored in them all. When Hinduism came West a hundred years ago, part of its mission was to reveal the common core of all religions.

None the less, whatever the advantages of Eros as a Way, the stance that claims Eros is the one universal religion has its disadvantages. It is unready for any change in the revelation of the divine, and its relationship to us. It fails to see that changes in words, symbols, thoughts, might be seeking, however inadequately, to bear witness to a change in the ultimates, as if the ultimates had only shown us one aspect initially, or had held back something to show us now never before shown. The ultimate might have chosen to show a certain ‘way it is’ through the divine Light, but equally, the ultimate might choose to show a ‘different way it is’ through the divine Dark. Hinduism is completely unprepared for this. If you tell Hinduism, ‘sorry, this revelation is ultimate but is new, and it does not concern RTa or any of its derivatives’, then Hinduism’s claim to be all encompassing crumbles. Most upsetting is, ‘what if this symbol actually ‘symbolises’ a new ultimate that is in process of being revealed for the first time ever, in any place, and therefore what if this symbol differs from all the others, and is by no means just another in a long line of equivalent symbols for the old ultimate’? The idea of a universal set of symbols, or archetypes, as developed by Plato and Jung, is a belief wholly within the ‘Static Quality’ of Eros, and is unfitted to deal with the ‘Dynamic Quality’ of the Daemonic.

Hinduism’s universality is conservative, and restrictive. In Piaget’s lingo, it ‘assimilates’ what is old, what is similar, but cannot ‘accommodate’ what is new, what is different. This is the considerable Achilles Heel of the ‘one universal religion’ stance. There is only one religion provided that genuinely ‘other’ religion throws away its otherness. This ends up very Luciferian indeed: ‘you and I are one, and that one is me.’

[2] A religion focused on the Daemonic; this is the West of the East where the divine Light sets and a strange and powerful divine Dark replaces it.

Judaism in its Messianic promise, though also prefigured in Shamanism.

The Daemonic is focused on this world, time, and the historical struggle of humanity not just for justice, but the 'coming good' of God's faith and trust in the human venture. Thus there is no Daemonic religion that does not, implicitly or explicitly, nail its flag to the mast of redeeming the entire world process, Beginning, Middle, End. It is for this strange, and pained, journey and battle toward redemption that a Messiah is needed, the One who is Chosen by God to reveal and spark the 'way' that redeems the world, rather than judging it as having failed to hit its mark. A full Daemonic religion must have a Messiah to exemplify and enact the against the odds 'crazy' gamble of redemption, and this strange being is nothing like any of the mystics, sages, monks, healers, teachers, gurus, who populate the religion of Eros in the Far East. The figures crucial to the Daemonic Road are very different: king, warrior-king, tribal chief; shaman and prophet; holy fool or sacred clown; existential wise person [the 'twice born' of Jewish tradition]; the outcast and derelict, the poor and broken.

[3] A religion that combines Eros and the Daemonic.

There are three religions that, to a greater or lesser extent, do both the encompassing and consoling Light and the piercing and unsettling Dark.

--Shamanism, as the first religion of humanity, and the matrix for all religion, has both sides. As the origin of Eros and the Daemonic, Shamanism is the only religion in the world that can claim to be genuinely 'comprehensive.' The Oriental religions are only comprehensive within Eros. Their claim to being the 'one universal religion' is bogus. What is true is that there is one universal religion of Eros, infinitely re-nuanced in different places, but always recognisably itself, even when theistic or non-theistic, personal or impersonal, metaphysical or poetic. By contrast, Shamanism truly has the total possibility, in a cauldron where it all is stewing together. Out of this cauldron you can bring the East's Day-break, whose patron is the Eagle, but equally and by contradiction, you can also bring out the West's Night, whose patron is Wakinyan Tanka, the Thunder Being. Moreover, the two sides of divinity are closer to the ground in Shamanism, and the earth has a more powerful role in both Eros and the Daemonic. The Shamanic Eros is less likely to be other worldly, or guilty of 'Angelizing'; the Shamanic Daemonic chivalrously protects, and serves, the earth, both in being the zig zag lightning of the storm that fights evil, and after shaking up the earth to keep her open to change, brings the healing rain. Shamanism protects the mystery of the earth. The Shamanic Eros is more in evidence among the indigenous peoples who are southern crop-growers, whilst the Shamanic Daemonic is more in evidence among the indigenous peoples who are northern hunter-gatherer nomads. Indeed, Eros is 'seeded' in the 'high civilisations' of the East, from Persia to China, through crop growing, while the Daemonic in Judaism, as in earlier Shamanism, is sparked by nomadic and warrior peoples who wander over vast stretches of terrain, and do not settle in one place. I once met a fierce Mongolian woman who told me she detested Buddhism. Why?, I asked, slightly surprised at her vehemence. "It ruined us as a people, a warrior people", she replied. Certainly, the Daemonic stresses suffering [pathos] and

fighting [thymos], personhood in its radical freedom, and a very different fire of love, heroically great and mysteriously deep.

--Judaism too has Eros in its temple/priest side, and the Daemonic in its king/warrior and shaman/prophet side.

--Then Eastern Orthodox Christianity also has two sides, because they are so evident in Christ. He starts in Eros, like any Oriental guru, but ends in the Daemonic as a warrior king, once he enters Jerusalem, and is on dramatic collision course with political and religious authority. The miracles and healings are Eros, the court case, conviction, crucifixion, are Daemonic. The Messianic mysteries of the Daemonic are three-fold: Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection.

Eros saves, the Daemonic redeems.

In Judaism, redemption is associated with the spirits closest to God, the 6-fold Seraphim; God's heart: 'Throne' and 'Chariot.' Salvation is associated with the spirits who guard the earth, the 4-fold Cherubim; God's soul: 'the Tree of Life.' In Judaism, God has a soul and a heart.

Salvation is the salt, redemption is the pepper.

The saviour pays no cost for those who are saved; he gives something generously, and so this deed can be called 'self-offering.' Salvation is a Gift.

The redeemer pays a terrible cost for those who are redeemed; he lets himself be the payment for those who cannot pay, and so this deed can be called 'self-giving.' Redemption is a Sacrifice.

It is clear that the 'grace' in Christianity is salvational, not redemptive. A friend writes: "In the Septuagint the Greek word 'kharis' is consistently used to translate Hebrew words from the root HNN [from which we get the name Hannah]. That Hebrew root generates verbs meaning such things as 'show favour', 'spare', 'show consideration', nouns meaning 'grace', 'favour', 'supplication for favour/consideration', the adjective 'gracious' and even an adverb meaning 'gratuitously/for nothing.' It is an important group of words. The same root generates similar meanings in Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic."

Grace is pure gift, given freely, given gratuitously. It is Eros that is gracious, kindly, charitable. All this is salvational. Buddhism's 'loving kindness' is no different to Christianity's 'agape' as described by St Paul in a passage that many people consider the most exalted statement of love ever recorded, though they often fail to realise that agape is the culmination of Eros, not in opposition to it. Buddhism is virtually entirely salvational, not redemptive. Christianity should be both, but historically has been far more salvational, and thus has ignored the redemptive. This suggests Christianity has confused Christ as a saviour figure, like all the other 'saviours' coming from the East, of which there have been countless versions. Christianity has not grasped the

nettle and really embraced Christ as the unique [Jewishly foretold] Messiah whose mission is redemption of all the world, at total cost to the redeemer.

What is the Daemonic equivalent of the 'Grace' of Eros?

St John says what it is in the fourth gospel. The Law came by Moses [to remind us of, and correct our loss of, Eros], but by Jesus Christ came the Grace of Eros [liberated from the Law], and the 'Truth' of the Daemonic.

The truth that is Demonic is a Sword, and this Sword travels towards, and by Reversal becomes, the Cross. The Truth of the Daemonic becomes the Supreme Personal Love which is suffered and fought for by the Daemonic; this extreme love is not Pauline agape, for agape is the spiritual crown of Eros. Rather, this 'sacrificial love', which even goes beyond self-giving to self-emptying, is Christ's Passion. It is the spiritual crown of all human struggle in the heart with its wavering and storm tossed passion.

Salvational love is non heroic. Redemptive love is ultra-heroic, it goes to the end of the line, even without guarantee.

There is ontological assurance in Eros, provided we plug in to it as it provides for this. We can block it. There is no ontological assurance, but savage existential risk, in the Daemonic. Its gamble has to be carried, and brought through to the far shore, on the other side. We can funk it.

3,

Saviour figures are always the same. They serve Eros by medicinally healing our breach from it; they help restore our part in the whole, or help restore the pattern of joining that links Reality and its manifestation, or help restore us to God's Grace and its Gift of Love, Light, Life. It can be differently emphasised, but saviours always reconnect soul as Beloved to God as Lover.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad: "Be drunk with the wine of divine love. Thus shall you reach perfection." Catherine of Genoa: "I do not know where the 'I' is, nor do I seek it. I am so plunged and submerged in the source of his infinite love, as if I were quite under water in the sea and could not touch, see, feel, anything on any side except water." Or, put in the more metaphysical terms of Tibetan Buddhism, saviours always show us the 'bridge' between Reality and its manifestation.

The key point is, this reconnecting of Non-Duality and Duality, or Source and the 10,000 Things, must be 'real', experiential, known with one's whole being, rather than just being regarded as a matter of theory, speculation, imagination. Only as experience, only as a bathing fully immersed in divine energy, can it be genuinely healing. We actually receive Grace, we don't just intellectually construct and believe in it as a doctrine. Or, we actually enter the Light, we don't just have opinions, prejudices, fantasies, about 'luminosity.' In salvation, we are raised 'up' from an inferior to a superior state of being, as Tibetan Buddhism puts it; raised out of human darkness into the divine luminance that enlightens all created beings, things, persons. Eros is a light

that does more than reveal what it falls upon; it reveals the essential core of whatever it lights up, and it reveals what it lights up as of ultimate value, and inherently beautiful, and eternally alive. This is a loving light: a love that throws light on, to restore, what it loves. St Maximos called this restoration a journey, from ill-being to well-being, and from well-being to eternal-being.

The Light of Love that gives Restored and Transformed Life is thus nothing like the cold light of mere intellect pursued in the West since the Latins lost their necessary root in the Greeks [about 500 AD, when Roman Catholicism began to grow apart from the earlier Greek Christianity], but becoming far colder among the Anglo-Saxons, until in our day, light is not only without interior seeing, and warmth, but is almost entirely abstracted out of existence. This abstract light is a great menace, and a great falsifier. Its capture of science, and intrusion into metaphysical philosophy, renders it very dangerous. 'Abstract Mind' is as far from Eros as it is possible to get. The Abstract, when it masquerades as the spiritual, is the most misleading of all. It offers 'salvation by de-situation', and that disembodiment, or non-incarnation, is a false enlightenment, a counterfeit salvation, yet in the West, 'spirit' is confused with 'mental abstraction', or 'abstract essence', repeatedly and more or less routinely. People think they can be saved by the mind, provided you hype up the powers of the mind. This path is a third devil, named in Goethe's 'Faust' as Mephistopheles: 'man, the seeker of False Knowledge.' This happens in science and in metaphysical philosophy equally, and gets worse as you travel farther westward, from Western Europe to England, and from England to America. The whole 'American identity' is a construction of Abstract Mind, without any root in the ground, without any ground beneath it. Americanism is a creation of Abstract Mind, and as such, sits on stilts miles up in the sky, flimsy and frightened.

The Abstract Mind is 'the mind alone', cut off, disincarnate, disembodied, ungrounded in the rest of what is human, and ungrounded in the surrounding world of nature, and history, but always a superb observer, a powerful over-viewer. An 'essential archetypal pattern' can always be found by this seeker, and 'taken out' of any context that gives it flesh and blood.

It is in the context of not just the humble inadequacy of Form to fully 'point to' Void, but in the more vicious context of people attempting to 'capture' the Ineffable by the mind alone, that Buddha's radical apophaticism must be understood. Greek Orthodox Christianity also has an apophatic tradition, stemming from the Desert Fathers and Mothers of Egypt, Palestine, Syria. But Buddhism, and especially Zen, has to be credited with the most thoroughly apophatic approach. This is to guard against almost the worst sickness, virtually the worst distortion, of religion. When you reckon that mind alone, if worked on and its game upped, can be enlightened, then all you ever arrive at are abstractions, or 'essentialist abstractions.' You think you have arrived at reality, truth, mystery, but you have not: you have arrived at something mimicking them, but in the mimicry, a million miles away. You think you are close, even there, but you are as far from it as you can get, thus you are doubly deceived. Suffering from the ordinary deception we all start in, you think you have abstracted your way out of it and abstracted your way to the

Real Deal, but you haven't. In your seeking, you have found all right, but only found the ultimate in false knowing. Thus in getting out of ordinary deception, you have climbed your way up into a more subtle deception. You use the Big Words that seemingly emanate the Big Mind, yet all you are doing is 'grasping at straws', trying to capture in your wrong hand hold, something that cannot be approached like this. A certain glibness, a kind of facile attitude, an arrogance in being able to skate fast over hard ground that is slow going, is the giveaway that you are a Mephistophles, not a Buddha.

The Buddha gives the true reason for his strategy of radical apophaticism in a well-known quote, which shows this is not only to curb the over use of metaphysical philosophy so obvious in Hinduism – and in its cousin Greek Hellenism – but more powerfully, to heal the sickness of Abstract Mind. If Abstract Mind was a danger in Asia in 500 BC, think how much greater a danger it is today, in the Far West where Abstract Mind thinks it is, or can become, Buddha-Mind=

“Bear always in mind what it is that I have not elucidated, and what it is that I have elucidated. And what have I not elucidated? I have not elucidated that the world is eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is not eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is finite; I have not elucidated that the world is infinite; I have not elucidated that the soul and the body are identical; I have not elucidated that the soul is one thing and the body another; I have not elucidated that the saint [arhat, one who achieves enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism] exists after death; I have not elucidated that the saint does not exist after death; I have not elucidated that the saint both exists and does not exist after death; I have not elucidated that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why have I not elucidated this? Because this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore have I not elucidated it.

And what have I elucidated? Misery [dukkha, pain, suffering -- from the root du, to burn, pain, torment] have I elucidated; the origin of misery have I elucidated; the cessation of misery have I elucidated; and the path leading to the cessation of misery have I elucidated [i.e. the Four Noble Truths]. And why have I elucidated this? Because this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion, and tends to ..absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore have I elucidated it.” [Henry Clarke Warren, 'Buddhism in Translation', Harvard University Press, 1896.]

Buddhism's silence on key religious questions – which Hinduism happily and voluminously answers with piles upon piles of 'religious philosophy' -- is to underscore that metaphysics cannot grab the moon, but can only point to it. So why overdo the pointing in volumes and volumes of words, concepts, symbols? Hinduism knows this, though its pointing may well transgress what a finger held aloft can do. Yet Hinduism is not un-humble, and its asceticism is certainly a recognition that mind alone cannot get there, but the whole being, mind and body, soul and spirit, must be brought to enlightenment. No,

Buddha's stance is a foreboding of how twisted, and even evil, the Abstract Mind can, and in the future will, become. He had been a seeker, and had found what the Eastern Orthodox Liturgy calls 'the True Light', and so Buddha felt responsible for this true seeking and true finding; he was going to guard it, and do all he could to make sure people after him could walk the path that arrives at it. Something in him anticipated the coming rise of Abstract Mind, and his insistence on being far more apophatic than Hinduism reflected this keen prophetic sense of future doom. Buddha's apophaticism is the medicine for a sickness that, in his day and place, had not got going as it would in a different day, and different place, in the West.

Almost the whole kudos of the West as the 'most progressive, most advanced' civilisation in all the world through all of history rests in its use and abuse, of Abstract Mind. When Abstract Mind 'takes over' even enlightenment, then the pale and cold tissue of abstraction, of essentialist yet hollow mere ideas of reality, has put the Light of the East out of commission. In a sense, the Light from the East has been slyly replaced, in the West, by the false light of Abstract Mind.

Western Buddhists need to take great care over this. Buddha's strategy of the 'via negativa', eschewing any via positiva, can play right into the hands of Abstract Mind's pseudo enlightening. Lao Tzu, the father of apophaticism, said that, 'he who knows does not speak.' But saying nothing, rather than trying to use the words, symbols, concepts that do 'point', can mask the pseudo light of abstract essentialism. Indeed, this danger is horrendous in Zen. The Abstract Mind can easily, because it is by nature so denuded of juice and pith in any event, bow at Bodhidharma in silence when his other followers tried to say something, however stammering in recognition of the impossibility, in order to do justice to the real advent of enlightenment. Bodhidharma at least blessed each effort, though he granted to the silent bow that it had pointed to the very 'marrow' of enlightenment. This has a huge danger. Yes, in the ultimate, we are silent, still, empty, before the Emptiness. But the Emptiness is also in Fullness, and this is where 'true enlightenment' differs from the false light of Abstract Mind. The Abstract Mind can mimic silent bowing, and mimic cute paradoxical statements like, 'if you see the Buddha on the road, kill him', all day long. These statements can in fact get increasingly glib and facile, and lose the true paradox of apophaticism. However, what the Abstract Mind can never express in any way, through words, symbols, thoughts, is Emptiness in Fullness, Non Duality in Duality, the Source in the 10,000 things. This task is beyond it, and exposes its disembodiment, and disincarnation, its de-situation masquerading as enlightenment. Eastern Orthodox Christianity calls the Ineffable fully incarnate, fully embodied, 'Ikon.' Only the ikon reveals and instantiates the paradox of apophatic and cataphatic not divided, not confused, but 'as one.' Abstract Mind cannot create the ikon, the poem of the divine in the created, in its proofs of knowledge. Consequently, its negative statements, so glib and facile, are also incapable of situatedness, of grounding, of full incarnation, of full embodiment.

The Zen 'koan' is iconic. It always cuts off the wrong Non Duality, and cuts off the wrong Duality, forcing you to be thrown onto both horns of the bull, speared by both, until you break through to their reconciliation, which does not fudge either.

I prefer ikons to the 'allusive' apophatic art of Zen Buddhism, because the apophatic on its own – the silent bow – is only one part of the total paradox, and misses the other part. Do not misunderstand-- the allusive and apophatic gesture, statement, painting, when spot on and not just the faking of Abstract Mind, is necessary, medicinal, and shockingly real. It carries forward Buddha's original strategy of only using words, symbols, concepts, sparingly, because the issue is 'what is of profit' in our path toward enlightenment. I laugh out loud at some of the duels between Zen masters, in their extreme apophatic or negative style, because they really hit it; our laughter is a mini enlightenment in itself. But other times I find some Zen dialogues disgustingly degraded by Abstract Mind, full of subtle arrogance about flying above it all and flying quicksilver quick. I think Buddha would have regarded some of the Zen shenanigans as the Abstract Mind spiralling into oblivion. This is part of the 'stink of Zen', and it is very injurious. Japanese Zen may have the problems of Japanese authoritarianism, hierarchic structure, and formalism, but Western Zen will 'get off on' the aspects of traditional Zen where Abstract Mind has pushed out Buddha-Mind. The stink of Zen will threaten to turn into a stench in the West, where shallowness is guaranteed by the cast of mind that is predominant.

This is why we need iconic -- the apophatic in the cataphatic -- statements, pointings, works of art, as 'proof' of the real enlightenment, and we need to become more discerning of when the 'merely apophatic' is medically healing and when the Abstract Mind mimics, hides behind, and abuses, this 'allusive' style. When the Abstract Mind abuses the 'wisdom of saying nothing', it has no medicine in it, but only a heightened and hard to discern poison. It is the heightened poison that adds to the ordinary poison, the deception that heightens ordinary deception. In reality, deception is preferable to this 'deception of deception', because the ordinary deception is closer to enlightenment than the pseudo knowledge of Abstract Mind.

A lot of Western people in Shamanism are relating to Platonic and Jungian archetypal abstractions as if they were spirits and spiritual realities. This is the same toxicity carried into a different religion. Much of Christian doctrine easily becomes a System of Abstractions, as well.

Buddha's concern not to answer "questions which tend not to edification" is his moral responsibility at work. This is the moral sense typical of Static Quality. If the real mysticism gives life, and a pale imitation of this mysticism that is really only approximating to it through philosophical metaphysics cannot give life, then drop the latter. The morality of enlightenment is, teach and practice only what edifies by healing the sickness of ignorance, and don't bother over what fails to edify by having no capacity to heal the sickness of ignorance, and probably can only add more decoration, more baggage, to ignorance. But, what if there is something worse than a pale reflection of the

moon, a down right pseudo mysticism that not only has no power to edify, but actually only has the power to make our ignorance yet more sick?

Both Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Buddhism diagnose the sickness of ignorance in the identical way, both insisting it is not a matter only of upping the mind's game. Rather, there are three poisons, and these touch on mind [nous], desire [soul], and anger [heart]. Even the way these three poisons are described in detail is identical. The point is, enlightenment needs more effort from us than the mind alone; since the Abstract Mind is without soul and without heart, and conflates abstraction for the 'direct seeing' of the nous, it actually refuses the effort needed to transform nous, desire, anger, as well as enlightening the body. The Abstract Mind will only do mental disciplines, no yoke is put on the delusive cravings or the fallen passions, and thus the pseudo light of Abstract Mind leaves nous, desire, anger, unhealed, untransformed, unaltered. The Buddha would never accept this 'only from the neck up' enlightenment. The pseudo light is shallow, disembodied, and all too 'liberal' about the dynamic forces of desire and anger [Freud's sex and aggression, or eros and thanatos]. Left without any metamorphosis, pseudo enlightenment also exposes its masquerade because it is loveless. Loving kindness and compassion will not emerge unless selfish desire is wrestled with in asceticism, and taking delight in another's joy as well as ceasing to tyrannise over the neighbour will not emerge unless egoistic anger is wrestled with in asceticism. Similarly, the real equanimity and non-disappointment of nous will never emerge unless the Abstract Mind's counterfeit 'indifference' is wrestled with in asceticism. Though Buddha rejected other worldly asceticism, as is obvious not only in Hindu monks but can be seen in many Christian Desert monks [like Simon Stylites who lived all his life on the pillar], an 'Angelising' use of asceticism, he also rejected this worldly, non-ascetical indulgence. His middle way with asceticism seeks the transforming of all of our being, and unlike the False Knowledge that the Abstract Mind is a seeker and finder of, enlightenment is never from the neck up, leaving the neck down untouched.

It can be concluded that apophaticism is not just about striking the paradoxical balance between unstated and stated, it is more than that; it is in fact the moral guarding of true enlightenment from all the fake versions, running the gamut from paler imitation to out and out distortion. Buddhism is morally obliged to ask for proofs of enlightenment, in words, symbols, concepts, that ikonically, or koanically, do justice not only to Mystery in its mysteriousness, but also to the Concrete in its concreteness, generating a poetry of concrete mystery, mysterious concreteness.

Therefore, all four of Bodhidharma's 'dharma heirs' are needed, to make an ikon, or a koan. He wanted to return to Mother India, and asked his closest students to state the essence of his teaching ['Zen Flesh, Zen Bones', Paul Reps, 1967, Anchor Books and Shambhala, 1994, pp ix-x]. This is what they said.

Dofuku said: "In my opinion, truth is beyond affirmation or negation, for this is the way it moves."

Bodhidharma replied: "You have my skin."

The nun Soji said: "In my view, it is like Ananda's sight of the Buddha-land -- seen once and for ever."

Bodhidharma answered: "You have my flesh."

Doiku said: "The four elements of light [i.e. fire], airiness [i.e. air], fluidity [i.e. water], and solidity [i.e. earth] are empty [shûnya, i.e. neither existence nor non-existence] and the five skandhas are no-things. In my opinion, no-thing is reality."

Bodhidharma commented: "You have my bones."

Finally, Eka bowed before the master -- and remained silent.

Bodhidharma said: "You have my marrow."

In reality, a being is not just marrow, but needs bones, flesh, and skin. A being entering enlightenment has above neck and below neck.

Reality is manifest in all of its manifestations. This is the test of enlightenment. Even our cells, molecules, atoms, have testimony to give about RTa.

We had better not over say, but we had better not under say, the Unsayable. When this is dancing in full, then both silence and speech are possible, and necessary, depending on the situation. Silence is often more mystical, but speech is often more loving. Don't confuse them, but do put them together.

Then you can shut up with your nonsense about killing Buddhas. It is you who need to die. Get on with it. When you are dead, I will be interested in your silence and your speech. Until then, neither fools me.

The Abstract Mind deceives with silence, and with witty apophatic and enigmatic negativities, dancing like ten million angels on a pin. The Abstract Mind has nothing to say about love, because love is outside its portentous knowledge.

I'll know when you are dead, and your silence speaks, and your speech hums with silence. Don't fool yourself with Zen nonsense. Use the Zen stick to deliver the coup de grace to the one it is meant to beat the nonsense out of. That's you. And when I take it on board in my life, it is me. The teacher can point at the medicine, but only you can take your medicine, and only I can take my medicine. No one else does it for you or me. So, you have to take your medicine, I have to take my medicine. In this process, we can laugh together— the big belly laugh that rolls out of nowhere and fills existence with its rumble, the belly laugh that lets go, loses, and embraces dying.

This is how the manifestation returns to the Reality always holding it. With a roaring laugh at dying. There is a story of a Zen master who died that way. Zorba the Greek, with more of the Daemonic in him, died standing up at a window, looking out into the world, braying like a donkey.

The Master of the Universe rode into Jerusalem on that very donkey Zorba's spirit exulted in at the moment of death.

Death is liberation, in Eros. Some die before their end, some postpone it to the end, but either way, death is liberation from the pervasive ignorance, and this liberation is permanent entry into and life in the Light whose generous overflowing, gracious and free giving, never ceases. The sun dawns but there is no entropy that will cause it to implode. It shines, forever. Those it shines on, shine forever.

Why ask what it is like? Buddha was right that he cannot tell you how it is, and will be. So if he says the saint does not go into Nirvana, he is wrong by your limited lights, and if he says the saint does go into Nirvana, he is still just as wrong by your limited lights. The problem is, your limited lights. There is no problem with Reality and the pattern that holds its manifestation. The problem is with your limited lights that cannot grasp it.

So, a better way to proceed than endlessly trying to grasp with your limited lights what cannot be grasped is – to smash the limited lights. Laugh at them, cry over them, but let them have the carpet pulled out from under them. You will not go through the floor boards. You will be on a solid footing for the first time..

Let the ikon, let the koan, suffice as food to chew, if you need something in your mouth. We do need something in our mouth. That keeps us non philosophical as much as non fantasy, but most vital of all, it keeps us un-abstracted.

For the rest, get on with dying.

4,

In effect, if 'by our lights' does not die, then the Light of Love that gives Life cannot reach us. It does not exclude us, but always and unfailingly includes us. We exclude ourself. An Eastern Orthodox Christian prayer, exactly paralleling Buddhism, declares: "In Thy Light we shall see light." The Light is God, but in his presence, and face to face with his countenance, as the Psalms put it, we 'see light.' The divine Light enables us to be 'enlightened.' The enlightenment is light with a small 'l', the enlightener is Light with a capital 'L.' It is a relationship, firm in joining, intimate in encounter.

D.H. Lawrence articulates, in a poem called 'The Hands of God', what it is like when there is no Light, no presence and no countenance of the divine, and we fall into the self-deception of relying on our own light, and foolishly

confusing it with the 'light we see' when Light shines upon us. The poem expresses in another way the spiritual problem of Abstract Mind.

Thus Lawrence's poem starts by crying 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God', the chief declaration of the Daemonic, then switches to what happens when we fall out of the hands of the God of Eros into false enlightenment, adding: 'But it is a much more fearful thing to fall out of [these hands].'

"Did Lucifer fall through knowledge?
oh, then, pity him that plunge!

Save me, O God, from falling into the ungodly knowledge
of myself as I am without God.
Let me never know what I am or should be
when I have fallen out of your hands, the hands of the living God.

That awful and sickening endless sinking, sinking
through the slow, corruptive levels of disintegrative knowledge
when the self has fallen from the hands of God,
and sinks, seething and sinking, corrupt
and sinking still, in depth after depth of disintegrative consciousness
sinking in the endless undoing..
even of the soul, fallen from the hands of God,
Save me from that, O God!
Let me never know myself apart from the Living God."

The terms 'soul and self' belong to Eros, as 'personhood and heart' belong to the Daemonic. A soul filled with God's Light becomes the 'no-self' and the '10,000 things.'

Eros, in its saving, is summed up by the traditional Eastern Christian claim that in the Incarnation of God in a human being, Christ 'takes on' our humanity in order to 'purify, heal, illumine, and transfigure' it. Indeed, to divinise the human, to create a divine-humanity that rejects both Luciferian self-divinisation of the human and Satanic moral condemnation of the human.

All this flows from restoration to the True Light, but it is paradoxical, in that to be restored to Life, we must die to a false life that is in reality deadness, to be restored to Love, we must die to a false love that is in reality loveless, to be restored to Light, we must die to a false light that is in reality darkness. All of these dyings are hard.

There is a moment in this process of restoration, of ontological turning away from our self-created prison-house and turning toward God, when it seems we will lose everything, and just be abandoned. There is no Light, thus giving up 'our lights' is suicide. In the Christian West, this crisis is called 'the dark night of the soul.' In the Christian East, it was not seen as a 'bad moment' in an otherwise progressively more light-filled spiritual path, but in a more down to earth manner, it was the ongoing Desert in which dying to 'the ungodly

knowledge of myself as I am without God' is lived out realistically, soberly, patiently, until the real Light, the real Love, the real Life, 'dawns.'

The Desert purges us of all the false encumbrances of Eros, and challenges its main error, which is 'having' as an escape from 'being.' The Desert asks us to live more simply.

The Desert makes it hard to evade the coup de grace we need to end the 'disintegrative knowledge, and disintegrative consciousness' of 'what I am or should be when I have fallen out of the hands of the living God.'

In short, the Desert helps us to get on with dying.

5,

John Chryssavgis, speaking about the 'message of the Egyptian Desert Spirituality of Eastern Christianity for today', in an interview in Boston [18 July, 2006].

Question: "Seeking God through silence and prayer like the 4th and 5th century Christian ascetics still has much to teach us now?"

Chryssavgis: "It is so easy today to consider silence and prayer as something historically outdated or merely as spiritual virtues. In fact, for the life of the early desert fathers and mothers in the fourth and fifth centuries, silence was a way of breathing, a way of going deep.

In a world, such as ours, where so much is determined by the immediate and the superficial, the desert elders teach us the importance of slowing down, the need to pay attention and to look more deeply.

Silence is letting the world and yourself be what they are. And in that respect, silence is profoundly connected to the living God, "who is who he is."

Of course, all this requires toil and tears, labour and love. It is the art of living simply, instead of simply living. It resembles the skill of gardening: you cannot plant unless, first, you cultivate. You cannot expect to sow unless you dig deep. And you certainly cannot expect fruit unless you wait.

The search, then, is for what lies beneath the surface. Only in taking time and looking carefully can we realize just how much more there is to our world, our neighbour, and even ourselves, than at first we notice or than we could ever imagine."

Q: "Is there a secret to live a rich and healthy spiritual life?"

Chryssavgis: "In some ways, the secret to living a rich and healthy spiritual life may well be the fact that there is no secret.

One of the problems along the spiritual way is that most of us seek -- or resort to -- magical solutions to profound issues.

Reading the texts of the early ascetics, I have come to realize that perhaps the most essential lesson learned in life is the lesson of surrender, of letting go.

It is a hard lesson, and one that is only reluctantly embraced by most of us. But I am convinced that this life is given to us in order to learn how to lose.

We think that the purpose of a good spiritual life is to acquire virtues, or perhaps to lead a solid, productive, dignified, admirable, and even influential 'lifestyle.'

In fact, every detail -- whether seemingly important or insignificant, whether painful or joyful -- in the life of each one of us has but a single purpose, namely to prepare us for the ultimate act of sharing and sacrifice.

I would say that the secret of the desert is learning to lose. When you know how to lose, you also know how to love! In some ways, every moment in our life is a gradual refinement so that we are prepared to encounter death, which is the ultimate loss."

Q: "What unifies the desert fathers and mothers?"

Chryssavgis: "If there is one element that unites the desert fathers and mothers, in my mind it is their realism.

The unpretentious dimension of their life and experience, of their practice as well as their preaching, is something they share with one another..

And precisely because they are truthful and down-to-earth, the desert fathers and mothers are not afraid to be who they are. They do not endeavour to present a false image; and they do not accept any picture of themselves that does not reflect who they really are.

"Stay in your cell," they advise us. Because so often we are tempted to move outside, to stray away from who and what we are.

Learning to face who and what we are -- without any facade, without any make-up, without any false expectations -- is one of the hardest and at the same time, one of the finest lessons of the desert. Putting up with ourselves is the first and necessary step of learning to put up with others. And it is the basis for recognizing how all of us -- each of us and the entire world alike -- are unconditionally embraced and loved by God."

Q: "Is there another kind of 'desert' nowadays?"

Chryssavgis: "In our day, the desert is not necessarily to be found in the natural wilderness, although it may certainly be located there for some. The

institutional church and the institutional parish have their place; and the natural desert has its place.

But there is more to the spiritual life than these could ever provide alone. Alongside the institutional, there must be room for inspiration. The two are not necessarily opposed, but they must work together integrally if the Body of Christ is to function in all its fullness.

We need to discern the mystery in life. And we can only appreciate the mystical dimension of our world and our soul if we go through the desert, if we experience that contemplative dimension of life.

Yet the desert today is found in the marginal places of the world and the church, where the prophetic and critical word is spoken in response to the cry of suffering in human beings and in the natural environment.

Those who put themselves on the edge of the conventional church or society in order to see clearly what is happening in our world are contemporary desert fathers and mothers.”

6,

This last remark from John refers to the way that the Desert monastics inherited the Jewish prophets, even as the Jewish prophets inherited the Primal Indigenous ‘medicine and holy person’, the Asian shamans.

However, what John neglects to mention is that the Desert tradition had something Daemonic at its inception that the later, established monasticism lost.

There is a different meaning of ‘dying’ in the Daemonic, as is evident in the Jewish prophets who lived in the wilderness, but were seeking not the Eros of God, but searching out the depth of heart of the Daemonic God, to bring this divine heart and its spiritual fire back to the people, in order to challenge them to search their own hearts, and accept a radical ‘change of heart’ in their enworlded existence.

CLEANSING THE POOLS

There is no problem with the Gift of Eros; there is a huge problem with our wrong way of receiving the Gift. We grasp at it, and thereby we deprive ourselves of it. We 'cling' on to it, thus disallowing its ebb and flow in our life. Even if we get what we desire, once we 'have' it, we desire something else. Such desire is discontented, unsatisfied, invariably disappointed, because it is 'delusive' in its craving. We want to feast, but all we can do is devour.

Buddha made all this very clear, and it is his great contribution to have purified the Hindu Eros which, in its very richness and prolixity, had grown corrupt and needed a simplifying that would wash it clean. Eros washes us clean, in order to robe us in glory, and splendour. But when the vehicles of Eros are themselves too distorted, this dynamic is lost. The religious vehicles must be washed clean, simplified, reduced to an essential core, before they can be trusted to wash clean, simplify, reduce to an essential core, the human estate. Buddha did not just enlighten humanity; he enlightened the factors that are the enlighteners of humanity.

MORE ON EROS AS STATIC QUALITY

It's a happy time! My godson and his wife have had their first child, the sun is for once really hot in gloomy England, the wife and I are pottering round together amicably not doing much but enjoying it, and even my recent illness is getting better. I want in this brief Coda to assemble some further contemplations on Eros as Static Quality, which functions through the 'supra real origin of everything', called in Sanskrit 'RTa.' This builds on Static Quality as Eros, and Dynamic Quality as the Daemonic.

1,

Is there only one religion in the world?

Yes and No.

The Hindus claim that there is only one religion in all the world, and any specific religion that gets to its own core will uncover something that is common to all other religions at their core. If you shed peripheral things and get closer to the centre, you will find all religions revealing the one and same reality. The different religions use different images and words, but as the divine reality manifest in the cosmos, manifest in nature, manifest in humanity, it is always the same reality and there is always the same pattern of manifesting it. The manifestation invariably has a certain Shape and a certain Dance, or it could not manifest the divine. You can read that shape and flow in that dance either 'back' to its divine origin, or 'out' into its created, and phenomenal, manifestation. This manifestation is like transparent glass: the divine Light shines through it, yet the colours and figures on the glass are also lit up as this happens; thus both divine and its manifestation 'come to life' conjoined. You can say the Shape conveys the formlessness of the divine, the Dance conveys the stillness of the divine, the Colourful Figures convey the undifferentiated brightness of the divine. Infinity in finiteness, Unity in diversity, the One in the many, the Opposites Balanced in a Harmonious Whole. This whole is all inclusive; the cosmic space that 'makes room' for all things is both exalted [high] and vast [broad].

The reality and its manifestation is RTa.

I know many people who agree with Hinduism's claim that there is One Proto Religion -- though this can also promote lazy syncretism in those who need over simplified metaphysics to console them. Hinduism's claim is true up to a point, for it only works in a specific context, but in that context it is absolutely on target. What is the context that affirms and limits the single 'universal religion'?

Eros, or Static Quality as Robert Pirsig names it, runs from Mother India eastward into Asia, where RTa becomes Dharma, but also runs westward

into Greece, where RTa becomes Arête, and travels on to the Danube River, where it stops. Eros did not go into the West of Europe, England, America, but halted in Eastern Europe at a fault line defined by the irreconcilable gap between Roman Catholicism which rejects Eros, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity which embraces Eros, though in Christianising it, Orthodoxy also personalises it, rendering God as Lover and creation as Beloved. None the less, this Eros is the 'one religion' Hindus say is tacit in all the religions of the world.

It has a foot in Shamanism, which calls RTa 'the Sacred Origins.' Yet in an important sense the religion of Eros/Static Quality is Oriental, not Shamanic. It is the Light from the East..

This Oriental Light runs from Hinduism into Buddhism, from Hinduism into Pagan Greek religion, and later a version of it appears in Temple Judaism, and goes on to indwell Eastern Orthodox Christianity and even infiltrates puritanical Islam in the mysticism of Sufi-ism which, like that in Orthodoxy, is personal and ecstatic. Though it undergoes real modifications in all these different places, in some version RTa runs almost seamlessly from Japan to Eastern Europe.

So the Hindu claim is right within limits, but wrong about the other religion in the world, the religion kindled by a wound, the religion of the Daemonic. Judaism and the Cross of Christ are Daemonic, or Dynamic Quality. The Daemonic/Dynamic Quality is 'dramatic' because it is about change in time -- non evolutionary and non natural, or non organic, growth -- and ultimately about what forces will drive time, and so the direction in which time will, or will not, go.

The Daemonic makes history the arena of existential action in the world, for redeeming the world. The Cosmic Order of Static Quality is spatial. The Fight for the Future of Dynamic Quality is temporal. In the Orient, time is cyclical, and this is an attempt to reduce Dynamic Time back into the Circle of Space that is Static. The Daemonic exposes the Oriental stance on time as fallacious. Time is not the nightmare of 'Western Progress', yet it has a linearity that is spiritually significant. It has, like all true story telling, a Beginning, Middle, End. Or in Aristotle's account of drama, an Act 1, Act 2, Act 3.

Static= Goodness

Dynamic= Risk

Static 'mothers' us, by containing us ontologically;

Dynamic 'fathers' us, by destroying our containment but making us free existentially.

Static shows its love not only by an abundance of gifts, but by its constancy;

Dynamic shows its love by a wound necessary to where it calls us.

Eros= the generosity of what is;

Daemonic= the gamble over what will be redeemed by sacrifice.

There are times in the history of the world when a crazy making, or evil, situation must be brought to an end. That is the task of the hero's sword. You risk something, to do something, and be done.

If you commit to action, it could cut different ways. You never know how it will turn out. But that is what you surrender to, and submit to. Sometimes that is preferable to the Round Circle Dance of Eros/Static Quality. You leap into the unknown, as an act of faith. That decides something, once and for all; the time before it differs from the time after it.

Thus, Hinduism has missed the fact that there are two primal religions in the world, an Oriental pan-Hindu religion of Eros as Static Quality, and a Middle Eastern specifically Jewish religion of the Daemonic as Dynamic Quality. I have recently started studying the Sikh religion that started in India about 1600 AD, and found to my utter surprise that it is more Jewish than Hindu or Buddhist. I have always respected and liked the Sikhs, and now I know why. Their religion is strong in Daemonic themes: justice, warriorhood, communal brotherhood.

Shamanism is the third religion in the world, holding in its matrix both Eros [the divine Light] and the Daemonic [the divine Dark], in some prototypical partnership. The good red road of making sacred and spiritual understanding is 'crossed' by the bad black road of worldly difficulties and war. Thus at the centre of the Sacred Circle [Eros] is the Cross on which Christ was crucified as The Lamb Sacrificed Before the Foundation of the World [Daemonic]. Eros and the Daemonic are not yin/yang opposites, for the opposites all belong to Eros/Static Quality. Rather, Eros and the Daemonic are partners. Shamanism hints at that partnership, but it is more like William Blake's 'opposition is true friendship.' It is a contradiction, a koan that cannot be solved. Eros and the Daemonic are opposed on fundamental issues, such as equanimity versus fear, peace versus war, ontological being a part of it versus existential freedom, and this must be acknowledged before we can discover any partnership. In the Daemonic there emerges a 'hypostasis', the personhood, different from both the 'unity of all that is' and the ego that separates itself from this.

Thus, the religion in the world not like the Hindu 'Proto Religion of the Orient' is the religion of the Daemonic that is most fully expressed in Judaism, but should come to its climax in Christianity. That it hasn't is another story. But Judaism itself is complicated, for in a way that Hinduism does not, it combines Eros and the Daemonic, despite their tension. Eros flowers in temple Judaism, and its chief proponent is the priest. The Daemonic, the real heart and point of Judaism, is kindled in the king, or warrior king, primarily, but also manifest in his herald and mentor, the prophet-shaman. Thus, two of Judaism's three religious figures are 'dynamised' by the Daemonic, only one

is 'planted' in Eros. This makes Judaism more like Shamanism, in having both horns of the bull functioning at the same time.

2,

Is Buddhism a revision of Hinduism, and thus still part of Eros/Static Quality?

I have friends who think Buddhism, especially Zen, has taken a step out of Eros and toward the Daemonic; if not exactly leaving Static Quality then trying at least to open it up to Dynamic Quality. Nothing I have seen in Zen convinces me this supposed transformation is more than a hint, and in classical Buddhism it is clear that Buddha's enlightenment is a move within Static Quality, not a move beyond it. Revising Hinduism nuances Static Quality in a different way, and the difference is subtle, and meaningful. But this is still nuancing RTa. Moreover, such is Hinduism's 'integration of complexity', it allows any and all permutations of its primal pattern. In a sense, Hinduism can assert that they are no more and no less than modifications of an extant melody, simply updates of an old tune: variations on a theme.

Buddhism reforms Hinduism, replacing a pure monism in which God virtually swallows the creation, a unity of fusion, into a more supple 'non-duality' where Void and Form are more 'related', because both Emptiness [Form goes back into Void] and Fullness [Void comes out in Form] are equally stressed. In a way, Hinduism overdoes the reality more than its manifestation, whilst Buddhism redresses this one sidedness by giving more weight to the manifestation-- the phenomenal world is not so overshadowed by the divine reality: it is not so totally unified with the reality it manifests, though the price for this greater differentiation of Void and Form is a keener sense of the manifest as passing away, dying, being inherently impermanent. 'Nothing lasts forever.' Yet by stressing impermanence, Buddhism only manages to remind us of what is permanent, and that takes us back to RTa as the only constant. RTa never fails, never wavers, never falters, like a loving mother who will not play fast and loose with her infant, but will maintain a reliably consistent and dependable bond with the needy little creature. The manifest may pass away, but it still goes back into the unmanifest in some relationship between reality and manifestation. Buddhism is apophatically silent on this relationship in any detail, but it is present and constant all the same. Who goes into Nirvana? How does the manifest return to the reality? Buddha's silence is not agnosticism, still less atheism, as foolish Western commentators claim; it is a silence that speaks volumes. Buddha is saying, 'wait and see, you'll find out.' And to the disciple he loved most, he was also saying, 'see you there.'

Hinduism squashes reality and manifestation too tightly in oneness, and allows reality to overshadow manifestation.

RTa is differently emphasised by Buddhism, but its 'holding' of us like a mother remains. I once read a Western Buddhist, obviously speaking from his

ego rather than the Buddha-nature, claim that “theism is the conviction that there is a hand to hold.” This is silly beyond belief. ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God’ is the non holding offered by the Daemonic God. But RTa, in its Impersonal version no less than its Personal version, has a hand that holds the manifestation in the reality. Buddhism has not changed that ontological belonging one jot. It is always present in RTa, theistic or non theistic, impersonal or personal. Reality is the hand that holds all manifestation, and when manifestation passes away, it goes back to that undiminished and everlasting reality.

An Eastern Buddhist is more honest on this point: “Compassion is like the mother’s milk.” In all kinds of Eros/Static Quality religion, there is a ‘hand’, but it can be ‘grasped’ in different ways. Thus when you look into it, you see both that there is a gap between Hinduism and Buddhism, but also that the gap is not all that huge.

Thus, despite Buddhism’s subtle revision of Hinduism, Buddhism is still in Eros, or Static Quality. Its nuancing of Hinduism is by no means a step into the Daemonic, or Dynamic Quality. What Buddhism calls ‘wisdom’ is ‘the Light that enlightens every man who comes into the world’, the Logos of John’s fourth gospel, and what Buddhism calls ‘compassion’ is the Water paired with that Light, crystallising its meaning and sharing its loving kindness among all who can immerse in its flowing currents, and this is Sophia the mother of ‘the ten thousand things.’ Taoism clearly pairs the Light and the Water, as does Eastern Christianity in speaking of ‘the Marriage of Christ and the Church.’

Leafing through notes on Buddhism almost at random, I came across a host of quotes that show Buddhism to be working in Static Quality, not working with Dynamic Quality. Many are Tibetan, some from South East Asia, some from Western Buddhists.

“Homage to Buddha

Transcendental One,
compassionately acting on behalf of living beings,
the mere hearing of whose name offers sanctuary
from the sufferings of inferior existences.
Spiritual Master of Medicine,
dispelling diseases caused by the three poisons
of Attachment, Aversion, Delusion.”

Attachment is not bonding, but craving, or selfish desire [it is also described as ‘clinging, controlling, and fear’]; Aversion is not righteous anger, but bullying hatred, hostility, violent aggressiveness; Delusion is spiritual ignorance, mental confusion, sleep walking through existence. This trinity of poisons is often spoken of as, ‘Desire, Hatred, Delusion.’

This Tibetan prayer to Buddha, if addressed to Christ, would not change much in meaning. There are Eastern Orthodox Christian prayers to Christ not that dissimilar. Indeed, if Christ was both God and humanity joined in one 'divine humanity', then this prayer would work better for Christ, since Buddha was merely a man reaching toward the divine. In this prayer, Buddha virtually acquires a Logosic dimension.

Be that as it may, this prayer clearly shows that in Buddhism, reality offers 'sanctuary, healing, awakening, superior being', to the manifest. That the manifest passes away does not imply that the reality 'acting on behalf of living beings' will just throw them all away, or let the manifest wholly disappear. This is not the Buddhist message. Buddhism is not saying, 'you can be touched briefly by the real in this world, but when you die, you lose the real because you cease to exist in any sense.' The issue is less where we go after death, and more the Way which RTa establishes for ever and ever without end: a hand from reality holds the manifest. Reality will not let go. Buddhism has rejiggered the nature of that holding in Hinduism, to allow it to become a more sophisticated and emergent relationship. The relation between Nothingness and Beingness is more opened up in Buddhism. But the 'law' of that relationship remains the same in Buddhism as in Hinduism, and in any religion of Eros/Static Quality.

The law in RTa -- that reality holds the manifestation, and does not treat it arbitrarily -- is the essence of Buddhist 'salvation.' When you 'know' with your whole being the join in RTa, linking reality and its manifestation, you are saved. Whatever passes at the level of manifestation can be accepted, can be welcomed in its vicissitudes, and not forced into becoming something it is not. This frees the manifest to be manifest. The manifestation cannot offer ontological security, it is inherently ontologically insecure-- without foundation, without permanence, without anything to hold on to for certainty. Yet once we really know the insecure manifestation rests in the secure reality, then we can allow the insecurity of the manifestation its 'natural' flow. This is what looks like a step into the Daemonic/Dynamic, but isn't. It is just freeing the manifestation from the overshadowing divinity, and letting it be itself, out of ceasing to fear, and worry about, whether the reality is there or not.

This acceptance of what is, at the manifest level, due to our experience of the unbreakable link between reality and the manifest, is peace, as well as enlightenment. This is salvation.

It enables Buddhists both to immerse more in the passing, yet let it be passing. The manifest is valued more, yet not wrongly valued, as when we grab on to its Form to avoid our sinking feeling about the Void. Once you know with your being, which is what enlightenment is, that Void is Form, and Form is Void, then you let go.. A huge relaxation of a previous cramp occurs. A clinging to a host of manifest things as if they were the ultimate reality is let go. But no one lets go just because they accept 'you're born, life is short, then you die.' This is nothing to do with the letting go in enlightenment. You let go of the manifest as 'the answer', and let it be no answer at all, but just

whatever it is, or is not, because you have accepted the reality that holds the manifest. This reality is the mystery, and by ceasing to fear and flee it, setting up your ego against it, mystery and phenomena are restored to a creative relationship. When you know the mystery, and do not force it to rescue you by ceasing to be a mystery, then you free up the 10,000 things to be, and show you what they can be, in their way, uninterfered with by you.

In a way, Buddhism allows more play with the manifest, because we are not using it, not forcing it, to be something it cannot be.

The old popular song, 'you win a little and you lose a little, and that's the story of love' captures the acceptance of the flimsiness of the manifest, once its root in the solidity of reality is taken as read. In a real sense, we cannot really lose our root in reality, so there is nothing to find; it is always there, known or unknown. Thus even in delusion we remain enlightened. Yet this does not stop us from being like 'the fish surrounded by water, crying piteously from thirst' [Zen]. We have to reclaim our original enlightenment.

Nor do I agree even that Buddhism is non theistic, or Impersonal, as Hinduism is in metaphysics-- yet is not in devotional yoga where the soul yearns personally and ecstatically for God. Buddhism is simply apophatic rather than cataphatic, the negative way, not the positive way. It knows we spoil things by too many words, too many concepts, too many images. There is a lot more to be said-- but Buddhism keeps quiet on it, inviting people to know it directly.

Buddhism, then, has revamped Eros/Static Quality, freeing up the link between reality and manifestation, turning it into a relationship.

"A bridge is revealed which connects the everyday temporal world of sense perceptions to the realm of timeless knowledge."

"Reality, enlightenment, the divine, must shine through each moment."

"With wise understanding we can live in harmony with our life, with the Universal Law."

But this does not change the other, central theme of Eros/Static Quality, which is that when you know, as manifestation, your join with reality, then you also know your unity with all other manifestation. Buddhism introduces more of a relationship in this level, as well, the eros of 'interdependence' replaces mystical fusion. Manifest things influence each other, as well as being connected together. Clearly, RTa governs both the unbreakable link of manifestation to reality, and the unbreakable connectedness of all the differing manifestations. Reality not only upholds but also unites the 10,000 things.

“I move beyond the bounds of my own life and discover that I am an expression or form of universal life, of real divine energy.”

“The forces that move the cosmos are no different to those that move the human soul.”

“This paper is empty of an independent self. Empty, in this sense, means that the paper is full of everything, the entire cosmos. The presence of this tiny sheet of paper proves the presence of the whole cosmos.” [Thich Nhat Hanh]

“Everything that appears is singing one song.. We experience the world of phenomena playing themselves out in a dance without separation.”

The block on Eros/Static Quality is the ego, or the sense of selfhood that separates itself from, and indeed sets itself up against, the rootedness of phenomena in reality, and the connectedness of all phenomena. This two-fold unity is lost because of the ego, or selfish self, misapprehending itself, the outer world, and what holds both yet is neither. The three poisons drive this setting up of a separate selfhood, and thus the ego is constituted of Craving, Hatred, Delusion. Delusive Cravings and Delusive Hatreds dominate human psychological life.

“Obstacles to enlightenment: desire, anger, mental confusion, pride and jealousy..”

“Our suffering is due to ignorance, attachment to the self, and a false perception of reality.”

“We live a form of false perception of reality.”

“Pursuit of vulgar ambition is the height of confusion.”

“The real world is beyond our thoughts and ideas; we see it through the net of our desires, divided into pleasure and pain, right and wrong, inner and outer. To see it as it is, you must step beyond the net. It is not hard to do, for the net is full of holes.”

“Don’t be led and trapped by feelings, let them arise and pass.”

“Ordinary mind is the prey of external influences, habitual tendencies, and conditioning.. [It is] vulnerable to all the winds of circumstance.”

“No self, no problem.”

Another common misunderstanding of Buddhism fails to realise that, as a version of Eros/Static Quality, its Light expresses divine Love for what it shines upon, and brings to Life. Eros is the ‘Light of Love’, and this brings Life

to the myriad of things held in the Light. To 'intellectualise' enlightenment as knowledge, but lacking love, is a Western tendency because Western people are, unlike Easterners, so very cold. Western culture is far too Mentally Abstract, soulless as well as heartless, and when this spirit gets into Western Buddhism, you have a perversion that fundamentally falsifies RTa.

RTa is reality and the 'pattern' of its manifestation. This pattern is the Way reality and manifestation inter-relate, but it is also a loving hand offered to that which it holds. The love is gentle, benign, non coercive, non judging, yet it is certainly love. Buddhism, like Christianity, stresses the kindness, or charity, of such love, the kindness of a greater for a lesser. St Paul's famous description of 'agape' is very similar.

"Loving kindness is not attachment; compassion is not pity; sympathetic joy is not comparison; equanimity is not indifference."

"Compassion is like the mother's milk, love and affection."

"Generous love leads to thankfulness.. Gratitude is necessary to enlightenment."

This last is particularly significant: to be grateful for the way that reality is holding and uniting all manifestation is only possible if the soul is touched, even ravished, by the gift of Eros. Eros is entirely to do with an unconditional generosity that informs and sustains and flowers all being, all of What Is. Eros overflows, it is the well that is bottomless, and its generosity toward All That Is also creates its compassion for the sufferings of beings, especially those sufferings that beings bring upon themselves by a false way of 'positioning' themselves as standing apart from the Sacred Circle and its Round Dance. The Love in Eros is shown both by its primal care for all things, which is unstinting and never falters, and its solicitude in saving the beings who fall out of the arms of Eros, and need to be restored. Buddha's enlightenment is medicinal, because it restores beings living in unreality and hurting from that to the reality that alone can make them content with their lot, no longer restlessly trying to redesign it, and this brings joy and happiness as the ultimate of being. For this, we feel grateful.

This is why, as is always the case with Eros/Static Quality religion, happiness and joy are more ultimate than sorrow and misery. Our distress is created by our resistance to the Way It Is, the Way Things Are. When we renounce our need to try to 'improve' on this Way, then we cease to be disappointed with what happens in our life. "Renunciation is being freed of dissatisfaction."

If there were 'no hand to hold', then gratitude would not be part of enlightenment. But gratitude is crucial to enlightenment, and what we are grateful for is that hand that holds all things, and holds them together as one. Any Buddhist who has lost that hand, or delusively thinks they can do without it, will never reach enlightenment.

My personal stance is that, of all the religions in the world that focus exclusively on Eros/Static Quality, Buddhism is the most helpful. Personally, I would rather see Buddhism and not Islam bidding to become the world's most popular religion. But that in itself might reflect my resistance, thus whether Buddhism waxes and wanes is also not to be fought over, but allowed to become whatever it becomes. 'Let it be.'

Doubtless the Buddha just smiled when the Taliban foolishly and futilely blew up the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan.

3,

How close is the Eros/Static Quality of Buddhism to that in Eastern Orthodox Christianity?

In a letter to a friend, I suggested this: "Hinduism is radically monist, Buddhism less so [neither monism nor duality, but a union that is non-dual and non-fused], and Greek Orthodoxy more 'personal' in Eros. Yet if you Christianise Eros, you still have Eros-- and Eros runs from Mother India to Greece in greater or lesser continuity. The Logos is also the Light from the East, though in our tradition Logos and Sophia are paired [Christ and the Church] to make Eros about [inter-personal] marriage, not just about [merged] unity. Our tradition nuances Eros as communion, not just oneness. Yet both are obviously positions in Eros."

Eastern Orthodox Christianity revises the non-duality/non-fusion of Buddhism into a more personal Eros of Lover and Beloved. Void and Form acquire a love relationship which is ecstatic, on both sides. Void goes out to Form, ecstatically, as Form yearns for Void, ecstatically.

None the less, the similarity of Buddhism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity over the Light, Love, Life, that dispels the darkness into which humans fall is remarkable.

Buddhist gratitude is no different in spirit to the Eastern Orthodox Christian 'thankfulness to God' expressed in liturgical worship. We go to the temple to be rejoined to the Light, whose Love gives us all the gifts of Life, and thank the Light for its generosity in creating us, and in saving us when we have gone astray. "My Light, My Saviour", we sing.

Even the three poisons that 'darken' us are precisely echoed by the ascetic and mystic St Maximos, in terms so close to the Buddhist you could substitute either for the other and most scholars would not notice the swap. Hence in Greek Orthodox monasticism, the fallen desirous faculty spoils the ecstatic 'love of God' by creating 'self-love', and the fallen incensive faculty spoils the ecstatic 'love of neighbour' by creating 'domination of the other.' The fallen nous, or spiritual intelligence and direct seeing, is overcome by 'illusion, fantasy, unreality.'

Eros is the Light that 'shines on the just and unjust alike', that benefits all, that excludes none; it is thus similar to what Plato called 'The Good.' Eros is by nature an abundant Goodness, the source of all the divine gifts flowing into our life [which we tend to be totally unaware of and ungrateful for]. Eros is certainly the 'good' in the Good News of the gospels. Jesus did not talk of Eros philosophically, but in Jewish style brought it directly into people's lives by miracles, storytelling, encounters with people where healing and teaching in the encounter is vital to its meaning.. Encounter heals. Encounter teaches. The good life is the sharing of the gifts of God among people through all the encounters that comprise human existence. Eros has to be purged, ascetically, to restore its living reality and shed its deadened counterfeit, and Eros has to be shared, socially, given to all rather than stolen by a few, to keep its abundance overflowing.

The relationship of reality and manifestation, and among the different manifestations, becomes loving, in Eros.

Clearly, this relationship has to be non-dual and non-fused as a 'channel', or inter-personal love would collapse. The ecstatic Eros is not separation, not merging; 'not this, not that.' It is a third way. Martin Buber's I—Thou requires this third way, this opening up of a space between things: an inter-subjectivity that rules out both objectivity and subjectivity. In this sense, Buddhism moves away from Hinduism and towards the personal and ecstatic Eros so marked in Eastern Christianity, and in the Sufi-ism influenced by Greek Orthodoxy.

That Eros is made more personal and ecstatic in Eastern Christianity is significant, for the Daemonic requires a distinct and free personhood to be involved in a different ecstasy. The ecstasy of Eros is yearning toward God and creation, whereas the ecstasy of the Daemonic is surrender to depth, and the unknown. Heart passion 'surrenders' itself to a dark and suffering, and ultimately unknown, Fate.

Equally, there is a surprising continuity between the Eros/Static Quality in ancient Judaism and in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Temple Judaism is similar to Liturgical Orthodoxy, in ethos and form, though there is a difference in content in regard to the former living in expectation of the Messiah and the latter living in the reality of his presence.

The Daemonic might be found in Hinduism and Buddhism in muted form, hinted at yet underplayed, not much developed. In Judaism and Christianity the Daemonic is, or should be, primary, not secondary. That should in turn affect the way that Eros is lived. This is another tangled issue..

Perhaps with Judaism and Christianity, what we should find, and sometimes do find, is Eros/Static Quality and Daemonic/Dynamic Quality side by side, despite the contradiction.

Their co-existence is, and must be, uncomfortable.

Eros= colour,
Daemonic=black and white.

Eros= the Greeks who know a little about everything,
Daemonic= the Jews who know a lot about only one thing.

Eros= height and breadth of space,
Daemonic= depth and focus of time.

From the perspective of Eros, Einstein was right to equate space and time, yet that works only if time is curved, as the Orient always declared. From the perspective of the Daemonic, Einstein was wrong because time is different to space, it is not curved in its step into the unknown, gambling with what will turn out in the end. There is an arrow to time= the time 'before' cannot be treated as notionally equivalent to the time 'after.'

Eros is naturally philosophical, in the best sense, whilst the Daemonic is not at all even remotely philosophical, but mainly psychological. It searches, ponders, challenges, the deeps over which we move, on the ground, in time.

Philosophy wants to know the whole, and our part in it. Psychology wants to know if the next step over an abyss into the unknowable is firm, trustworthy, will hold up, or will fall through the floor boards.

Eros= Greek philosophy,
Daemonic= Jewish psychology.

4,

Is the uncomfortable difference between Eros/Static Quality and the Daemonic/Dynamic Quality only conceptual? Is this distinction just arbitrary, an interpretation of the mind, not necessarily a given of reality?

A friend puts this position thus: "In terms of static/dynamic, it is precisely because I am trying to relate the static to the dynamic that I am writing this. "I" is as it is -- it is only when thought intervenes that the trouble starts. Both "static" and "dynamic" are abstractions [first-order, primal dichotomy] which help us deal with the undifferentiated reality of phenomenal experience, to stop the time, fight our own demise, find our bearings. Thus, paradoxically, labelling something as dynamic renders it stable and static -- that is the way of thought -- even Lao Tzu wrote thousands of words on the inexpressibility of Tao."

Obviously you can attach words and images to a Static reality more easily than you can to a Dynamic reality. Yet that misses the key point. Both Eros and the Daemonic have unmanifest and manifest. After all, the highest mysticism of Eros is beyond any Light in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Hinduism has God as unmanifest Brahma and manifest Atman. RTa has its inexplicable source and its disclosure of that in the forms it generates.

Thus, only people too conceptual and abstracted think Static and Dynamic are 'conceptual abstractions.' They are not. Each is a Spiritual Power, and we relate to each Spiritual Power below the neck, in primary experience, relating to it spiritually and only then being able to partially communicate its spiritual quality in secondary thought.

Reality comes first, thought second; thought is not constitutive of any spiritual reality.

Static Eros and Dynamic Daemonic are two Spiritual Powers that pre-exist the thought that seeks to convey them.

[1] The thought that communicates the Static is visionary, or what the old Greeks meant by 'theoria': vision as contemplation, seeing into things, seeing the spiritual shape of things, that spans from the mystical to the mechanical.

[2] The thought needed to convey the Dynamic is clearly much harder, verging on the impossible.. The Dynamic is about action; thus there is a sort of understanding inhering in doing itself, but it can be 'commented' upon later in reflection [like Jewish commentary on Scriptures]. The Bible calls this thought 'searching the heart', and when Mary gets the Impossible News, it is said she 'ponders in the heart.' This is the only kind of thought that gets close to the Dynamic. David does it a lot in the Psalms, where 'deep cries to deep.'

No one can talk about the Daemonic, much less search and ponder it where it strikes us without having been fatally wounded by the Daemonic God in their own existence in this world. People who have not been hurt by God will not be roused by God in heart passion. They will be left in Eros/Static Quality. Those called to the Daemonic are all chosen by God for that road, very specifically: God calls us by our true name, and this name contains the power we are granted to serve the Daemonic journey and battle for history's outcome. Those not chosen by the Daemonic do not experience the blow that devastates a person's existence. Some people love God intensely and irrationally, and this is necessary to sustain such a costly calling. For, the Daemonic keeps pushing us farther, and deeper, increasing the cost.

Thus, if either, or both, Spiritual Powers, Eros and Daemonic, live in us as reality, Eros animating the soul, Daemonic challenging the heart, then we will be inspired in what we think and say about them. If the Spiritual Power itself, Eros or Daemonic, does not inspire you, there is little point in talking about it or pretending you can 'think it real.' If we are struggling with either Spiritual Power in our life, that struggle can overcome the gap. Then we will have something to say and something to think about. So, are you doing your homework? If there is no practice in regard to either Eros or Daemonic, no struggling with a reality beyond our human apparatus, then we must shut up, for we have nothing to say, and nothing to think about. It all remains up in the

air, whether we quote writers on Eros or quote writers on the Daemonic. If you are on a path, then the spade work done by others can help you with your own spade work. If you do no spade work, you cannot be helped by those who went before. Their living words and plugged in thoughts will just be conceptual abstractions to you..

If you only live in the head, and your head lives in conceptual abstractions, then every reality will be reduced to conceptual abstractions by you.

This can also happen when imagination takes the place of direct experience, and so images blot out reality, substituting for it, instead of playing the role of metaphors, or symbolic analogies, able to communicate the unknown in the known.

5,

Eros/Static Quality abounds in the Beginning; falters in the Middle [and needs chivalrous protection by the Daemonic], but is restored more completely in the End. This is the hope, but it can have no guarantee..

The Daemonic/Dynamic Quality quests and contests time, from Beginning through Middle to the End. The victory or defeat of the Daemonic will decide what becomes of Eros.

Eros invites us to come back to the Circle Dance of Being, in its bounty and excellence, its supreme quality and its constancy. It never plays fast and loose, but is constant as a truly loving mother.

The Daemonic is a tough father, for it invites us to join God in the risk that gambles existence. It is stranger and darker.. It permits no gurus, only elder and younger brothers. If it has sages, this is because there is a 'wisdom of the heart' -- but it is so hard won, it is rarer than hen's teeth.

This gamble requires us to be free in a radical way not comprehended in Eros, for it is neither the whole, nor a part in the whole, but a personalness that stands apart, and is free to place the world in its heart, and give its heart for the sake of the world, or not..

The personhood is neither ego or selfish self, a false separation from God and creation, nor is it God and creation. It stands apart and it stands alone. It stands on the abyss, which renders it no more contained by the maternal milk of Eros, but standing in existential freedom that is radical. The Russian Orthodox Christian existentialist Berdyaev has written of this abysmally groundless freedom as no other writer has managed, even Kierkegaard. Buddhism offers freedom from self-created error, based upon resisting, denial, avoidance, of what is. But that freedom is not the existential freedom of the personhood. Buddhism is 'freedom from'; but Berdyaev is referring to 'freedom for'-- the freedom to personally give the heart through its passion.

To act from the heart, we must be free as person, and this means, 'Other' to everything. At times, we stand alone, abandoned by God, and quit on by our brothers.

The Spaciousness of Eros is fine, as the backdrop of Goodness we all rely on from start to finish, but Time's Edge cuts us with its risk, and calls forth a deeper pain and a deeper love. In the Daemonic, only suffering leads to the deep love.

On two further points, then, there is no compromise, but stark opposition, between Eros and the Daemonic.

These two points are [1] war, and [2] suffering.

[1] Eros pronounces this in Buddhism: "The wars between people are a reflection of our own inner conflict and fear." The Greek Orthodox Fathers often said the exact same, claiming that the many passages in the Jewish Bible where the righteous, the kings and warriors like David, fight outer wars in the arena of the world are 'really' about the inner warfare inside us. In Eros, this warfare is between ego or selfish self, on the one side, and being a part in the whole, on the other side, if nuanced Buddhistically. In Eastern Orthodoxy, the opposition would be stated as ego/selfish self against love, light, life. There is no substantive difference. The stress on peace as spiritual, and war as fallen, worldly or delusive, is the net result.

The Daemonic repudiates this perspective entirely. Christ said, 'I bring not peace but a sword.' In Judaism, there is an inner spiritual warfare, but it is between the two hearts, the heart of flesh and the heart of stone, and it decides which heart we give to the world, power lusting and dominating, on the one hand, or making the leap of faith and sacrificial, on the other hand. Moreover, war in the world, for the destiny of the world, is real and holy: it is the hero's calling, the calling of those royal and noble in heart. We must fight ourself, and fight God, to be made ready to fight the world, for the sake of the world.

There is a war going on for the world's destiny, and its protagonist has to be deeper in love, because the antagonist is an objectively existing evil spirit who wants the world's redemption stopped, and the investment God made in the world as other, and free, to end in ruin. In Eros, the demonic is our own shadow, projected outward; in the Daemonic, the demonic is other to us, and is a real adversary of the gamble God is co-enacting with us. In the Daemonic, we have to overcome both our own nerves, given the difficulty of the task, and we have to stand up to real intimidation trying to break our passion emanating from a malicious spiritual source. This is not an aspect of our unconscious not sufficiently integrated and transformed. Celtic Shamanism referred to spiritual evil as "the grim dread, the great horror that is hateful to all."

The Daemonic is 'anti-pacifism', and only values peace as the state of 'it is completed' experienced by a heart that has done its duty, at cost to itself. On the Cross, as he died, Christ uttered 'it is finished', meaning 'I did what I was called to do', and that is the peace in death.

The inner warfare is less important than the outer warfare. The outer warfare is part of the redemption of the entire world process, thus it counts supremely, and the inner warfare is only valid as necessary to helping, and clarifying, the outer warfare.

[2] Suffering is even a greater difference than fighting. In Buddhism, and all versions of Eros/Static Quality, we suffer because we resist the way things are, we look for permanence in the impermanent, we deny the mysteriousness of the permanent. So, neither reality nor its manifestation allow us to seize it in our tight fist as we wish to do, and this causes our suffering. Frustrated wishes, frustrated ideas, frustrated ego/selfishness, is what causes us to get depressed, and constantly bemoan our fate about the way things happen. Why can't they happen as we want? Only acceptance of that which does not give us 'what we want' frees us from suffering.

In the Daemonic, this account of suffering as self-inflicted is true, but only up to a point. For there is real suffering in existence that has nothing to do with denial, or resistance, and insisting 'things be this way, rather than that way.' The deep suffering comes from existence and hits the heart deep. Buddhism is talking of the mind and soul, but knows nothing of the heart. The purer and more innocent the heart, the deeper the suffering. Suffering that affects the heart, inescapably, deepens it. Not to be affected is not to have a heart. To be affected deeper and deeper forces us 'down' into the heart.

Two mysteries of suffering are missing in Buddhism.

First, suffering reveals to us how to fight truly. Our personal suffering can drown us in self-pity, but it can also spiritually link us to the suffering of all mankind. It is only deep suffering that reveals what is at stake in the fight for the world. Only by knowing the deepest suffering *of* the world can we make the deepest fight *for* the world.

Second, there is a point in the long Daemonic Road of Judaism, changing over 2000 years repeatedly and hugely, where the link between pain of heart and love, the love that goes to the extreme, is forged. Only those who suffer deeply in the heart will ever love deeply, deeply enough to find that passion of heart that is redemptive. This is the passion that suffers a wound, carries a weight, pays a cost, to love the world.

These two points are reflected in ancient Judaism; they should have stormed into Christianity, but have instead limped in.

The Eastern Orthodox Christian monastic tradition, in being so close to Buddhist monasticism, has blocked the Daemonic most of all. Much of Eastern Christian monasticism is the yoga of Eros, rather than being the prophetic delving into and change of heart necessary for the heart's mission to the world. Thus the doctrine of 'impassibility' of the Orthodox monks may work for Eros, but for the Daemonic it is the chief heresy, the heresy of heresies, the betrayal of the heart, the falsification of the human passion called by God to travel toward the Passion of Christ.

Points [1] and [2] go together, and cannot be separated. It is only suffering which reveals the true fight, and it is only the deep pain which reveals the deepest love. Until this is enacted and lived to the last drop of the cup -- and even Christ said to the Daemonic God in the Garden of Gethsemane 'let this cup pass' -- the Daemonic reality and calling of Christianity will remain halfhearted. Like Christ we have to say, 'not my will, but yours, be done.'

However, it is also important not to confuse the true Daemonic intervention in time and the world process, with the travesty that Western Christianity has made of this, starting in Roman Catholicism, where Satanic things like the Inquisition were regarded as 'godly', but going much farther in Protestantism. It is Western Christian Protestantism that has profoundly falsified the heroic summons to the world, by engaging in a Satanic 'crusading' that says it is God-led and God-loyal, but is in reality the total betrayal of the Daemonic Spirit. Conquest by the sword, forcing people to embrace religion when they do not understand and assent to it with the heart, threatening people with fundamentalist teachings that are coercive and judgemental, are all the works of the devil who in Judaism is called Satan the Accuser. There is nothing redemptive in any of it. Protestantism, allied with colonialism and capitalism, has given 'intervention' a bad name. There are times when even well intentioned action can 'make matters worse', and so there are times for doing nothing. Yet there are other times when to let things be, and do nothing, is cowardice. Clearly, the heart must be purged, destroyed and remade, to be able to 'act' for the Daemonic God. This is why 'God chastens those he loves' is so crucial to the Daemonic Road. The Protestant buccaneers, who raped and pillaged their way through the New World, no different to the Roman Catholic knights who went to 'liberate' Jerusalem in the Crusades, were unchastened in heart, and therefore such people can never serve God. It is always the most unchastened in heart who are the most self-righteous, the most convinced they have God on their side, and want to win for God. All this 'holy war' foolishness is Satanic.

A major advantage of the monasticism so prevalent in Eastern Orthodox Christianity – and in Celtic Christianity – is that it tended to rule out the spreading of religion by tyrannical force; rather, religion was spread by the monastic 'example' of humbleness [toward God], non-greed [toward self], and non-domination [toward neighbour]. The monasteries fed the poor and became centres of art, medicine, learning= oases of refreshment from the desert of the fallen world.

But for Christianity this trade-off has a price, in that it encourages people to follow Eros as a way of avoiding the distortions of the Daemonic which have to be overcome.

6,

In Eros/Static Quality, you can mystically experience God, and be enlightened; in the Daemonic/Dynamic Quality, you never know and must make the leap of faith into the unknowable. No one knows how time will go, and if it will end well, or catastrophically. Because persons matter, and the world matters, 'going back to source' cannot console, or in any way resolve, this possible final tragedy.

Eros is optimism, the Daemonic is pessimism.

The dark and suffering, and fiery, Daemonic Spirit has 'forcibly' taken hold of the human heart. Only of the Daemonic God is it true that 'fear is the beginning of wisdom.'

7,

Time, in its Daemonic meaning, is urgent, and it is still more urgent that Christians step up.

Christianity cannot afford to over value the 'ontological-liturgical-mystical' and under value the 'existential-dramatic-historical.' That one sidedness is the Greek heresy in Christianity. It points to the conclusion that Christianity must be more Jewish.

Only Christ really bore and plumbed, and reversed at depth, the ancient human tragedy; only he stepped up to it. But somehow his followers have contrived to be, among all men and women, among the least likely to step up to the human tragedy as Christ did..

This is beyond tragic, it is a disgrace.

For those of us who love Christ, the God of Eros will never suffice. We are, like it or not, given over to the Daemonic God. What he will do, with us and the world, remains in doubt to the last gasp, but the access to this mystery is suffering and fighting, from love, for the world.

That is all we have. It suffices.

EROS AND THE DAEMONIC IN JEWISH TRADITION= Deuteronomy and the Book of Job

PRELUDE

The Book of Job is the ultimate story of the Daemonic, and arguably the clearest prefigurement of Christ in his Passion of anything in the whole Jewish Bible.

But first Eros, as it is conveyed to the Jews in Deuteronomy. Put at its simplest, all the 'good things' of life, tangible and intangible, are gifts from God, and so we humans do not, and cannot, 'own', possess, devour, consume, such gifts as if they 'belonged to us', and were our 'private property.' Rather, to acknowledge these gifts as divine in origin means giving to other beings as we are given to by the Origin of All Being. We circulate the 'goods' of life, passing on what has been granted to us. If we fail in this, we do not understand and live by the generous spirit of Eros; the irony is, through miserly holding on to what we think we can 'have', we destroy the spirit in whatever goodness our hands try to grasp, and so it all goes dead on us. The rich man hoards deathliness in his bulging grain-barn. What you preserve you destroy; what you let go you gain. In Eros, gain is loss, and loss is gain.

Seek fullness, and you will end up with emptiness; accept emptiness, and you will end up with fullness.

[1] Eros

In Deuteronomy – a book much re-edited [and over hyped] by a later 'law upholding' group in Judaism – the basics of Eros for the Jews is laid out. From the start Eros is linked to the temple, and to the function of the priest. It is not linked to king and warrior, prophet and clown, innocent and wise, and tramp and broken: the figures of the Daemonic.

The passage is Deuteronomy, 26, 1-11=

“When you come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.. you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that Yahweh your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place which Yahweh your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. And you shall go to the priest.. and say to him, ‘I declare this day to Yahweh your God that I have come into the land which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us.’ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand, and set it down before the altar of Yahweh your God..”

The person making this sacrificial offering is to declare that, having been a wandering tribe 'few in number', the Jews were forged into a 'great, mighty, and populous' nation in Egypt, as a result of the sufferings and harshness

visited upon them. In this captivity, they cried out to Yahweh the God of their fathers who had promised never to abandon them, and he heard their voice and saw their 'affliction, toil, and oppression', and Yahweh brought the Jews out of their bondage with 'a mighty hand and an outstretched arm', with great terror, 'with signs and wonders', and he brought them into 'this place and this land, 'a land flowing with milk and honey' [milk being the maternal pole and honey being the sexual pole of Eros].

"And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O Yahweh, hast given me."

The person making the sacrificial offering is also told that they will 'set it down before Yahweh your God, and worship.. Yahweh your God.'

The next line is crucial in understanding what Eros is and how its Gift works in us: "and you shall rejoice in all the good which Yahweh your God has given to you and your house." The rejoicing in Eros is for 'you, the priest, and the stranger who is among you.'

Anyone who understands what is being revealed in these lines would understand why capitalism is impossible: why Yahweh who is the source of all Goodness, freely given and gratuitously offered to one and all, forbids usury, the engine of capitalism. Eros gives bounteously and unendingly, like a wellspring with no bottom, and asks no payment 'in return'; it simply requires we give and offer ourself, and all the 'goods' we have received, back to God. What does this mean? It tells us what the spiritual basis of joy, and tasting the fruits of life, really is. It is sharing, and give away, not hoarding, and holding on.

Thus the sacrifice made in the temple, at the altar, is a giving, or offering, in which we let ourself be remade by the spirit of Eros; hence we thank and are grateful to God, in our worship, but this spirit also reaches out to and includes our fellow humans, including the sojourner, the 'other', the one not familiar but strange to us. The Eros that is a living Generosity to All has no 'those who are in, and those who are out.' Eros is non discriminating, non-dualistic.

The goodness of life is shared between God, neighbour, and stranger. It needs all three to bear witness to the origin and dynamic of Eros.

The social side of Eros is linked to its mystical ontology. Eros is divinely bestowed as a free gift, with no strings attached, yet it does require a response from the human to truly unite with it and become what it is. It is, but by its gift, we become what it is.. Sharing instills, or enshrines, the very nature of Eros in our being. We become the well-spring. Hence 'if they ask for your shirt, give them your coat as well', and 'forgive 7 x 70'; or, 'the sun shines on the just and the unjust alike.'

There is a sacrifice in this process of acquiring Eros as our true nature: we 'offer' ourselves to the divine gift, letting go of much that is incompatible with

its love, light, life. Sacrifice in this context means letting go of a relative good [in human eyes] for a greater good [in God's eyes] that replaces it..

The whole letting go of something humanly old and dead to receive something divinely new and alive is articulated in naturalistic, farming metaphors, through-out the Jewish Bible. Eros sanctifies farming: the settled life-- the life which leads on to capitalist greed, violence, rivalry, and selfishness. Without the true Eros, humanity seeks Ego, and Desire, and everyday life -- the life of business and trading -- becomes ever more corrupt, and under the sway of evil. Eros addresses the 'natural man and woman', transforming them, so that in all their natural dealings they constantly incarnate Eros in the ordinary. Though there always remains an exalted mystical side to Eros, there is also a side more embodied, and encompassing of all that 'naturally happens.' This is the Sacred. The temple is the special place of the Sacred, and the priest is the representative of the people in asking for and passing on the 'saving grace.' Thus every human being is 'priest of the creation', because the creation is itself in its entirety meant to be Sacred to humanity.

Given this, then what the temple, and the priest, ensures is that Eros will never be confined to the mystical alone, but that it will stretch seamlessly from heaven to cosmos to nature to culture to society to family to person; Eros will become the Everyday.

Consequently, there is a sacrifice in Eros, but it is the give-away that 'makes sacred'; it sanctifies, and creates sacrament. This is not the sacrifice of the Daemonic that is radical, terrible, unbelievable.

In many older and indigenous cultures, the sacrifice [of greed and selfishness, of possessiveness and holding on] that sanctifies, and makes all ordinary things 'sacraments', is known and practiced.

A Desert story points to it.

Once a peasant farmer barely surviving on the margins of the desert was over looked by a wandering monk from a neighbouring hill. The peasant's prayer, and thanksgiving, to God was to leave some of his meagre food out at night as a gift for God. This was his sacrificial offering. To his happiness, every morning when he came back to the ritual place, he noticed the food was gone.

The monk went down to the peasant and put him right. God is a Spirit, and has no need of your material food, the peasant was told. The peasant said nothing, but showed that obdurate face of the unlearned to the learned, when the former think the latter wrong but cannot prove it. The monk realised his words were falling on deaf ears. The peasant believed what he had experienced. All right, we will watch tonight and see who takes your food, the monk insisted.

Sure enough, in the deep hours of the night, the confident trot and jaunty tail appeared. The fox gratefully ate his daily bread under the cover of night.

See, the monk crowed, I told you so. When he left the next day, he taught the peasant a more spiritual way of praying and left. Within hours the peasant had forgotten the sophisticated words, and the consequence was his prayer life, woven into a sacramental consciousness, ceased from that day.

Back in his monastery, the monk slept one night but was awakened, in terror of his life, sweating and shaking. God loomed over him, a terrible presence speaking in a more terrible voice. 'What is it to you if I want to give my food to my fox?'

This is a story about the nature of Eros, but it is backed up by the Daemonic God.

[2] The Daemonic

The tale told in the Book of Job is one of the strangest in the Jewish Bible, having wheels within wheels, and as with all things Daemonic, having a hidden and secret wisdom uncovered by a journey only suffering can send us on. The Daemonic is not every day, and natural; it is out of the ordinary, rare, the disturber of the usual peace. It is the patron of wandering tribes all-round the globe, and a threat to all those who settle down in the name of Eros-- but betray Eros in their bourgeois addiction to preserving the good things; for by the way we try to preserve them, we turn good things into dead things. Then the Daemonic storm comes, and it is all wrecked, as it needs to be.

Job is different, however. He is not a bourgeois man, a hoarder, a selfish and mean Scrooge, a card carrying capitalist. He is not the vampire devourer drinking the blood of others, to promote and secure his life. Job is a genuinely good man, by the lights of Eros. More interesting, he is not even Jewish, but a pagan; he is 'everyman', and he will be forced to go through something harshly difficult which the Jews will struggle with through-out their religious evolution: the existence, and importance, of innocent suffering. This is existentially fated suffering that is not a cause-effect, or karmic, result of evil doing that comes back upon the evil doer. Job does not deserve what befalls him. Indeed, he is the stakes in a bet between God and Satan; the gamble is that if undeserved suffering is visited upon humanity by God, as a necessary part of the world process, then humanity will reject God. Most interesting of all, Job is the oldest book of the Bible, older than Genesis. The Jewish 'story' begins with this stranger who is the subject of a wager made by a God willing to gamble with the Evil Spirit called Satan the Accuser. God has faith in Job, and thus humanity as a whole, believing we will come through the worst fate that can test us. The devil believes, by contrast, we will fold in the midst of the suffering hardest to bear and hardest to endure, and will blame God for it-- or will blame ourself as rejected of God. Either way, we will 'in the end', at the last breath and the final accounting, throw the whole risk of existence back at God, as not worth it.

This story is not confined to Job, but is the story of what the human heart passes through in existence. It lays bare an existential suffering in this world that cannot be rationalised and cannot be moralised. It just is. It is what is.

Without going into detail, suffice it say that Job is the story of every human being who goes through, and undergoes, the worst that fate can bring down upon our poor human flesh. The righteous Jewish judges insist Job has done wrong, and try to explain his 'black inexplicable pain' as a punishment from God for moral failure. They deal in guilt. Job has the integrity to throw off this guilt. His wife counsils him to curse God and die, which is a more existential response, more ultimate in despair. This death would be the affirmation that hell wins, or as Sartre put it, that "mankind is a useless passion."

But Job comes through. He accepts something impossible to accept, and he comes through.

Job's coming through, right at the beginning of the entire Jewish story, prefigures and prophetically anticipates Christ's coming through in hell, after the Cross and before the Resurrection. Job's 'season in hell' is a foretaste of Christ's Descent into Hell, and his final victory there.

But what strikes me today, more than anything, is the declaration, the shout, that Job cries at the moment of break-through, the moment of turn around, in the depth. This is the end result of all the wounding inflicted by the Daemonic.

Job, 19, 23-27=

"Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then from my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold.."

Before, Job had heard of God, and kept the divine instructions. Now, he is face to face, flesh to fire. His skin is burnt away, and his flesh is unconcealed, and in this flesh of the body radiant with energy, he will know God heart to heart.

You cannot claim you believe in Christ as the Redeemer, and go to church to 'remember' him, or read thick tomes of theology 'explaining' him.

You can only discover Christ is your Redeemer as Job did, from the depths of hell. Only in hell, where you are lost and done, can you find the Redeeming divine-humanity that, just as you sink for the last time, seizes your failing hand with violence.

Only in hell do we accept the irrational suffering.

Only in hell do we know the Redeemer lives, and stands upon the earth.

Only in hell do we know the Redeemer is on our side, and will not let us go down to the pit, the furnace, the void.

In hell, the Redeemer comes, and in hell we discover why it must be passed through, and what takes us through all the way, to a far shore.

To discover this, in hell, electrifies Job. He wants to tell everyone the unbelievable news, he wants to scream it to the height and to the depth, and to the farthest disappearing horizons.

Job wants to write it in the rock, to make it available for all the generations to come after. In his story, the word in the Rock is the Redeemer.

But later on, after centuries, the Redeemer and the person who can turn to him when all help is gone becomes Christ and Peter: Christ is the word and Peter is the rock. The word comes on the day of trouble, and the rock, paradoxically, is troubled by the day of trouble, it remains true to the trouble on that terrible day.

But it is Job's wild declaration, his witness to the hidden secret of hell, that celebrates the victory of the Daemonic.

Those who suffer under the Daemonic may lose Eros, may lose the rejoicing in the fruits of Eros. Their suffering is protracted, the night is unending, the black pain is deeper than any ravine. Yet, at the end of it is a victory, an exultation, that will electrify you, if you can make the same plunge into hell.

In hell, you will know your Redeemer lives; in hell, you will know the God on your side, because he is prepared to pay the price for you beyond calculating.

If you discovered this, this redemptive power in the place where God is not, and God is defeated, would you not want to shout it, like Job, to the rooftops?

If we are not shouting it, then this is because we have either not descended into our hell, or if we have, we cannot yet find the redemptive power that contests that place as our advocate, against our accuser.

We may be in hell, but without discovering the Redeemer in that place, we are simply assaulted night and day by the 'doubting' and 'judging' voices, coming from authority, spouse, friends, and Satan. Many persons know what this assault is like. Call it deep depression, existential despair, or what you like, the name does not change the experience one jot. Under assault, we can do nothing. We see with the clear glint of hell our own defunctness and weakness, and all the rest of our shabby failings and big betrayals. You cannot get up, or do anything, or even defend yourself, under this assault.

You sit under it, you lie under it, your substance wastes away under its endless barrage.

It is incredible what Job found in hell, and the words in which he expressed it are electrifying.

This is the Daemonic.

Job anticipates the true meaning of Resurrection. Christ himself tells us the Resurrection is not about securing eternal life, for Moses already established the existence of an eternal life beyond this ephemeral life. In Luke, 20, 27-38, we are told that the Resurrection is in reality 'a coming age', and in this changed condition of everything visible and invisible people will not marry, nor will they die, because they will be like spirits, and sons of God. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls Yahweh the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."

Resurrection to the Coming Age starts in this existence, once we are raised from hell, by the knowing only possible in hell that the Redeemer lives. In this life, we come out of the black grief and enter the red flame of love. This is 'the love stronger than death.'

Job is electrified by the unexpected reversal, and when it happens to us, so will we be.

We thank God in Eros, and share with others what he shares with us. But in the Daemonic, we are lost and refound, and it is just unbelievably electric!

THE TWO VOWS GOD MAKES

God's risk in Eros is the give-away that establishes Life. Thus his Marriage vow.

God's risk in the Daemonic is the sacrifice that embraces Death. Thus his Warrior vow.

It is for life, it is for death.

SAVING AND REDEEMING= An Overview of the Contrast

PREAMBLE

For some time now a differentiation of 'salvation' from 'redemption' has become increasingly apparent. Both terms are used in everyday parlance as if they are speaking of the same thing: just two words for one and the same process of 'deliverance.'

However, despite this convergence -- accentuated by Christian theology taking over these terms for its own purpose -- there is a vast difference between 'saving' and 'redeeming.' Saving, or salvation, is about ascending out of trouble: the deliverance is about getting out of harm, by rising above its destructive power; whilst redeeming, or redemption, is about descending into trouble: the deliverance is about going through harm, by reversing its destructive power.

The Jews were specially chosen by God to ready them for the coming of the Messiah. Such a Messiah would establish, by his own suffering deed, the new path of redeeming the human dilemma. But this requires us to remain in it and go down to its depths, before the depths can be fundamentally changed, becoming the 'new land of heart' upon which will stand a pillar of fire for redeeming the world.

Given this hope, then it is nothing short of tragic, almost to the point of betraying its mission, that Christianity, East and West, has lost its root in the long struggle of the Jews to move closer to the mystery of the Messiah, and lapsed back into the salvational dynamics of earlier religion. If Christ was not the Redeemer, and if the task of Christianity is not to complete the sacrifice he made to plant the redemptive process in harsh soil, then there seems little point in having a religion that dares to call itself 'Messianic.'

In recovering redemption, we are trying to recover the religion that should have followed from Christ, but largely did not. Either the relatively few seeds and sparks of redemption scattered throughout a basically salvation oriented Christianity need to be developed much more fully, or we must start Christianity again, from year zero. If this is too radical, at the very least a basic renewal is needed to reinshrine Christ as the Redeemer of all the world, and Christianity as the path of those who 'go where Christ went, and do what Christ did.' This is not to deny that, on the ground, and in the particular circumstances of their lives, many Christians over the centuries intuitively followed a redemptive path, even when the church, or the tradition, to which they belonged espoused salvation, or some misleading melding of salvation and redemption in a mish-mash.

The time for clarifying the difference between the two ways has come-- to encourage Christians to act for the redemption of 'all', and cease to concern themselves with 'their' salvation.

No one genuinely touched by the Redeemer has any care if they go to heaven after they die, or if they attain illumination in this life, or if they are graced with help that will facilitate their completeness of being.

The more redeemed the person is, the more they are inspired and moved to redeem other persons, even if it means their personal existence becoming like 'the seed that must go into the ground and die, to bear fruit.' If the Redeemer had wholly remade your heart, then you would gladly accept to be crucified like him for the sake of the most hurt and broken of human beings, those who will never be consoled and never be mended.

The focus of redemption is entirely on this world and its destiny over the long span of its evolution and history. Salvation might be articulated as other worldly, for example as concerned mainly with ascending ever more transcendent rungs of being until they attain encounter, or union, with God; or it might be articulated in more this worldly terms, for example as concerned mainly with enlightening us about 'what is real', or 'the way things really are', here and now. None the less, in neither version does salvation take on the task, nor pay the price, for redeeming the world process in its entirety, from beginning through middle to end. Salvation is less ambitious, in saving what can be saved; but redemption takes on the impossible, in seeking to redeem everyone and everything. Salvation is rational, redemption is irrational. Salvation asks less of saviour and saved; redemption asks more of redeemer and redeemed. Yet, asking more, redemption gives more. Salvation is loving, but redemption is 'the love supreme.'

Redemption asks us, can God love this much? Can I lean on an unknown and uncertain, mysterious love, have faith in it, and remain faithful to it all down the line, and to the end of the line, never knowing whether the end will be bitter or a great unexpected rejoicing?

[I] Latin Terms for Saving and Redeeming

By consulting the dictionary, I found that in English both 'saving' and 'redeeming' are of Latin origin. As Latin is usually more limited in poetic resonances and noetic subtext than Greek, this is unfortunate in itself. None the less, a few important hints about why salvation and redemption are so different come through.

This is what the New Webster's Dictionary says:

[i] SALVATION is at root to 'save' -- 'saving' somebody from something damaging in which they are lost [= know no way out], imprisoned [= unable to get free]. This is close to 'salvage' – akin to the act of saving a ship from [a] wreck at sea or [b] capture by pirates; 'rescue' from something dangerous. To be 'salvable' – 'that which can be saved.' This raises the question, what can

be saved, or preserved, from being [a] wrecked by existence, or [b] captured by evil?

The dynamic is, to those in harm's clutches, you drag them out of it to safety. Similarly, to those in darkness you bring light [enlightening]; or you wake up those who are asleep [awakening].

We can be saved from disaster by a certain gift, ability, or skill -- 'he was saved from hitting the animal that jumped out in front of the car by his agility and quick reflexes.'

And save might be close to 'salve' -- anything that heals, relieves, or placates; a soothing balm applied to a wound.

[ii] SAVE -- the Latin root is 'salvus', which means 'safe, unharmed.' Thus the core point about saving is 'to preserve from harm, injury, loss, or destruction; to keep intact or unhurt; maintain; safeguard; to keep from being lost [as in a game or match]; to set apart, reserve, lay by; to avoid the consumption, waste, spending of; to treat carefully, to obviate the necessity of; to lay up money; to keep without spoiling, as in food [ham saves well].'

Basically, then, 'to keep someone from injury or danger.' To save means 'preservation from danger, destruction, or great calamity.'

In Western Christianity: to deliver from the power and consequences of sin. Or, the rescue of man from the bondage and penalty of sin.

[iii] REDEMPTION -- the Latin root is 'redemptus', which means 'to buy back.' Its financial metaphor means, 'to buy or pay off, as something pledged, by payment or other means.'

Two points are key to redeeming in Latin: [i] 'to recover something pledged, by some means; to discharge or fulfil a promise, or a pledge; to make amends for; to offset'; and [ii] 'to obtain the release or restoration of, as from captivity or bondage, by paying a price or ransom.'

The theological meaning [but obviously Western Christianity again] -- 'to deliver from sin by means of a sacrifice offered for the sinner.'

[II] Greek Terms for Saving and Redeeming

Three friends, two of them Greeks, and one who has spent years in Greece and speaks Greek fluently, responded to my request that they tell me what saving and redeeming are in the Greek language.

[i] FIRST REPLY [from John C.]

Saving is from 'sotiria', meaning anything from 'preservation and safety to deliverance and salvation.' The root is 'so-os', meaning 'whole or intact.'

Redeeming is from 'lytroisis', meaning anything from 'ransom and release to deliverance and redemption.' The root is 'lyo', meaning 'loosen, or free'; or 'lytron', meaning 'proof of release, ransom.'

[ii] SECOND REPLY [from Bruce C.]

As far as I know the Greek word for redemption - lytroisis - has similar overtones to the Latin one..

In other words it suggests 'buying back, paying a price, ransoming, paying a price for freedom, if you like..'

Salvation - sotiria - is cognate with the verb 'sozo' which simply means 'save', as in 'save somebody from drowning or some other danger..'

Another Greek friend adds to this: saving, and salvation, goes back to 'sotiria' [σωτηρία]. In ancient Greek texts, apart from salvation and redemption [used in a Christian sense], it would seem to be a 'preservation or safety', 'a way or a means to safety'... 'Soterios' means saving, or delivering. 'Sotir' a saviour or a deliverer. All are words that go back to the very beginnings of Greek as we know it.

[iii] THIRD REPLY [from Costa C.]

Now for the Greek roots of the English words "salvation" and "redemption", which are, as you rightly say, of Latin not Greek origin. The noun 'lytron' and the verb 'lytrono' all originally referred to a 'ransom.' By extension already in classical times, as for instance in the early fifth century BC with the poet Pindar, it came to have the meaning 'expiation' and was taken over in a closely related meaning by Christian writers, e.g. the phrase in Matthew 20, 29 "lytron anti pollon" where the Son of Man came 'not to be served but to serve' and to give his life as a 'lytron anti pollon.' Hence the word 'lytroisis' became standard for 'redemption' in Greek theology, and the word's origins do indeed suggest that the root idea is certainly not "going up and out of our world" but one of "being returned, through another's sacrifice, free within it."

In Greek, the word 'sos' means 'safe and sound.' The various associated words, 'sotir' -- 'saviour', 'sotiria' -- saving, deliverance-- and the verb 'sozo'-- all have the sense 'save, keep, preserve from danger', generally in classical Greek a very this worldly matter, even if 'sotir' is regularly applied to gods, heroes and, on their model, to political figures.

In short the Greek roots of both words do not seem to me to indicate a distinction in terms of this worldly versus other-worldly, but rather a distinction in terms of 'lytroisis'/redemption involving the payment of a cost by one party for the benefit of others, while 'sotiria'/salvation is an act of grace coming from outside for the recipient. This fits with the thought that Christians are called on to continue and complete the self-offering, and sometimes even sacrifice, of Christ.

[III] Commentary On Latin and Greek Terms

1,

The Latin terms for saving and redeeming leave out much that is vital to this distinction, and reflects the history of the West, where these terms drew closer together due to the influence of Western Christian doctrine. Still, we do find some crucial pointers.

The first concerns who pays for redemption. It is the Redeemer who pays for the redeemed, not the redeemed who pay; and there must be payment. Moreover, there is a pledge, or promise, involved in redeeming. Neither of these key factors holds for saving. Saving is not driven by any pledge, or promise, from the saviour, but on the contrary, is a gratuitous act. Hence it was called, probably accurately, 'grace', meaning it is gracious, magnanimous, freely offered. Conversely, in the pledge, or promise, involved in redemption, the redeemer is not free, because of having earlier pledged or promised himself to those to be redeemed: he is bound to them by his own commitment. Moreover, whereas it costs nothing to the saviour to save, other than giving of his time and strength and talent, or wisdom, skill, and power, the cost to the redeemer for redeeming is much higher. The redeemer goes far beyond giving; he sacrifices himself, to redeem those in trouble.

There is probably a third implication: those who need redemption are more stuck in whatever destructiveness holds them fast; their condition is more tragic. Dragging someone up and out of what is threatening and restricting them contends with less of a problem, because it catalyses their own capacity for a more intact, and whole, state of being; thus saving is easier than breaking the hold of the tragedy that claims those in need of redeeming.

2,

The Greek terms do not add much illumination to the Latin ones. In the case of *sotiria* and *salvus*, the Latin term reflects directly the Greek term. In the case of *lytrois* and *redemptus*, the Latin term is not directly derived from the Greek term. Why this happened, who knows? Despite this difference in the term, the Latin meaning seems still focused on the Greek meaning-- paying a ransom is common to both.

There is an important point worth noting, however. It concerns the real meaning of the Redeemer 'paying' for the redeemed. Existentially, to pay for another is to make up for their lack. You pay what they cannot, at cost to yourself. This is your sacrifice, for love of them.

Unfortunately, paying can get sucked into a scenario of 'expiation' very different in meaning and spirit. To expiate means to appease or propitiate a feared and loveless authority; you seek to pacify their anger by giving in to their demands.

We have no relationship of inherent truth, nor of inherent love, to the authority/power ruling over us. If we submit, it rewards us, if we defy, it punishes us. That is a relationship of fear, and compliance, between the boss and the bossed, like a despotic monarch with cowed subjects. It has no dynamic of truth, nor any dynamic of love, 'moving' the heart. In fact, as well as fear, there is a backlog of resentment and anger against the boss, which is too unsafe to honestly express. It gets projected onto other people who will not bend the knee. They are unregenerate sinners, and will get zapped for their disobedience.

This is a legal transaction. You get out of line, then you pay, or expiate, to get back into line. It is a moral balancing of the books.

Thus according to the teaching of Western Christianity on 'Atonement', the Redeemer takes away the punishment God is justly directing at the sinner by suffering it instead; and because of this, the Redeemer also has the power to appease, placate, make amends, to God who is justly enraged by the sinning. This entire interpretation is an evil Lie. William Blake was hitting the nail on the head when he called it Satanic, and further asserted that the 'father' who is moralistic, and judgemental, about sin, and demands to be paid back for the injury it causes him, is in reality none other than the Prince of This World, and the Father of All Lies, Satan the Accuser.

'Expiation' is therefore where redeeming is twisted, distorted, fundamentally falsified spiritually.

In old Gaelic, redemption is 'reamhfhuascailte.' It means to buy captives back= 'someone was captured.. and let out.. because a large ransom was paid.' This is a 'loosening' of ropes holding the prisoner fast, an 'opening' for them. It is something redeemer and redeemed do 'jointly' or 'together.' It can only be 'bought at a great price.' It 'reaches abysmal suffering.' The debtor whose 'pledge has not been redeemed by him', and is 'putrefying and decaying', can be redeemed by another. You 'redeem the pledge' you have made; you are keeping a promise. Redemption is the converse of 'accusation': "Will you be redeeming and accusing us at the same time?" To redeem, you must stop accusing; if you persist in accusing, you cannot redeem.

3,

Western Christianity, it seems on the linguistic evidence, seized more on 'redemption' than 'salvation', but twisted redemption to a point where it lost virtually all its spiritual truth, and divine love. Atonement is a totally loveless teaching about the God of Love. Yet, just to complicate matters more, the Christian West often called atoning by the term 'salvation.' It is only in terms of the vile teaching on atonement that fundamentalists could end up saying, 'unless you accept Christ as your one and only Saviour, you will get the punishment coming your way, and worse than that, you will end up beyond the pale as far as God is concerned.' This piece of Satanic bullying recognises that the Redeemer has a special power which other helping, and

saving, figures lack; but it completely misunderstands that special power, in its thrust and ethos, and also misunderstands the job of work that this power must undertake. Given the nature of the job, then the power must be unique to get the job done. This is why the Messiah must be, not only a special man chosen by God -- in Hebrew 'Messiah' means the 'Anointed One' -- but also at the same time God. Redeeming is, as a process, beyond even the most exalted, completed, illuminated, human being. It is a conjoint task, conjoint power, of the 'divine-humanity.' Such is Christ.

"Horse sense is a good judgement which keeps horses from betting on people", sagely remarked W.C. Fields. Yet the Daemonic God does not give up on human beings, however far they have fallen; he gets them through it, to a restored and free condition on the other side of its existential shipwreck and capture by evil. God believes we can make it, given divine and human conjunction in the deepest point of the human tragedy. The true Anger of God is not turned on us, but will not tolerate the attempt by evil forces to derail the human journey and battle towards eschatological victory.

4,

Consequently, instead of expiation, appeasement, placating, propitiating, making amends, making redress, the 'paying' by the Redeemer is the most radical love. It is nothing else but love taken as far as it can go. If I pay for you, at cost to me, then my love for you will go to any lengths to restore you. If I pay the absolute, most ultimate cost for you, then there simply cannot be any bigger, or more profound, love for you. I cannot do more. I have done the maximum. 'Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends.' This is nothing to do with the scenario of Atonement in Western Christianity.

Yet what is most crucial to the paying by the Redeemer of a ransom for those who are being redeemed is that this deed of final sacrifice is in order to fulfil an old pledge, or promise, made by God to all whom he has created, all things, all creatures, all beings, all persons. The Jews will at times confuse the reward and punishment fairy tale, which is rooted in primitive human superstition toward capricious gods and parents, with the existential cutting edge of the truth, and love, of heart that God is trying to forge in them. However, gradually God makes it clear that he has abandoned any kind of 'final end' for humanity that would preserve a few humans, and abandon many more humans [for example, his change of heart after Noah], and instead is yoked heart and spirit, is committed unwaveringly, to an unbreakable promise, a real pledge, that God will redeem what he has made. David in the Psalms= "Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Yahweh; Yahweh hear my voice, let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. For if you should mark iniquities, O Yahweh, who could endure it? But there is with you merciful forgiveness. Therefore will you be respected.. From morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in Yahweh. For with you is plentiful redemption. And Yahweh will redeem Israel from all his iniquities' [King James, Psalm 130]. The Psalmist, like the Jews as a whole, has been chastened and deepened by the Daemonic cataclysm of

Exile to Babylon which seemed, at the time, the end of the line — the end for the Jews as a nation, and the end for their religion.

It is only after the calamity of the Exile that the Jews go deeper in heart, and out of that place of heart crying, the coming of the Messiah crystallises for them. But the necessary context for this is first establishing the cutting edge of existential cause and effect. From early times, a 'stand' for truth in the heart is made by God, forcing the Jews to stand for truth from the heart, and to know the difference when they were doing so, and not doing so.

Though there is an ethical dimension to the Daemonic God's 'tough love', allowing us to point to the difference between 'good and evil', the ethical dimension itself is taken deeper when it is understood that what is at stake is whether passion is true or false to the truth upon which, and by which, the heart 'stands.' The deeper issue is not 'right or wrong outer behaviour', but what 'truth' is in the heart. Truth in Hebrew means pillar, or door: it refers to the active passion that either hits the target, or goes way off target, the active passion that either stands up or falls down, the active passion that either steps up, or flees. When passion is true to truth, it is a pillar for the world, and it is a door that allows people to step through a barrier into a new condition of heart otherwise blocked.

'God sees into the heart', and for us, our Daemonic schooling is a kind of growing up wherein we take increasing responsibility for what heart, what passion, we act from. Do we act from a false heart and therefore are false to the world? Or do we act from a true heart, and therefore are true to the world? What people do with their heart, out of its passion, cannot just be 'tolerated', and ignored, as often is the case with liberalism. This would be to not care what happens to the world-- redemption's whole focus. Anything anyone does is fine; that the world might be tottering on the edge is of no concern, because people are 'at liberty' to do whatever they want, and damn any consequences.

Hence, 'truth and falsity of heart' undercuts 'good and evil'; and once we have reached the heart ground of passion, through genuine self-examination brought about by acknowledging the creative or destructive consequences of our actions, then we can wrestle more honestly, more sincerely, to delve even further into the hidden depths of heart, to give these to God's spiritual action. When the Spirit starts to work in our depths, as was obvious with David in the Psalms, then great change in the human 'engine' of action starts to become feasible. From this point on, it is a new ball game.

What appears -- to those with Satanic eyes -- to be 'reward and punishment' is actually, understood spiritually, 'truth of heart' and the struggle in each and every human being to be true or false to it. Only a person involved in this struggle, like David, attains the 'righteousness' of God. For even when true to truth, we are aware of our own falsity, and this creates repentance, humility, non judgementalism. 'Judge not lest ye be judged' is addressed to the Satanic misinterpretation of this whole arduous area of experience, where we seek to come out of lazy indifference to the heart, by suffering the pained

realisation of the conflict in our own heart. It is a person who is cheating on this struggle who becomes judge and jury in regard to the 'sin' of other people. This is the 'self-righteousness' that God repudiates. The 'whited sepulchres', the 'hypocrites', feigning outer rectitude whilst their hearts are far from clear and clean inside, are those whom God blasts the harshest. 'They acknowledge me with their lips but their heart is far from me.'

The lesson David learned, and teaches us, is that a person does not reach the point of asking God to redeem them until they have arrived in the place of brokenness. Honest sorrowing in regard to our heart's failure -- not casually presuming on redemption -- is what reassures us that the mercy and compassion, the forgiveness, involved in redemption will be extended to us. 'Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness, and in your great tenderness blot out my transgression. ..For I am well aware of my faults, and my sin is before me continually. ..Yet, since you love sincerity of heart, teach me the secrets of wisdom. ..let the bones you have crushed rejoice again. Turn your face from my sin, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and put in me a new and constant spirit. Cast me not away from your Face, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ..My sacrifice is a broken spirit, a contrite and humble heart God will not despise' [Septuagint, Psalm 50].

5,

It can be concluded that, as it is declared in Isaiah and other places in the Old Testament, 'God will only be angry with human beings for a time', and such anger will not determine how, or where, humans end up.

Despite that, the Daemonic anger has an important purpose, over the short run, of shattering our heartlessness and returning us to the heart. Once heart rebuked and heart restored, then we make strides that take us deeper into the heart, where we confront suffering in a new way, and learn the link between the deepest pain and the deepest love. Daemonic suffering goes deeper than Daemonic anger. This is where we face up to the unanswered questions of existence, especially those that address the existential fact that life is not just, and there is an undeserved suffering and punishment aplenty that hits the righteous, the true and the loving of heart, just as there is an unmerited happiness and reward aplenty that falls into the lap of the unrighteous, the false and uninvolved of heart. The prophet Habakkuk [600-700 B.C.] cries to Yahweh-- you are too pure to endure any kind of suffering, any trouble or exhausting toil, thus how is it that you can acquiesce in the existence of suffering, and in particular, how can you endure the moral abomination of the suffering that is inflicted on righteous people by the wicked people?

Happiness and woe are not distributed on the basis of merit, or earning one or the other morally. For the God who insists on justice in the way people deal with one another in a community, this is a problem; for it shows that the existential arena of the world is not just, but is in fact, unjust. If God is so keen on justice among all people -- and through the prophet Amos, among many others, Yahweh declares with a ringing voice that until justice comes to Israel,

the liturgical songs and burnt offerings stink in his nostrils -- then why did he not build it into the very workings of existence? Clearly, God 'allows' the existential situation where good people are abused and lose out, and wicked people are comforted and win out. Existence is basically 'not fair', as any alert child realises soon enough. The apportionment of joy and sorrow makes no sense. Sometimes heart truth prospers people whilst at other times heart truth dooms them, and this is nothing but existential consequences, like karma. Yet, this is not always evident historically, and in general, the world contains much undeserved and unearned suffering, much undeserved and unearned satisfaction.

Suffering has some other meaning in existence. It cannot be explained morally, or even rationally. It is irrational fact, like death.

Habakkuk is told by God, 'the righteous will live by his faithfulness.' This is a typically pithy Jewish reply. A vital point is made, but there is no reasoning to explain it. The arrow hits the bull's-eye and you get it, or you don't. There is no philosophy to amplify it. We should not go farther than what the prophet was told by the Daemonic God. It is something like, 'truth of heart is its own reward, you need no outer reassurance of what happens to you in the world. If you are grounded in the deeper heart, you will be able to do what you have to do, and let it fall where it may.'

Yet the question of why there is so much innocent suffering in this world is not fully addressed by God's reply to the prophet. There is no solution to this life. Christ's Cross embraces the searing question and provides not an answer but a way through.

Salvation replaces neurotic and self-inflicted suffering, unnecessary suffering, with joy. Redemption, by contrast, goes into the suffering both brought on ourselves and visited upon us because of other people and because of the way existence is; the suffering inflicted by the Daemonic becomes its engine of change.

After the Exile, when the Jews were free to return home, though it meant re-crossing the desert wilderness in which they had been at risk to harsh elements and threatening tribes hundreds of years earlier, the Biblical text says to encourage the return, 'Yahweh has paid the ransom for Jacob.' It should by now be clear that this payment is God suffering for humanity. This is the ultimate mystery of the deep pain connected to deep love, and is revealed in its ultimate by Christ on the Cross. God suffers for us, pays our ransom, to make it possible for us to get through the place of trouble and toil, the wastes where deadness and evil dwell in their pure spiritual nakedness. As the Jews crossing the desert to the new land of heart, so Christ on the Cross, Descending into Hell, and being Resurrected, as the payment of ransom that forever wins for us a way through to the new heart promised by God, the heart that though still human, vulnerable, fragile, influenceable, will become the Abyss filled by the heart of God.

This divine and human heart has no other motive, no other passion, than to redeem, at any price to the redeemer, for the sake of all being redeemed. In redemption God says to us, if you love me, love my world. 'Feed my sheep'-- and what a redemptive word this is, spoken by Christ to Peter, because all too many human beings are indeed sheep, docile, passive, inoffensive. That redemption is prepared to suffer even for those who choose to make no spiritual effort is even more extreme than suffering for those who can make no spiritual effort. Never mind the criminal, the insane, the disillusioned, the hopeless, if redeeming even is pledged to, and pays for, the human sheep, then its love knows no bounds. Nothing can stop love of such fiery propulsion.

6,

The conflation of saving and redeeming is endemic in West and East. To realise this is so, all we need do is examine the branch of theology that deals with Christ's sacrificial action on the Cross. Theologians adopted the term 'soteriology' to refer to the key event in redemption. This betokens confusion over whether Christ is a Saviour, or a Redeemer. Actually he can be both, but if the latter is reduced to the former, then only saving remains, and redeeming disappears. Then the account of Christ that Christians rely upon for guidance is lacking in respect of who the Redeemer is, and what his redeeming work is doing. This is disastrous. Why has no theologian, West or East, ever used a term like 'redeemology'?

The East has lacked the Satanic twist in redeeming, but to avoid this, has accentuated a more Christ-centred kind of salvation, what my Greek friend describes well when he says= "salvation is an act of grace coming from outside for the recipient. This fits with the thought that Christians are called on to continue and complete the self-offering, and sometimes even sacrifice, of Christ." God's grace has never been understood with such beauty, goodness, wisdom, and 'self-offering' as it has in the Christian East; and though some Greeks wanted to receive this gift of God separate from the world, most Greeks realised the divine giving had to be passed on to the world.

None the less, my friend's way of putting it inadvertently betrays the Greek bias. Christians in the East 'continue and complete the self-offering of God' more readily than they 'sometimes' continue and complete the sacrifice of the Redeemer.

God's grace to help us up, even if spread from us into the wider world, is not the redemption that must go down where no grace, no help, can reach. Only the God of redemption loves this much, to go to that place, to pay that price, to free those held in bondage. The Messiah, as the bridge between God and humanity in this dark, hard, suffering work, asks us to come with him.

The Russian tradition of Eastern Christianity arguably has moved farther from salvation and closer to redemption. The Redeemer's sacrifice is approached through the acceptance of unchosen suffering which smashes the ego, and the rational mind, and leads deeper, to a place in the heart where finally we

understand the will of God, and break through to unreserved love for one's fellow human beings.

Words are only words. We need not be confined to their limits..

But this conflation of 'salvation' and 'redemption' is more than verbal confusion. It is also a failure of resolve in action, and that is serious.

[IV] The 7 Differences of Saving and Redeeming

Saving and redeeming differ in seven main respects.

[1]

The one who 'saves' pays no price for the one saved. In stark contrast, the Redeemer pays for the redeemed one, because no one needing redemption can pay.

[2]

The process of saving helps the saved overcome what is holding them back from ascending to the best. This is why gods, heroes, politicians, are 'saviours' in pre Christian Greece: their coin or currency is the best people can become, can rise up to, can aspire to. Saving is rising upward toward the summit, the excellent, the exalted. Think of a spiritual master teaching a disciple meditation. Or, a master painter mentoring a learner. Saving works toward the highest, the most realised, the most intact, the most whole. Modern thought runs with this Greek tendency in the theories of Maslow's Self Actualising, or Foucault's Self Perfecting, and even Nietzsche's Superman.

In salvation, we are travelling towards the zenith where 'God is' in greater fullness. In redemption, we are travelling toward the nadir where 'God is not' in greater absence. On the Cross Christ says to God not, 'why have you punished me', but 'why have you abandoned me'? Christ is undergoing our human condition of being without God deeper down; we have lost God in the heart, and so do not experience God at our base, in our ground, holding us up. On the contrary, all that is beneath us is an Abyss into which we can fall forever. This is why our heart is apprehensive and anguished, in a permanent state of dread, or what David called 'fear and trembling', or the 'sickness unto death.' The heart has no ground on which to stand.

In stark contrast to salvation, we are not helped by the Redeemer to rise out of this deep place of final defeat and dereliction; we are helped to move 'through' it to the other side. That is 'resurrection.' Hence, the coin or currency of redeeming is not the best, but the worst; the act of redemption works with the worst, and out of it, raises a new and different kind of best: a best chastened, forged, refashioned, by its 'season in hell.'

In short, it is the Redeemer who pays the ransom to get the captive through the problem where they are stuck. And 'the stuck' refers to the people who cannot rise, cannot shine, cannot use any ladder of ascent to rise up through stages of spiritual purifying and illumination which draw ever closer to God. But this is not just 'them', it is a part of all of us, though it may be more evident in certain 'lost' people. None the less, the lostness is present in depth in everyone. The Redeemer pays a price the lost cannot pay. But he also suffers a wound we cannot accept, lifts a weight we cannot carry, bears what we find unbearable, endures what we cannot endure; this is the deep 'sacrifice' of the Redeemer. This is done to free us, to enable us to get through, and be raised from hell, once we pass through the place where it has put down foundations in the heart.

Heaven is given to hell, indeed heaven is defeated by hell, but once inside the heart of hell, heaven changes it from within.

But this means, then, that redeeming works with the worst, the dark, the broken, the tragic, the failure, the weakness, the ruination, the error, at its very deepest, at its source deep in the heart. Christ came for sinners-- not for the elevated, or those being elevated. Christ came for those beyond any 'saving' hand up, and that is why Christ had to descend down to their level, working in abysmal deeps. Saving aims up at the bright zenith; redeeming plunges down to the dark nadir. From the nadir of hades and hell, and below these the ambivalent Abyss, springs up the resurrected heart passion. In so far as we are redeemed by Christ, so we become Christlike redeemers of the world.

Yet, as a Redeemer, he suffers what we suffer differently, and part of how his suffering changes our depth, is that it helps us come through to a new way of suffering. By God suffering human suffering, it is changed; and its resurrection means that henceforth it will suffer differently.

Consequently, we who are 'dead with Christ' are then 'raised with Christ.' Resurrection means nothing about Eternal Life, or going to heaven after death, but refers to our being returned to the world freed of the hell holding our heart prisoner, and so now we become fully passionate, which means fully on fire with redemptive love for the world. This new heart and new passion raised from depth knows no limit, no impediment; it proceeds and cannot be stopped by evil or by human reluctance of any origin. What redeemed us, in our depth, becomes our redeeming of the world, in its depth.

Like God, we will suffer for love.

[3]

There is a third meaning of 'redemption' that the verbal roots in Greek seem to miss. This is largely financial. It means that God 'invested' in us, believes in us, has faith in us, and so will not give up on us, but will go to any lengths, to pull us 'through', and bring forth fruit out of us in the end. This metaphor of humans bearing fruit, and the fruit being a 'return' on God's investment, runs

through the New Testament. This is another reason why Christ's paying the ransom for us, making sacrifice for us, is not Western Christian Atonement or expiation; it is the one who has invested a lot in us refusing to 'write us off' as a bad investment. On the contrary, the investor goes way beyond his initial investment of money, for to bring that investment to fruition, now he must spill his own blood for the sake of it still flowering, despite being ruined.

Several further implications flow from 'the investment coming good.' It also means that redemption can bring good out of bad, recreation out of ruin, a new departure out of hitting the brick wall. In some important sense, bringing good out of bad, the ultimate victory out of profound tragedy, is what redemption is, as a process of change that descends to depths, travels through depths, and rises again. There is no transcending of the problem; the problem is transformed, becoming the matrix of rebirth.

The Redeemer always, by his suffering, wins for the redeemed a 'second chance', even when all sane assessment would conclude all chances are despoiled, all chances have run out.

Rather than Western Christian Atonement or expiation, the Redeemer paying the price, spilling his own blood to make good his investment in us, is God winning his bet with Satan in the Book of Job. Redemptive history does not start in the Paradisiacal state of humanity; it starts in a gamble between God and Satan, 'the Adversary.'

[4]

Saviour figures are usually praised and lauded, revered and respected, thanked and held in 'high' esteem and affection. In Hebrew, saving implies 'favour'; this means that the saved are supremely valued by the saving agency, not just to be discarded as if they were of no more significance than the flotsam and jetsam, the debris swept away on merciless tides of forgetting. Not surprisingly, those who value us even when we cannot value ourselves are especially valued.

By contrast, the Redeemer comes 'not to be served but to serve', and in this process, the Redeemer is not only humbled, but fundamentally disrespected, spat on, dismissed. The redemptive deed is miles greater and miles deeper than any salvational deed, but people reject redeemers. To redeem, you have to embrace not only being unsung, not 'recognised' for the bigness and profundity of your heart, the supreme lover treated as the lowest of the low, but also you have to be ready to be actively shunned, despised, not liked, and even killed for your pains and efforts on the people's behalf. There is in the world today a huge irrational hatred for Christ, and even allowing for Christianity's horrendous mistakes historically, that does not explain all the enmity that the Messiah stirs up. No Buddha figure, no Shaman, no Sage, stirs up this kind of 'objection' from people. It is visceral, below the neck, not reasoned. I once saw a Buddhist monk in Staffordshire catch sight of an old wooden Cross nailed to the side of a barn, and he winced.. Why?

The Messiah, the Redeemer, is rejected by people, even punished and killed by them [religiously and politically-- the Roman state and the official Jewish religion], because the Cross inverts all our human hopes, and lets us down.

---[a] We do not want a Deliverer as low and covered in dirt as we are, as seemingly powerless as we know ourselves to be; we want a saviour figure who represents the apex of human attainment [spiritual or material].

---[b] And we do not want to change by travelling through the sewers, but rather, we want immediate rising out of the pit where we are trapped-- we want a ladder of instant ascent, whether this ladder takes the form of 'spiritual' yogas and disciplines, or 'ethical' uprightness in which we inhibit bad behaviour and follow only good behaviour, or instant forgiveness of all our sins if only we will emotively 'acknowledge Jesus as our Saviour.'

The Hindus say openly that their gods, and God, does not do 'suffering', and worse, 'humiliation.' Yet, for redeeming to work, [1] we have to be unsung, non-recognised, and [2] we have to get down in the dirt with those stuck there, and so we get dirty, to effect any change from within the dirt.

Redemption is more like a secret agent, working underground. It is the religion of no name, and every name, as it secretly infiltrates. People can serve redemption without realising they are doing so, and redemption can infiltrate other religions and even operate in situations of ostensibly no religion. By working unsung, and by embracing humiliation, disrespect, misunderstanding, even being killed for the supreme love you 'give away', allows redemption to be more in the Spirit, less in the Form or Word or Structure. As Christ said to his disciples, referring to the non-disciple doing things in Christ's name-- leave him alone, for if he is not against us, he is with us. He does not need to be in our group.. In redeeming, you have no 'credentials', no badge, no membership card to the kosher club, no external or extrinsic validation.

[5]

'Salvation' is universal, it is the same religion wherever or whenever it exists. It goes under countless names. In Shamanism, it is the good red road of 'making sacred and spiritual understanding.' In Hinduism and Buddhism, it is rising from ignorance into illumination. In Orthodoxy, it is the 3 fold ladder of the 'practical life, the contemplative life, the mystical union with God.' In humanistic psychology and therapy, it is self-actualisation, peak experience, becoming Whole, and such like. In ordinary affairs, saving happens whenever a greater sends a helping hand down to a lesser, to 'give them a hand up.' So, parental caring and helpers of various kinds, teachers and healers, are also 'saving.'

However, when St John had a pupil who went back to his old life of robbing, and St John travelled alone in the wilderness to bring the man back -- and risked himself to the desert and to his erstwhile pupil's vicious robber mates -- he was redeeming. St John is the person in Christianity who 'switched' from

the most exalted theology of salvation -- the summit is not just mystical experience of God, but becoming God and human at once, the 'Christification' which is an ontological gift of the highest for humans -- to one of the most tumultuous, and violent, stories of Redemption. But if Christianity does not switch from saving to redeeming, then it dies and is pointless.

Hence, if Salvation is universal among all religions, just given different nuances and emphases, then in so far as Christianity becomes only about saving, then it loses its uniqueness and distinctiveness. Why do we need yet another salvational religion, when we have plenty already?

In short, Redemption is the only unique, and distinctive, religion. It breaks from the universal pattern, to do something radical, that is different.

It is in fact foretasted by Shamanism -- in the bad black road of 'worldly difficulties and war' -- and perhaps in places in other world religions.

But the reason the Jews are the people selected by God for something special entirely pertains to them being 'chosen' to carry the honour, but also the burden of a people roughed up by God and reforged in a hot furnace in order to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer. The irony is, though distinctive and unique in origin, only Redemption is truly all embracing, truly universal, in outreach, or outcome. Why?

The limitation in salvation of any form is that though it reaches down a certain distance, to haul up to its height those it helps, not all humans can be graced like this: not all humans can be raised up by any of the means of salvation [unless it works as magic, just transforming the lower into the higher in an instant].

Indeed, in a more subtle sense, a huge area of the deep heart, its Hades and Hell and Abyss, is not touched by any salvational act, or power. The Buddha's deep heart is no more redeemed, and he has no more access to it, than the deep heart of the vilest criminal. The 'deeps of God and humanity searched out by the Spirit' are lost to all humans, the Buddhas and the criminals alike, until redemption as a process challenges the deeps, and 'goes down' into them to reclaim them to humanity and God. This is the 'deep' meaning of redemption.

It hides a strange paradox: the most loving of the heart is mixed up with the worst of the heart. This aspect of the heart's depths is what the Eastern Christian monastics called 'the passible', the influenceable, the malleable, the vulnerable. It is the core of the heart's passionateness, and is why the same passionateness can result in madness, crime, and holiness. It can go in different ways, inherently. None the less, this most temptable part becomes, in redemption, the part most all-loving. What Christ said of Mary the Whore can be said of this passion of deep heart= 'to those who love much, much is forgiven.'

Thus, only redemption will over the long haul, redeem everyone and everything. By working through the nadir, it will abandon none, and will include weak and strong, both of whom need its help in the place where all are lost.

The process that happens in the deeps -- what occurs between Christ's descending into hell, and being raised on the third day -- is crucial. In the way Christ is undefended to evil, something in his heart passion will undercut evil, and resurrect from the depths a love 'greater than good' and 'deeper than evil.' This is the Resurrection= the resurrected heart, and heart passion.

[6]

Saving= addresses human sin.

Redeeming= addresses human tragedy.

Sin= our smallness.

Tragedy= our bigness.

Smallness= when our potential for greatness is lost, when our heroism falls into the dust, we become radically reduced-- calculating, mean, possessive, avaricious, vicious, malicious, and vengeful. We count cost.

We refuse our indebtedness in this existence to everyone and everything that makes life possible. By rejecting our debt, the one to whom we owe it, whether God or neighbour, becomes feared and hated, and has to be appeased, or subjugated. In our guilt, we do both at once, buying off threat. Hence our superstitious attitude.

Bigness= the mystery is why – not how – the Image of God in us, the Royal Heart and Truthful Passion, was tricked out of its crown by the deceiver, and became unable to pay the cost of love for the world.

The Cross is the ultimate testing and proving of the warrior king in his heroism of heart action, heart stand, heart giving, in the world, for the world. The Cross attests to their nobility, and sacrifice. It is not the world that punishes this deed; that is down to the Devil and those in thrall to his Lie. This exacts a cost from us. It asks, will you pay to be here and act here for love, or if you will not pay, where will you flee to, where will you hide?

[7]

Redemption is not theory, not dogma, not doctrine, not ideology, not explanation, not philosophy, not metaphysics, not theology. It is a story -- the true story of the world -- and it is an account of that story, an existential account of an existential story. It partakes of Shestov's remark, that the rationalist wants 'to live in the categories by which he thinks', whereas the existentialist is forced 'to think in the categories by which he lives.' However, he lives not categories but edges, gaps, crossing of roads, depths and a ground poised over depths on which he spills his sweat, tears, and blood. A

road emerges, finally, out of trackless wastes.. In writing or speaking, in thinking or reflecting, on that strange reversal he speaks of a road 'not marked out', a road discovered by walking it, a road no account in poetry, or story, or art, or music, can 'save' you from walking.

Any discussion of walking this road takes the Shamanic form of, 'this is where I was, this is what I did.'

Hoka hey.

KARIN'S REPLY

"I have just read 'Saving and Redeeming', and a quick thought – or feeling.

To me salvation has to do with saving a thing, rescuing it from trouble, evil, or applying a healing salve to mend it.

The broken may be rescued and mended but the thing in itself, the brokenness, remains itself as it is/was. It is still a broken thing 'stuck together.' Redemption actually involves change of the thing redeemed.

You can 'redeem' an object you have pawned of course. In this sense when God redeems us we pass back into his ownership but more than that – redemption involves a change in heart.. It's not just rescuing it – it is putting a new stamp on it, the owner's mark perhaps, in any case it moves into another condition when it is redeemed.

Salvation is only half the job.

Not well expressed but I guess you see what I mean."

Salvation works with the God-given blueprint. It facilitates the capacity to grow into a potential identity, an evolution of identity effected through relationship.

Redemption has lost any chance of the coming good of the blueprint, yet 'not me, but Christ in me' becomes its more fundamental power.

EMPTYING THE WILL

St Maximos=

“It is as man that Christ said, ‘Not my will, but thine be done.’ And by doing this he gave himself to us as a model showing us how to renounce our own will so as to accomplish fully God’s will, even if we thereby find ourselves face to face with death.”

CHRIST'S CROSS

To be in touch with Christ's Cross, and its redemption, is not to be in some triumphalist, judgemental, exclusionary, mood, which is Satanic, but in touch with the poverty and mourning in oneself which is in all, for this is what recognises Christ's redemptive deed, and offers our broken heartedness to it.

THE CROSS IS IN THE WORLD

1,

An elder in Eastern Christian tradition says you cannot pray for people unless you hurt for them.

“Prayer, which is not from the heart, but is made only by the mind, does not go any farther. To pray with the heart, we must hurt. Just as when we hit our hand or some other part of our body our nous is gathered to the point where we are hurting, so also for the nous to gather in the heart, the heart must hurt. We should make the other’s pain our own. We must love the other, must hurt for him, so that we can pray for him. We must come out, little by little, from our own self and begin to love, to hurt for other people.”

This is clear-cut= to love people, we must make their pain our own. It is not just that we should ‘feel’ their hurt, empathically, because that could come and go; what is stated here is stronger than that. To love people is to hurt for them, because it is to join them where they hurt.

The hurt in all people is deep, nothing can assuage it. The heart is troubled, and the heart is broken, at depth. There is a hole in the heart that cannot be filled. In some individual persons, and in some whole peoples, this pain is extreme. Their lives have revealed to them the deep pain in everyone else, the pain paved over, blanked out, stifled, strangled. In some manner, these persons or these peoples carry the pain for others, because in others the pain is disavowed.

Love for the Red Indian peoples has brought me to a pain bottomless, inexplicable, terrible. At times, this pain screams. At other times it is mute. It is always inarticulate. It does not know what to say. There are no words. Its terrible question cannot be voiced.

Did I count for so little that you stood back and let me be thrown away?

The Red Indian peoples suffered the greatest genocide in the history of the world. It took longer than the Jewish holocaust, and it was far bigger and far more comprehensive. It took three centuries to kill off countless millions of people in the Americas. Imagine all those souls, children, grandmothers and grandfathers, women and men in the torrent of life, all suddenly ripped out, cut off, thrown away. Can you imagine all those souls, as they were uprooted and thrown on the rubbish dump, crying in protest, crying in incomprehension? A whole people. A whole way of living. A good way of living, an ancient way of living, a spiritual way of living immersed in the strangeness and beauty of the earth. The genocide was physical and the genocide was cultural. Every trace of these people, every trace of their way of life, must be extinguished. Greed is better, Anglo-Saxon capitalism is better, to live by reason abstracted from the body is better, to have no soul and to

have no heart is better. Progress is better. Mammon is better. Mammon is the god in whom we trust.

In the pain in the heart there is grief and anger without any bottom, without any relief. I know this pain. It is inarticulate but it tells me things. I know the disappearance of these peoples of the sacred beginning, these peoples of the dream time who came forth from the caves in the earth, is a cataclysm beyond imagining, for all of humanity, as well as for them. This cataclysm is so vast it cannot be measured. It is on a scale off any scale. It is as monumental, and as horrendous, as if we were to lose a third of the earth and had to go on with what remained. This cannot be allowed to happen. If it happens, it will affect us all, as well as them. It will affect the very earth. Maka already mourns her lost children in America; she is not friendly to the interlopers, which is why they build their machines and defences all over Maka's body: they fear her. None of the spirits of the land welcomes the newcomers. They sing in the night, and in the loneliest winds in the day. Their no words songs say, every tread on this ground is on graves, you tread on the dead, you tread on souls. Jesus Christ may have died for you. He described you accurately when he said to the unknown God, they do not know what they do. You still do not know what you are doing. Is it an excuse? Or is it your innocence, the unparalleled naïveté that shelters your rabid selfishness and ravening covetousness that is most horrendous of all your evils?

Yes, you, Christians, I am talking to you.

Jesus Christ died for you too, but whom have you ever died for?

You call yourselves Christians, but that claim stinks in my nostrils. It sickens me with its hypocrisy. When are you going to die for anyone? You did not die for the people of the beginning, the people of the garden. You made them die for you. Your advantage was your sister's and brother's disadvantage; you bought your gain at the cost of her and his loss. Do not talk to me about your Christianity. I spit on it.

Yes, you, Christians, I am talking to you, keeper of the best for yourself, even when it costs the worst for your sister and brother.

You do not know what you are doing, but to get out of your heart's deep pain, you are ready, willing, and perfectly happy, to push your sister and brother deeper into her and his hearts' deep pain. You have endless rationalisations; hypocrisy is something you are good at.

2,

The black pain inside us, deep in the heart, is connected with something outside us, deep in the world. The heart hurts in each of us, because the world that is the 'common destiny' for all of us is almost lost. There is a deadness and hell and void in the depth of every heart, but this is not an

isolated and personal problem; it exists because that deadness, hell and void is in the depth of the world, and is increasing its hold upon the world.

This is why Jesus Christ's Cross is placed in the world. For the world is where the heart acts or funks acting, where the heart gives or withholds, where the heart brings Heaven to Earth through the abyss, or condemns the world to hell. The heart is staked to the world. The heart is make or break for the world, but even more importantly, the world is make or break for the heart. The world is the heart's fate.

This fate is a burden, this fate is a wound, because it opens out the heart and binds it to the fate of the world. If the world is lost, the heart goes down with it. This fate is terrible, because it brings the heart to the place that is terrible in the world. The Cross is that place in the world which is called in Latin *terribilis est locus iste*: 'this place is terrible.' This is the place of the existential edge and the existential gap and the existential crossing of the roads. Black Elk said of this place that it is where the good red road of spiritual growth and understanding is crossed by the bad black road of worldly difficulties and war; he said as well, it is the Great Mystery who has made these roads to Cross, and where they Cross is holy. A friend once said it is here the road of heaven and the road of the world cross, and we must choose; but this is not right, because it is at this intersection that we can go no farther, for it is in this place heaven is staked to the ground of the earth, here heaven is vowed to suffer for the world, and this is make or break for whether the world will be supported from the abyss beneath its feet; or, should this fail, whether the world will fall all the way into the abyss of ruin and end in dereliction.

Another friend said to me, 'I am called to a dark place.' We all are, because that is where the Cross is. We are called to the world's most terrible place, because only in that place is the Cross. Only the Cross can redeem the world, but to do that, it must join the world's pain and embrace the worst place in the world. This place is lonely. It is ugly. It is windswept by a hollow wind. It is called 'heart ground': the heart ground is the killing ground. It is the place where it is all lost. Only in the place where it is all really lost, and we are all in the black inexplicable pain that knows that loss, can it all be regained.

The Cross is in the worst place in the world. But this terrible place is also great. This is the deep where God suffers the pain in the human heart that is the pain about the world; this is the deep where God toils in the abysmal; and this is the hour. Cometh the hour, cometh the man. This is the time of decision, the place of leverage. Here we encounter the paradox of the heart's truest passion at its most profound: here we come to defeat and here it turns around. Here we can do nothing and here we can do the only thing that matters.

Where else could the Cross be, except in the most terrible place of the world? Where else is God, except in the place where it goes over the edge, is stuck in the gap, and crucified at the crossing of roads?

Is God in the church? Only temporarily, only episodically, only now and then. Like us, God turns up and goes away again. God's permanent residence is in the world. The place from which God does not flinch is in the world, at its terrible place, which is also its great place, the place of the turning. The place where it is all over, and the place where, suddenly, it is all to play for.

3,

The Cross is not fully embraced in the ascetic desert, where the lesser heart is burnt out of us, to restore the greater heart.

The Cross is not fully embraced in the sacred temple, where the people gather round to enter into sacramental communion with it, by drinking its cup of blood.

These are fine, as far as they go, but they do not go far enough.

The Cross is in the world.

You, Christians, who colluded in the biggest genocide and the largest cataclysm in the history of the earth, if you want to stop dishonouring your master, then go where he went, and do what he did.

Even you, Christians, will not escape the common destiny. One day you must make peace with it, because until you do, it remains at war with you.

Hetchetu yelo.

COVENANT VERSUS CONTRACT

1,

A Native person of North America has pointed out the difference between a covenant and a contract.

“A CONTRACT is an agreement made in suspicion. The parties do not trust each other, and they set ‘limits’ to their own responsibility.

A COVENANT is an agreement made in trust. The parties love each other and put no limits on their own responsibility.

Indian leaders made treaties with the White Father in Washington and called them ‘covenants’, sealing them with the smoke of the Sacred Pipe.

The trouble began when the White Father in Washington, his lieutenants and merchants, looked on the treaties and called them ‘contracts.’

Thus began – in the basic religious difference – the conflict between cultures.”

2,

This person goes on to point out the several covenants made in respect and love.

[1] There is the Natural Covenant made with the first humans, and renewed in the story of Noah, where it explicitly includes all creatures and living things with human beings, and promises that no ‘mass extinction’ of all the life on earth will ever occur.

[2] The First Covenant with the Jews, which is made with Abraham, and renewed with Moses.

[3] The Second Covenant with the Jews, which is extended from them to all of humanity, is rooted in the coming of the Messiah. Yeshua the Mashiach says to us= “I am with you always, until the end of the world.”

THE 'SIN' OF MOSES

Hasidism= "Anger can cause a sage to lose his wisdom, or a person who is destined for greatness to forfeit it." [Mendy Kaminker]

1,

The 'sin of Moses [Numbers, 20, 7-13], and what makes him lesser to the sinner David, is his anger. Ostensibly a righteous anger on God's behalf, it is in reality a self-righteous anger on his own behalf. Moses has mistakenly identified with God's Cause, not let God's Truth stab him, as it did David, to reveal his own untruth. Thinking himself 'justified' in God's Cause, Moses actually blocks God's cause in the incident where he upbraids the people as he strikes the rock to bring forth water. In the same spirit Moses destroys the Tablets of the Law.

The false attempt to identify with God produces the zealot without heart. Humble acknowledgement in the heart that God's Ways and Thoughts are not our ways and thoughts produces repentance.

2,

That David is immeasurably greater and deeper than Moses will be clear cut to anyone who has the heart with which to understand what Yahweh means in saying to all of us, 'My Ways are not your ways, My Thoughts are not your thoughts.'

We cannot identify with Ways, and Thoughts, not ours. That is cheating, it is dishonest to our heart. Our heart must be broken before it can be remade as the house of God's heart. Getting closer to God is not so easy.. It ain't enthusiasm, it ain't good boy or good girl compliance. You will be shredded to get close to God, so do not pretend you can mystically unite with him before your heart has 'paid its dues', nor pretend you can morally aim at God and that is enough, your idealism will get you there.. Do not imagine you are in favour of God, his Ways and Thoughts have straightforwardly become your ways and thoughts, because you have adapted your way to God's Way and adopted His Thoughts as your thoughts. You haven't. It cannot be done, not like that. Without contention, without clashing, without the reduction of your heart to nothing, you will never 'in your heart of hearts' accept God's Way and God's Thoughts. Stop kidding yourself. Stop lying, to yourself as well as to God, and to other people. Tell other people, I cannot repent of my way and my thoughts; secretly I know it is better than God's Way and God's Thoughts. Go to the people and confess your alienation from God, and with tears and bowed head, tell them how hard, how impossible, it is to reconcile with God over his very different 'mode of operating.' That confession will do more for you, and for them, than all your pious play acting, pretending to be in with God when, like everyone, you are out with God.

If liberals are mother idolatry, the lax children of matriarchy, then the conservatives, authoritarians, fundamentalists, evangelicals, of patriarchy are father idolatry= both are incest, and neither works.

Over identification with God is the real sin of Moses.

For if I simply take it for granted that my anger is the same as God's anger, then this means in effect that my judgment can command God's judgment, we never disagree because he always backs me fully. In short, I am god, and he is simply my sanction, my authority, my validation, in claiming to be god. My judgement on you, because I am strong while you are weak, is ultimate. If I say you are wrong, you are wrong, and you'd better believe me, or else I will kill you.. After all, you hardly deserve to go on living, such is the error of your departure and increasing divergence from me, the only valid 'kosher' god..

This is horrendous folly.

So, for practical purposes on earth, in the everyday, the beard stroking patriarch is god. And what a god he proves to be! A tin pot dictator, dispensing cruelty, handing out sadistic punishment, to anyone who dares to question that the patriarch's Big Ego is not god, and has no sanction, no blessing, from the real God, the real father, the hidden and mysterious father. "Call no man father" is not a text of the Christian Bible much noticed by patriarchal religions, or by patriarchal religious peoples.

David is truly great because he knew himself worse than everyone else, and by accepting, however reluctantly, to be under God's hammer, painfully and slowly put down the hammer against other people.

3,

It is only when you are really under God's hammer that you learn what your heart's true disposition, and situation, in the world really is. It is not good news..

When you are under the hammer of God, you do not hammer other people.

When you hammer other people, you are not under the hammer of God.

When you are under the hammer of God, you are blessed more than at any time in your life, even if you reincarnated and returned for millions of years. Do not pray for it to pass. Pray to learn its lessons, pray to be helped to stay under as long as your heart needs.

Under the hammer of God, we find what our heart seeks, the true God, and the true heart that is his vehicle, his chariot of fire.

Under the hammer of God, we gain psychological knowledge of the heart, and are helped to attain spiritual power and wisdom that exceeds any

psychological level. We are initiated into the true heart of humanity, on which Yahweh placed his gamble against Satan.

Under the hammer of God, we acquire the hammer of God that contends against Satan in a fair fight, not over until the end.

When you are under the hammer of God, you are being initiated into the real fight for the human heart and for the human world.

It is hard, it is heart forsaken.

You will shed much, but you will become both the broken, and the Redeemer of the broken, at one and the same time.

4,

A certain judgement, and condemnation, of the human heart for its weakness, its laxity, its back sliding, is close to the Satanic Lie that contends with God to prove humanity worthless. Moses was tempted by Satan and found wanting.. He failed the true test of greatness.

True greatness carries, and pays for, what is less than itself, always believing the greatness it has attained is latently within the people it serves.

The flaw in greatness= to find the flaw in humanity unacceptable.

The test of greatness= to never give up carrying the load in people, out of faith they will one day carry the load. You cannot give up on people. You cannot cease carrying them, because you too have put down the burden and are no better than them, in the reckoning of God. If you stand, it is by God's help. If you help your brother or sister to stand, it is out of being helped that you understand no one is beyond help. It is not for you, whatever your supposed and seeming accomplishments of strength, to give up on anyone. God did not give up on you when your face was eating the dust. You do not give up on anyone. If you were not beyond help, neither are they. If you have to yourself get down in the dust to help them, then do it, and be glad they are giving you the opportunity to love as you were loved. That is the honour, the respect, God grants you.

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

1,

The Cross has been misinterpreted as pacifism; it means something more subtle and hard than 'non-resistance' as Tolstoy and Gandhi understood it. Rather, it means 'don't defend anything of God, and throw yourself fully in where evil is.' It means, also, 'don't use the weapons of the devil to fight the devil= don't meet force with force, hate with hate, evil with evil.' And, the suffering of love is itself a mysterious way of fighting evil. It empowers you to 'bear the brother' rather than abandon him for his betrayals of you as a brother. It enables you to continue to hope in him as a brother, whatever he has done to rip apart the already torn fabric of human solidarity.

To return love for evil is not just to refuse vengeance and retribution for harms done to you, it is actually to refuse to judge the brother going astray in any morally ultimate sense, but to leave this in the hands of God. Indeed, 'judge not lest you be judged' is to have faith in God to finally bring good from all the evil we do to each other. For, if one of us is to appear before the judge to have our crimes noted and punished, then all of us will similarly appear, and similarly be convicted. David= "Yahweh, if you should mark iniquities, who could stand it?"

When we cease judging other people, we cease having to 'justify' ourself.

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is Christ who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgement before the time, before Christ comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every person will receive the praise of God" [Paul, 1 Corinthians, 4, 1-5].

Justice cannot be jettisoned, as if the severe truth of our standing for each other, and letting each other down, can be softened.

But, justice needs to be taken out of the court-room and repositioned in the worldly arena where everyone is under the hammer, and everyone is put at test because of the jeopardy everyone endures. 'We are all in this together.' Letting each other down means adding to the burden each and every one of us carries just by virtue of being human, and existing in the world. We hurt each other, due to our weakness and temptations, and then we damn each other moralistically, condemning each other as beyond recall.. In this way, the unity of the people in a community of shared risk and shared struggle fragments. We become inherently divided= mere discrete units, each with a self-interest, an agenda, opposing and opposed by the self-interest, the agenda, of other discrete units.

Thus= Justice to expose the problem, and the Cross to resolve it.

Christ pays the debt we all owe and are all owed which none can repay. Christ does this out of his faith in us that love can free us for love. Rather than keep final score, he rejoices that each and all of us can be restored to love, like the many cells in a single body feeding from the same blood.

Forbearance, patience, long-suffering, is also Atoning, as well as dying for the sinning, and tragically fallen, brother. For Atoning is a deed of suffering love; no more 'passing on' the damage and destruction, instead, we take the damage and destruction upon ourselves, even if it kills us. Something more important than any kind of karmic 'come back' is at stake. The divine love reveals us as involved in each other, a part of each other, upheld on a mysterious heart ground that is common to us all. That ground only 'holds' when it upholds 'all.' Do not ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for you when it tolls for your brother..

The suffering at the hands of the world becomes in the end, through the intervention and example of Christ's Passion of the Cross, a suffering with and for the world. Only he who suffers has earned the right to forgive. This is the Atonement, supremely.

Faith is 'faith in the way it works' -- "faith in the working of God" [Paul, Colossians, 2, 12] in the world.

"If justification were through the Law, then Christ died to no purpose" [Paul, Galatians, 2, 21].

"And you, who were dead.., God made alive with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the debt which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the Cross" [Paul, Colossians, 2, 13-14].

Atonement is where suffering love steps in and takes over from primitive pay-back or even the just scales of balance.

The buck stops here.

Christ Yeshua= "You have heard that it has been said, you shall love your neighbour, and oppose your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despise you, and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your heavenly Father. For he makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends the rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what virtue do you have? Don't the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Don't the tax collectors do this? Therefore be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" [Mathew, 5, 43-48].

2,

Existentially, not legally -- in terms of honesty about the heart's inner dispositions in human relating rather than legal strictures of outer behaviour -- to 'pay' for another is to make up for their lack. You pay what they cannot, at cost to yourself. This is your sacrifice, for love of them.

Such is the Cross as Atonement.

This is nothing to do with 'expiation' and 'propitiation', at the best legalistic terms, and at the worst much too easily dragged into the Satanic scenario.

Expiation= to make 'satisfaction', as if a juridical god cannot be satisfied until the wrong in sinning is 'made up for' by punishment of the wrong-doer..

Propitiation= expiate also means to 'appease', suggesting an angry and loveless authority who demands recompense for the wrong we have done to them; we bow down to this superior authority only because they have the unilateral power to control our destiny= thus we acknowledge the recompense we owe them to appease their outrage, and we kow tow to their sovereignty over us to propitiate their anger..

Propitiate= conciliate; to render favourable..

Appease= to pacify or calm anger; to seek peace by yielding to the terms of an adversary; to appease an enemy by giving in to their demands, do as they command to mollify them.

Expiate, Propitiate and Appease= our way of trying to control that which controls us. There can be no God of Love in these low-grade notions..

Atonement, like all the mysteries of the Cross, arises from suffering love. This radical love originates within God, but is to be enacted by humanity= this is what Christ's Atoning action of the Cross reveals.

"If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" [1 John, 4, 11].

"He who does not love his brother abides in death" [1 John, 3, 14].

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world" [1 John, 4, 17].

Once Atoning moves out of the court-room into the existentially testing arena of the world, it becomes clear that we all have it in our heart to suffer for each other in order to redeem each and all -- or to accuse each other; or to abandon each other; or to climb over each other to get to the top. All these alternatives to Atoning for each other make the world a hell.

As the Cross bears us all, for once and forever, so over time and to whatever degree we are able, we are all called by the Cross, individually and collectively, to bear each other in the same manner, and in the same spirit.

It is one thing to bear the friend, but quite another to bear the enemy, yet Christ says that Yahweh, the Father, loves all equally, the rain falls on righteous and unrighteous alike, the sun shines on upright and wicked alike. This deed of suffering love does not foreclose prematurely on the enemy, regarding him beyond recall, but leaves a door open, trusting he is, beneath it all, capable of becoming the friend. The divine love sees human possibility differently; as Nietzsche put it= everything done for love is beyond good and evil. Morality is a fall-back position in the absence of love; when love finds a spark to ignite deep in the heart's abyss, it kindles a love that exceeds any moral accounting, broad or narrow, sophisticated or childish, authentic or inauthentic.

This is the 'rationale' behind Atoning. It is not about balancing the books, making the accounts add up. It is about getting beyond that, recalling what has been lost, and in the absence of which, 'weighing up accounts' -- in every sense -- took its place. Such is the Tree of the Life of Love versus the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Atonement does not condone sin, nor magic it away. By the way we suffer each other from love, bear with each other, put up with each other, carry each other, so we keep everyone together in a brotherhood dynamically dependent upon the deeds of suffering love.

Forgiveness is arguably the very crown of Atoning because it pays the price of the evil which the evil-doer has 'passed on.' It is the ultimate in 'the buck stops here.'

Nonetheless, Atoning can take many forms in human existence. St Isaac of Nineveh speaks of some of them thus=

Let yourself be persecuted but do not persecute others.

Let yourself be crucified but do not crucify others.

Let yourself be insulted but do not insult others.

Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Suffer with the sick. Be afflicted with sinners.

Exult with those who repent.

As for the sins of others, hide them, and take them on yourself.

This last deed of Atoning, so radical, was rediscovered in Tibet in the 11th century AD by Geshe Chekhawa hundreds of years after St Isaac of Syria. He stumbled by accident upon two lines by an unknown Tibetan teacher which read= "Give all profit and gain to others, take all loss and defeat on yourself."

This is the Messianic Spirit. It does not airily transcend karma/moral consequences of action, all too easily dismissing the harshest reality of existing in this world, but 'suffers' it, and by a new way of suffering transforms it, through unconditional love. Such unconditional love comes only from God; without God sparking it in their innerds, humans are never capable of it, yet with God 'at work' in them, 'all things are possible'..

In the deed of Atonement made by the Cross of Christ, the stronger carries the weaker, like a load. This is because God carries all of us, as a load. It is done from love-- or it cannot be done.

We suffer for each other to redeem our 'standing together' as the ultimate.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF ATONING IN ANCIENT JUDAISM= Priest, Prophet, King

PRELUDE

In ancient Jewish tradition, the question of what 'atones' for sins – part of the bigger question of how God deals with sins, or puts right in us what has gone wrong, or heals in us what has become sick – is complicated.. So many strands to it.. So many arguments and shifts of emphasis in Judaism itself over this question, down the ages.. There is no single, unified notion of Atonement in Judaism.

[1] PAGAN AND SATANIC ELEMENTS OF ATONEMENT

There is a Satanic element washing around in this Jewish emphasis on 'atoning for sins.' It is interesting, because this element is both pagan -- the very pagan religiosity that Yahweh was supposed to supplant -- as well as Satanic. The pagan element, which so easily becomes Satanic, is to do with buying off, giving a bribe, for your sin, to get you off any consequences that might come back to you because of that sin. So if you kill your neighbour's ox, you must pay a bribe, a 'ransom', to make you all right with the neighbour, or he might kill one of your oxen, or do who knows what? The same idea was applied to God. If by sinning you offended the deity, and got him angry with you, then there had to be a ransom -- in truth, a bribe, a buying off -- to him as well. This bribe/buying off was in order to change the deity's attitude toward us; this is therefore nothing more or less than a psychological mechanism for 'placating' anger.

There are several elements to such placating of anger..

[a] If you fear the anger of someone or something you have offended by harming what they value, then you offer something you value, of similar value, that will mollify the angry one.

[b] Psychologically, you are terrified of their [unknown] retribution, what they will do to you as a consequence of your sinful act, so you kow tow to them, to avert their wrathful retribution. You go all placatory in the sense of bending the knee, hanging the head, bringing the tail down. You are 'so sorry'... Actually you are not sorry at all, necessarily, but just greatly fearful of their payback to you. But you must make a show of being all sorry to start taking the edge off their anger with you..

[c] Moreover, you are inescapably caught in this bind because you believe their retribution is 'just', after all you harmed something of value to them, so to evade the wrathful retribution justly coming to you, it is necessary you 'offer' something of similar value, to make up for what you harmed.. It is a legalistic transaction, a definite 'tit for tat.' You believe in retribution, actually, to enter this legalistic/juridical attitude. 'I took from you, you have a right to take from

me.' This is the way a 4—7 year old child sees 'justice', I hit you, thus you hit me. A balancing of the books. This legalising of the transaction is desirable, or preferable to leaving it human and loose, because the whole motive of fear behind it all is only assuaged if there is a fixed and non-revisable formula for 'me offending you, then getting back into your good books.' Making this whole exchange legally binding reassures me that you cannot still harbour revengeful motives toward me, which you will act on later down the line. We are OK now= we have to be, because I have done my bit to repay you for what I took from you. We are now even..

[d] Here is where those ugly words 'expiation' and 'propitiation' -- so ugly in English as to be irredeemable and no longer useable, indeed spoiled by theology -- enter this juvenile, primitive, picture. You propitiate neighbour or deity -- the two cases are always the same -- to placate their anger; you expiate your offence by 'offering' something to them that not only says you admit you did wrong to them and are sorry [this is really a kind of pleading with them-- 'please don't hurt me, boss'], but also says you are trying to make restitution by handing over to them something of an equivalent value to what you harmed. This is where the so-called 'substitutory principle' comes into play. If I took your blood away, I should lose my blood; so if I killed your brother, I should be killed. But, at less of an extreme, I can give you something of value to me, like an animal, which substitutes for me. So, I give 6 cows to be killed, instead of taking 20 knife cuts to my chest.

In many ancient cultures, the sacrificial element is comprehended wholly in substitutory terms. Sacrifice is not the give-away made by love. Rather, sacrifice refers to what I have to give up in order to propitiate the party I have injured [= mollify them] and expiate for the injury [= compensate them].

For the Jews, this was the idea of 'blood for blood', 'life for life.' The blood is life, and hence the seat of the soul; so if the soul sinned, then it had to offer something comparable in recompense, and this could only be an equal loss of its blood, an equal loss of its life. But, because no one wants to die or be harmed, the sacrificial substitute is offered instead of the sinner. This is the 'expiation' of sin that is allowed, and it is practiced both toward the deity and to other people, but mainly to the deity. Blood from sacrificed animals, like bulls and goats, stands in for the sinner's life blood, and is offered to the angry deity as a way of reducing his anger.

Expiation therefore overlaps with propitiation, because both are sucked into a system of placating anger. The propitiating is the attitude of kow towing, of pleading towards the anger= 'I'll do anything you want if you agree not to blast me to pieces.' Expiation shares the same exact attitude, and so it means 'to appease, to propitiate' in the dictionary; but it also involves how the placating of anger is to be done, is to be secured; so what is asked of me to get you back on board towards me? Must I kill myself? OK, I don't have to do that, thank god! Must I cut 12 pieces of my flesh away from my body, and offer these to you? OK, I don't have to do that, thank god! But I must perform a ritual sacrifice, in which I give blood for blood, life for life, and this involves killing a bull, or a goat, and offering its blood, its life, to you -- instead of mine.

It stands in for mine, and is a symbol of mine. Through the 'sacrifice' or killing of innocent blood, innocent life [an innocent soul], my guilty blood, my guilty life [my guilty soul] repays you for the wrong I did to you, and so this sacrifice, or killing, of the innocent soul [animal] instead of my guilty soul [human] 'expiates' my wrong. This is how I repay you, this is my recompense to you; it gets me off the hook of deserved and coming punishment, because in effect an innocent party has stepped into the breach and taken the hit for me.

Clearly, the deity that will be bought off by this kind of ritual and symbolic propitiation and expiation for human sins is not the Old Testament Yahweh, but is in reality one of the arbitrary and certainly not loved, but profoundly feared, tribal deities in the pagan religion of Canaan and the Near East. None of this is Yahweh, thus if there is any truth to the beliefs in [1] an innocent 'standing in' as a 'sacrifice' for the guilty, and [2] the need for blood to make sacrifice effective, because of the accompanying belief in [3] 'blood for blood' and 'life for life', then there has to be a radically different way of interpreting [1], [2], and [3]. They have to be entirely recast-- or just thrown on the rubbish heap of history.

The 'god' whose wrath needs a legalistically codified and fixed repayment for the loss he has suffered to his authority, pride, supremacy, due to our sin is clearly not the true God; but whatever its original ontological and psychological status in ancient pagan religion, this sense of the divine easily and rapidly becomes taken over by the Evil One, Satan the Accuser. Hence, the 'offended' deity who demands sin be punished, in the name of justice, is a hateful, vindictive, judgemental, harsh, 'god' who has no love for the sinner, as well as no compassion and no mercy, no forbearance and long-suffering patience, no condoning of sin to give people time to amend their lives, no forgiveness of people out of appreciating how radical is their tragedy..

Terminology such as 'Christ sacrificed his blood to wipe away all our sins', or 'Christ's blood was expiation for all our sins', is therefore both pagan and potentially Satanic. Whatever this phrase would mean in Hebrew or Greek, in English it is misleading, and in many ways, totally horrendous. It is not clear if Paul [Romans, 3, 24-25] should be criticised for using such language, or the problem lies with the English translators of the Bible, and the whole history of Western theology seizing on 'propitiation and expiation' to render the Jewish 'atonement.' We cannot interpret 'atonement' as propitiation and expiation, without sucking atoning into a pagan and Satanic world where there is no love from God towards humanity, where sacrifice has nothing to do with love, where only fear and anger dominate the landscape-- making that landscape emotionally and psychologically 'dark', as you see in fundamentalist accounts of atoning, but to an extent in all Western doctrines of atonement from Augustine through Anselm to Calvin. These people are all worshipping Satan as their 'god.' They do not know the true God at all..

On the foundation of the pagan deity whose anger people fear, but towards whom people have no love, Satan builds his court house, and renders 'god' into an unloving and hence unfair judge and jury, vengefully out for blood!

This is why, as so many Eastern Orthodox have pointed out, Western Atonement says, in effect, that the sinner must be saved from God!

It is God who threatens the poor sinner, not even the sin as such; thus the emphasis is on changing God's threateningly negative attitude toward us-- not on our repentance for sin which leads to a change of attitude in us [toward God and neighbour].

Moreover, changing God's attitude toward us is a magical act, since it requires no wrestling with truth and untruth inside the self at all. We engage in what is a magical act of negotiation with the deity, out of a superstitious mistrust in him. When the trans-action is over, we are now safe and secure, so all we feel is relief from fear. We will not be hit by the deity's anger. But other people, if they don't bend the knee and enact the formula of restitution we went through, will still get zapped. We did not defy the dreadful deity; if others do defy him, and he blots them out forever -- his wrath towards them never to be 'assuaged', never to be 'satisfied' by the correct way of buying it off -- then that is their tough luck. It is what they deserve for defying such a deity. They have brought eternal punishment on their own heads.

Not only 'sacrifice by blood', but 'blood for blood', as mysteries of 'atoning for human sin' need to be recast, entirely, from root up, to cast off the pagan [superstitious and magical] and Satanic [legalistic and judgemental] elements that have, in the Christian West but also elsewhere, crept into the whole language and teaching of 'Atonement.'

This Atonement needs to be redeemed.. Or chucked in the bin, with a new terminology used to speak of 'love's sacrifice of dying for sins.' There is a truth in this, but it is not a 'dark', fearful and wrath hedged-in thing, but something profound. It is part of the way in which the greater suffers for the lesser. Suffering must be added to sacrifice, and it must be 'the suffering-and-sacrifice of love' that the Cross shows, or what is shown in prophecy by the last [fourth] Slave Song in Isaiah, about the Messiah. The greater is God, suffering through sacrifice, for the lesser, humanity. The greater is also the king suffering through sacrifice for his people= and this is what is put on the Messiah.

[2] THE PROPHETS, NOT THE PRIESTS, FORETELL THE ULTIMATE ATONING SACRIFICE

The false meaning of Atonement, which is pagan and Satanic, stems entirely from the priesthood, and the whole temple system of sacrifice, blood, and the rest. Leviticus, 1, 4= "Let the sinner bring a guilt-offering to the temple and the priest will atone for him." This verse is pagan, and its ethos can become Satanic. Jacob speaks in the same way about his brother Essau whom he wants to 'buy off' with a propitiatory gift, a 'kofer nefesh'-- a 'ransom for Jacob's life' [Exodus, 21, 30]. Hence Jacob says, "I will appease his angry face with the present" [Genesis, 32, 21]. This bribe is offered out of fear of

retaliatory anger. In the event, it is love that reconciles the brothers, for Essau generously forgives Jacob, and Jacob gratefully accepts such an unexpected deed from his 'wronged' brother.

Another example from Proverbs, 26, 14= "The wrath of a ruler is as messengers of death, but a wise man will [by some propitiatory offering, or kofer], pacify it." Such is the pagan atoning projected into Yahweh by the early Jews.

It has often been pointed out that at the start of Israel's religious history, Yahweh allowed a mixture of pure and pagan elements in Jewish worship. Only slowly were the pagan, and potentially Satanic, elements excised, differentiated out, in a sifting of wheat from tares that must be slow and delicate. For if the contrast between distorted and true is made too early, and too starkly, the people will not be able to take it. They will be shamed, and despair of themselves.

None the less, it is therefore no surprise that the prophets blasted the priests and the temple worship repeatedly, over centuries. Sirach, 35, 12= "Do not offer Yahweh a bribe, for he will not accept it. And do not trust to an unrighteous sacrifice." It is clear that the prophets were trying to purge the pagan and Satanic element from the priestly system. The importance of the priestly role ebbs and flows in Judaism, and this is why. The priests are infected by a real toxic poison, and they must be purified! Never mind their false 'intercession' for the purification of sinners. They themselves are too often the root of the false approach to purification.

There is much in Judaism's priestly tradition, and in the prophets who discern it, to combat the pagan and Satanic tendency of Atonement in the Christian West. There is, therefore, a truer Jewish Atonement. The sacrifice practised in the temple is that of giving up our 'attachment' to sin in order to be able to sincerely offer our entire life, and everything we depend upon for sustaining life, to God. We 'cannot serve God and Mammon.' If we resist what draws us to Mammon, then we begin to find God in all of life, in the everyday things, in the small things, in the physical things, from sex to food. We discover that everything genuinely alive is sacred, and the sacred is to be shared. The temple gathers the people as a community round what they have in common which really unites them= the fountainhead of God.

However, there is a different understanding of Atonement in the prophets= the Atoning person is, must be, and can only be, the king. The suffering and sacrifice of a king, a righteous king, for the people, including his death for their sake, is a more powerful atoning than that which occurs in the temple.

It is possible to trace a set of practices which are more prophetic in their style of atoning, as well as the priestly atoning, and the kingly atoning. But, the

atoning most powerful is the king's, and this is the atoning evident in the Cross of Christ, and in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah.

[3] PROPHETIC ATONING

In prophetic tradition, instead of God being the object of the atoning, the guilty person becomes the focus. Sin is to be 'purged.' 1 Samuel, 3, 14= "The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for with sacrifice, nor offering.." Proverbs, 41, 6= "By mercy and truth iniquity is atoned for." Psalms, 141, 2= "[Yahweh] will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

Consequently, instead of the priest being the one who offered the ransom, God himself becomes the one who atones, the one who removes the sinful state by 'truth and mercy.' The Psalmist is speaking as prophet when through him it is said that God does not require, or want, burnt offerings and blood sacrifice, but a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Prayers to God which ask him to 'clean' Israel, or 'clear Israel from guilt', and repeatedly ask for his 'mercy' toward human sinfulness, are in this tradition of the prophets. The prophetic atoning stresses, as in the Psalms, the need for a human being's sincere repentance and prayer directed to God. Moreover, fasting seems to have replaced sacrifice [Isaiah, 58, 1-3; Zachariah, 5, 3]. The emphasis on 'inner change', and on 'truth in the inward parts', is prophetic; if we will uncover our hidden and deep-seated roots of sin and pray for God's merciful help in revealing what is untruth and what is truth in us, then priestly intercession will not be needed.

The prophets implied that the priestly 'intermediary' between the people and God was not necessary, or if it had a purpose and should remain, this must not be to get in the way of each person's own precious relationship to God. We each can forge a personal relationship to God in the heart and spirit. The Psalms of David both 'personalise and psychologise' our direct link to God, in trying to ready us for the indwelling and activity of God's Spirit. In reality, it is God's Spirit who changes our inner constitution and fathomless depth as we wrestle with its truth and untruth.

The prophets emphasise that 'the fruit of sin is death' [Ezekiel, 18, 4= "sin brings death to the soul"], and exhort the people to cast away their sin, so that in returning to God, they will live. For the prophetic tradition, atonement is wrought by acquiring Ezekiel's 'new heart and new spirit.' The prophets put their hope in the redeeming power of God's Spirit which will cleanse the people from their impurities and endow them with this new heart and new spirit. In short, sin is only overcome by a radical change of the inner core, the inner engine, of our being and deeds. This is the Spirit's doing.

Both the king and prophet are Spirit-bearers, in a special sense. Redemption cannot be complete until the Spirit has effected fundamental changes in the human depths, making them a vehicle of Spirit. The Messiah's suffering and sacrifice, even to pouring out his life blood, is the action and paradigm that shows us how to move, and moves us, toward the Spirit's power to transform us in depths, so that we arrive at the singular heart and new spirit. This is the

crown of redemption, and even the Messiah's suffering and sacrifice points to this crown as the consummation.

[4] THE KINGLY SACRIFICE THAT IS THE 'ONCE AND FOR ALL' ATONEMENT

What, then, is the kingly sacrifice, the shedding of his blood, the dying for the people, because of their sins?

Due to the shared bond of the Spirit between king and prophet, it is not surprising that this kingly sacrifice is a major theme of the prophetic oracles. Thus, another means of atoning instead of sacrifice as practised by the priesthood, is given to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel, when the prophet urges the king to show more righteousness: "Break off thy sins by almsgiving, and [break off from] thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor" [Daniel, 4, 24]. This exercising of righteousness is itself an atoning for sin, because in a deeper sense sin just is the failure of righteousness. The heart and spirit must change for righteousness to stand up, and step up. This also points to one of Judaism's most fundamental revelations -- that our actions are what redeem us, not our fine words, or finer thoughts. You can have a sophisticated theology, but if your ground level existential deeds are unrighteous, your grand ideas are in vain, in fact a distraction, a fantasy. The king is the figure of 'doing', action, deeds not words, or words that must be backed up and matched by action; and the king operates in the existential arena of the world, the hardest but most redemptive place to be -- the place of ultimate significance for redemption failing or coming through in the end.

But many Jewish commentators interpret the four Slave Songs in Isaiah as revealing 'the most efficacious atoning of all.' This most powerful atonement, the once and for all atonement, is kingly, not priestly, not prophetic. This atoning is understood in Judaism -- and again it is only the prophets who introduced this theme, going back as far as Hosea -- as rooted in the suffering of God for the people he loves. The claim that 'suffering love' only began with Jesus Christ is not true; it starts in the prophets, and reaches a crescendo in the description of the Slave of Yahweh, which is a text from the Exile [600 BC to 528 BC], or soon after it. In this prophetic tradition, there is a sequence that starts with love, goes to suffering, proceeds to sacrifice, ends in shedding of blood and death. But, the priestly sacrifice disappeared in the Exile, and thus this kingly suffering is what replaced it.

In short, suffering replaces sacrifice as the start-point of this most powerful of all atoning. All kinds of suffering, and death itself, become atoning, through the kingship that is Messianic. In the Slave Songs, this truth is rooted in the Messianic King, in his reversal, or inversion, from glory to humiliation. The king 'suffers' for the people -- this is the new emphasis in the kingly atoning.

This allows us to clarify a number of factors that Satan would wish to darken. Love leads to the willingness to suffer for love; this comes from God, it is an example of 'greater acting toward lesser.' Suffering for love, in turn, makes sacrifice, and pours out its own life blood even unto death, as a measure of

how far it will go, how much cost it will pay, to love. This is paying a ransom, but of a very different kind. The greater becomes, in his whole life and death, the ransom for the lesser; by what he is, a greater, and by what he does for a lesser, sacrificing and giving himself, even emptying himself, from love, so he redeems the lesser, gets them through the deep place where they are stuck..

Whether 'life for life', 'blood for blood', remains in this account, or has been lost along the way, is not clear.. If it does remain, it does so in a non-propitiatory, non-expiatory, way. It is more to do with how the greater embraces the lesser into itself, like a wound; the greater is wounded by the lesser -- the innocent wounded by the guilty -- to bring the greater into the lesser. The healthy lets itself be wounded by the sick, for in that way, the sick receives the healthy. Life embraces death, but in entering death, brings life into death. "By death he overcame death and brought life to those in the tombs." The life for life, and blood for blood, turns out to be related to healing. You give healthy blood to sick blood, and by this *infusion* from the former, the latter receives a *transfusion*. You have to be wounded by what you are going to heal.. If I love you, then no matter how diseased or guilty your blood, I will gladly give my 'good' blood to you, if this can effect a metamorphosis in your blood.

I will decrease so you can increase.

One of the sacrifices a king must often make, a drama director friend tells me, is that he must die to make way for a new king. Hamlet cannot redeem Denmark. He must die, to let come to centre stage someone else who can redeem the nation. Sacrifice is a constant companion of the true king; as is the 'suffering for love' from which all sacrifice arises. By rooting sacrifice firmly in the suffering of love, we break its tie to superstition and magic, to Satanic Accusation. It has nothing to do with any of that.

Thus, suffering is itself the sacrifice that atones.

This is the central message of the Exilic prophet who wanted to encourage the Jews in Babylon. He was reassuring them that of greater and deeper atoning power than all the temple sacrifices was the suffering of the 'elect ones', the righteous, who were to be servants and witnesses of God, demonstrating how the most hostile and worldly environment is to be paradoxically overcome. The belief in the atoning power of the suffering and death of the righteous is not only expressed in Isaiah, but also finds expression in 2 Maccabees, 6, 27; 17, 21-23, and in fact goes back to early times in some respects, for when Moses -- after the debacle of his Satanic anger caused the first giving of the Ten Commandments to be lost -- asks God to blot out his own name from the Book of Life forever if this would mean his people's names could forever remain in, this is the love for the people only their true king can manifest [Exodus, 32, 32-33]. This kingly love for the people is from God, and of God, showing God's love for all the people. This is why 'works of benevolence', works of mercy, particularly toward the most wretched and downcast of God's people living under oppression and duress

in the world, are regarded as powerfully atoning: “[kingly] charity is more acceptable to Yahweh than [priestly] sacrifice” [Proverbs, 21, 3].

Therefore, this prophetic understanding of kingship gives the most far reaching atoning power to the Heroic Martyrdom of the king, or other noble and upstanding persons [Psalms, 29, 2; 116, 15], as it reveals God’s love for all the people, all of whom are ‘his.’

This gives to very priestly sounding statements in the New Testament, referring to Christ’s sacrificial blood ‘shed for many for the remission of sins’ [Mathew, 26, 28; Hebrews, 10, 12; Colossians, 1, 20], a very different interpretation. The meaning is paradoxical, and in line with the love of the greater for the lesser; the rich pay for the poor, the good pay for the bad, the healthy pay for the sick. Suffering helps us let go of the self, and allow it to become a sacrifice, a payment, a ransom, for the lost. This is not the greater ‘lording it over’ the lesser, but precisely ‘serving’ them, as does Yahweh’s Slave. Christ said, I came not to be served, but to serve; the Messianic King serves love, by willingly making his very self, and entire life, a sacrifice for love to enable it to redeem the hopeless.

Thus, [kingly] suffering is more likely than [priestly] sacrifice to win God’s power. The person who lets their soul and heart, their being and doing, become the sacrifice involved in suffering for love, has God’s favour and will atone for many.

According to Jewish tradition, then, “particularly the death of the righteous atones for the people” [1 Samuel, 21, 14]. He is taken as the security [‘mashkon’] for the life of the community. Righteous persons are needed in every generation to atone for the people, and when there are no such righteous ones, disaster strikes.

Isaiah certainly ascribes strange powers, and mysteries, to the king that go far beyond any rational, or moral, conception of leadership. The king’s pre-eminence is because of his heart and passion, the royal and golden heart, the noble and extreme passion, that will do all that is necessary to stop the people from coming to destruction, because of their own failings, or how evil spirits twist their failings to augment them. The king is God’s heart and the people’s heart. He is the inter-secting of roads where heavenly and earthly ‘cross.’ He tells us, existentially, through action, how to be at that cross-road. The priest brings the people to God; but the king brings God to the people, and lives out the two-sided contention and reconciliation of divine and human hearts in the world. He most ultimately depicts what God wants for humanity in the world, and how far God will go, in love, to attain it.

The question remains, does the kingly suffering, sacrifice, death, that ‘atones’ for the people just suddenly remove the people’s sins, as if by magic, in an instant?

It is not magic, so sin does not just suddenly disappear from the world. But the 'remedy' for healing sin, as St John puts it in his first letter [using the language of healing, not of atonement], is at work in the world, and can be tapped into by anyone at any time. It rests on two mysteries.

[a] How far love can go, even for sinners. This is love of enemies, not just love of friends. It is the 'love for the people' which bears, carries, makes up for, pays for, the deficiencies of sin.

[b] Thus this kind of love shows a different way of meeting the deficiencies of sin, a way not retaliatory or excluding, but accepting and including.

Taking the brother's sin on, as if it were one's own, and 'sucking it up' in order not to pass it on, but bearing it in one's own kidneys, is so that all the people can remain together, as one, all brothers, with no brother lost. This is the ultimate in forgiveness-- hence the ultimate defeat of the Satanic Accuser who wants everyone held to account for their transgression, and everyone 'damned.' It is the kingly atonement which is 'the judgement on judgement', according to St Isaac the Syrian.

Therefore God acts in the Messianic King. His heart 'in' the world reveals God's heart 'for' the world.

[5] CONCLUSION

When you look at it more closely, it becomes evident that 'ransom' retains its link to 'redeeming', in the atoning of the king.

But, in the atoning done by the priest, ransom disappears; it is only a symbolic 'guilt offering', and as such, only signifies our gift to God of repenting, mending our ways, pardoning and being pardoned in a mutual forgiveness with our fellows. Such is priestly atoning, and important as it is, it is salvation oriented, and does not redeem.

Redeeming costs more of the redeemer, both when suffering for love because that is simply the way existence is, and suffering for love because of sin exerting a heavy toll on love. But, it is in redemption we lay down our life for our friends, and lay down our life for our enemies.

About the first, the Slave Song says, "through his wounds we are healed", and about the second, it says, "on him lies a punishment that brings us peace."

So it is at the end of this long day.

ATONEMENT AS THE REVERSAL

1,

Atonement= 'at-one-ment', after a sundering..

What must be done to reconcile, or reunite, divorced or separated parties?

Atonement= what you do, what has to happen, to reconnect what has been divorced, or separated.

Mystical Oneness does not have to atone because it does not take seriously the consequences of action in this world. It does not seek to redeem, or make good, what has gone wrong in the world, rather, it 'lets go of' both the world and its ruination as of no ultimate importance.

Atoning puts final value on the world, history, humanity.

The Mystical Oneness co-exists with the existential reality, but cannot penetrate it, change it, make it come good in the end.. The space where Mystical Oneness works is different to the existential arena of this world into which humanity is 'thrown.'

St Paul mystically travelled into the seventh heaven, and beheld marvellous things of which 'it is not permitted to speak', yet he still had to come back to the world, to complete his mission, to live in a body, to make the impossible choices, to be borne by and bear other people, and to die a criminal convicted of sedition, executed by the 'lawfully constituted government' for crimes against the authority of the state and the authority of the state-sponsored religion.

Putting final value on 'world, history, humanity' means rejecting the solace of a 'better place' where the trade-off in going there is to leave behind, and not finally much care about, what happens in this world, to all the persons, creatures, things, 'condemned to its freedom' of radical existential choice. So, if your beloved cat goes missing, and you never find out what happened to her, whether a coyote got her or a car, or if she is alive somewhere having chosen a new family, that loss is denuded of its real blow to your heart because it is dismissed as 'the way life is.'

From a valuing of world, history, humanity, you get a valuing of everything in its very particularity, and unrepeatable uniqueness. When you say, 'cats come and go, that is the way the world is', you dismiss and are in denial towards that specific cat who mattered specifically to you= its specificity of creaturehood mattered to you in your specificity of personhood.

Specific beings, creatures, persons, matter hugely and ultimately in this world.

But then, the relationships between specific beings, creatures, persons, matter hugely and ultimately.

And then, the deeds between specific beings, creatures, persons, matter hugely and ultimately.

Not a feather falls but God knows it..

It all matters, hugely and ultimately, in this world.

Therefore, sin as the world's 'failure to hit the mark' cannot be transcended by 'moving home' to a different level, or in effect a different place, where it ceases to matter.

Mystical Oneness consoles the frustrated wife for whom all men have failed, the disillusioned hero for whom all people are unreliable, and at the core of us all, the bewildered assaulted child whose very innocence is a 'red rag to a bull' for the wickedness dominating this world.

If any spiritual reality is to enter the existential arena to make a difference there -- and to tip the balance of contending forces on the existential edge -- then the spiritual question of questions becomes whether this can, realistically, be accomplished.

What spiritual reality can dent this world, to save its possibility for flowering, and where that possibility is tragically gone beyond recall redeem the tragedy such that it becomes the very anvil upon which is forged the second chance, the new beginning, for the world and all in it.

'It is accomplished' Christ uttered as he died on the Cross.

The question remains.

Is it accomplished?

Can it be accomplished?

What is accomplished?

2,

It is the people whose hearts are most 'instinctively' concerned for this world whose faith in God is most hurt by 'what happens' in the here and now.

There are people who 'believe' in God but profess to hate God, like Ellie Wiesel who survived the concentration camp. They speak for all of us, crucified on the contradiction of a world that matters, and a God who supposedly cares about what matters in the world, and asks us to be staked to its groundless ground.

Everyone has a point where this contradiction bites into their existence very personally, and this is the deal-breaker, the breaking point where they bail out. Some of these people still profess to believe in an unjust God, or simply a God who does not care what happens to us, or if he cares is never the less powerless to do anything to help us, and despise this God for his inadequacy. Other of these people profess not to believe in such a pointless God.. Either way, the pain is the same. The very profundity of that pain, and its refusal to be consoled, nor rationally dispelled by the supposed 'non-existence of any divinity', tells a story that few persons can really look at with undefended gaze.

Yet, the contradiction of the world that matters supremely only because it matters to the God who brought it into existence, and the loss of that God from its ongoing nightmare will not be ironed out..

The paradox is that it is precisely from within the worst case scenario for the contradiction that a change in the 'run of play' begins. The story begins its second chance just where it has, by all worldly logic, reached checkmate. Christ's Cross also says, 'it is all over.'

When we hate God, or despair of God, we reach the real tipping point.

Those who stop at the checkmate have bailed out on the Daemonic too soon.

3,

Atonement cannot simply magic sin away.. Sin is karma= if you eat poison, you die. If you give poison to your brother, he dies. When he is dead, his wife and children are thrown into the street because they are now too poor to remain in the family house. In the street, the mother and one of the children die, and the other child learns to be a hard case, and he grows up to harm many.. They all 'pay' for what you did to his father. And so it goes on. Sin has a ripple effect, engulfing wider and wider circles of destruction and damage.

Atonement has to soberly and realistically face up to the gravity of sin. Yet sin cannot be overcome in a way that nullifies, negates, removes, what is at stake and what is being risked in the human venture. Dehumanising 'solutions' that rob humans of freedom and the choice to give their heart or withhold their heart from existence, are the medicines worse than the illness= they are all, in different ways, the cure that removes the sickness by killing off the patient. The cure becomes worse than the illness in so many human answers, including religion itself; all our differing kinds of 'isms'-- Fascism, Communism, Capitalism, Conservatism, Liberalism, Gnosticism, Puritanism, Scientism, Esotericism, Traditionalism, Modernism, Post-Modernism, Militant Pro-Religion, Militant Anti-Religion, and on and on ad infinitum.

Dostoyevsky said that humanity will have to 'try out' all the imaginable twists and turns that prove to be errors, blind alleys, cul de sacs, because of our radical freedom. We must explore all kinds of false avenues to learn

existentially that they do not work, and so profit from our experience of making mistakes.

But the toll is high..

The Cross lets it all happen, and so we reject the Cross. Yet the Cross meets it, head on, not withholding the heart but giving the heart to everything, and from within that hell, finds the true road, the unimaginable road, that risks everything and because it is too late to 'save' it, redeems it in its tragedy.

Atonement overcomes the 'law' of sin, the karmic consequences of sin. In doing this, it also overcomes the justice that would keep a strict accounting of those consequences and demand each and all responsible be held to account.

The Atonement in the temple is salvational.
The Atonement in the world is redemptive.

Salvation is good news for those with lingering hope.
Redemption is good news for those in fundamental despair.

Temple Atonement= priestly and salvational, an 'offering' for one's sins.
Worldly Atonement= kingly and redemptive, a 'sacrifice' for the sins of others.

The former is a sacrificing, a giving up, of our sins.

The latter sees behind good and evil to something more important, the broken love that, if accepted, can be reversed, becoming the most final love exactly at the point of injury, the point of its real tragedy in the world.

The love broken by the world becomes an unbreakable love for the world.

This is God's doing, but only on, and through, the Cross of the Messiah.

This world matters not because 'it is all there is', but because the God who brought it into existence values it in some final way that is irrational and pained. God insists on the freedom of the world, and therefore love must go to an extreme, irrational and pained, to 'make it work out in the end.'

CHRIST, REDEEMER AND KING

1,

On Palm Sunday, Yeshua the Christ is addressed as 'Redeemer and King.'

This is entirely accurate, in terms of what Jewish tradition repeatedly says about the Mashiach. The Jewish prophetic tradition describes the Messiah as Redeemer, and as a King in the lineage of David.

Only as a king does the 'Anointed of God' bring righteousness and redemption.

2,

Though the mob shout out that Yeshua the Christ is a prophet, once the ordeal of the Passion is underway, he is in reality not a prophet; the prophets have foretold him, but he is much more than any of them. By definition, he can exercise several of the prophetic powers, such as 'searching out in depth' the heart of God and the heart of humanity, foreseeing future historical events, and declaring the heart truth by which people stand or fall down, and other such things, yet to confine him 'merely' to the status of a prophet, however potent that may be, is a basic error. He is chosen by God in some special sense for his mission, and given the Power and Wisdom, and Mysteriousness, of the Holy Spirit in some special way to accomplish that calling. Though Jewish tradition is ambiguous on the precise meaning of the title, there are places where the Messiah is called the 'Son of God.' Whether this means he is divine and human is not clear, in the Jewish context. None the less, he is unique. This strange figure is more than any prophet. One of the prophetic tasks had been to anticipate his actual coming, and to delve his nature, and significance. But always, and more and more as time goes by, whatever else might be added to the Messiah as 'decoration', his essential core is to be a Redeemer, and a Davidic King.

No one like this has appeared previously, because 'redemption' has only slowly, over hundreds of years, crystallised out of 'righteousness.' That the Redeemer is a Davidic King means that Righteousness is not transcended, or replaced, but is included in Redemption. Only a warrior chief, such as the indigenous Indians of North America had, or a 'high king' such as the ancient Celts had, and a king like David who briefly united Judah in the south and Israel in the north, becoming the central rallying point for all the Jewish people, can convey the Daemonic dynamic and worldly arena of Redemption. Redemption is this worldly and historical, not other worldly. It is 'tikkun olam' = "repair of the world." That is the job of a King, but the task goes beyond what the Daemonic and Kingly trinity of 'truth, justice, righteousness' can achieve. Something further is needed = an Action initiated by God, and the special human being uniquely commissioned by God to perform it as God's representative, virtually God's presence, on earth.

Anyone is free to reject the Jewish understanding of who the Messiah is, and what the Messiah has to do, but reducing the Messianic Figure -- who forms over a thousand years of Jewish struggle with Yahweh in the deep heart -- to fit in with prophets, priests, holy men, sages, elders, healers, is not workable. It is false to what the Jewish prophets were given as divine revelation concerning the Mashiach.

3,

The Jewish prophets evolved out of Asian shamans, and adapted the shaman for a more existential, historical, this worldly, religious path. The Jewish prophets are radically Spirit oriented. None the less, the reliance of the prophetic calling on Spirit, and spirits, is not to be confused with the special and unique role that the Messiah has with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, and spirits, know this role, and so help Yeshua the Mashiach to fulfil it. When the New Testament speaks of having the 'Spirit of Christ', most Christians misunderstand this, and some defile it. The claim that Christ can give a person the Spirit 'in a new way' does not mean people alive before him had no relation with Spirit, or spirits. An Oglala elder once said to me, 'We walk *in* one Spirit and *with* many spirits.' This is mystically sharp, and illustrates a rich, and immemorially old, human relation to Spirit and spirits before the Messianic Event. Nor does the Biblical assertion mean that unless a Christian is 'born again' by being given Christ's Spirit, they will not be saved but will go to hell. This last interpretation is dark Satanic hogwash.

The Messiah can pass on to other human beings the same Spiritual Empowering that enabled him to do his deed as Redeemer and King. To receive Christ's Spirit is thus to be assigned as, and appointed to, the Messianic. It has nothing to do with being 'saved', nor with 'saving', because as the Passion gospels make clear [especially Mathew, 27], the Redeemer and King, once nailed to the spot, once staked to the ground, once bound hand and foot to the human tragedy by 'ascending' the Cross, is no longer just a saviour. He is taunted, 'save yourself', but he cannot save himself, and neither can he save anyone else. This is the whole point. As King he is Reversed and Sacrificed, spat upon, sneered at and denigrated, not royal at all but a criminal and derelict like the lowest of the low; and as Redeemer he is Reversed and Humbled, mistrusted and disbelieved and put to severe test to prove himself kosher, authenticated, valid, or in Paul's words [Philippians, 2, 5-11], "though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.."

Salvation is one thing, redeeming is a totally different thing, far more costly to God and hard for humanity, yet far more universally inclusive and wonderful beyond all imagining in outcome. The Redeemer and King is not a saviour, neither a new kind of saviour, nor the old kind of saviour all over the Far and Near East, enlightening people, lifting them up and out of murky waters.

Redemption throws them back into deeper waters. Redemption does not 'save' us from anything; it embraces everything, and by how it 'passes' through, transforms it from within, and remakes it in depth. In redeeming, the greater dies to the lesser, that the lesser may die to itself and be resurrected as greater.

The new Spirit, and spirits, the Messiah will give us is entirely, and only, to do with helping us do the Messianic work and helping us venture the Messianic deed. If we are redeemed by the Messiah, we become a redeemer like him, by virtue of his Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not belong to anyone. Even the Messiah does not own the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeds directly from Yahweh, and is not 'channeled' through the Logos. That Western theology, introduced by Roman Catholics and imitated by Protestants and Anglicans, is yet another basic error. 'Christ's Spirit' does not refer to ownership, but simply says, 'if you want to follow in the footsteps of Christ, going where he went and doing what he did as Messiah, then the same Spirit, and spirits, who empowered Yeshua to accomplish that mission will be given to you to accomplish the same mission—albeit in your personal way, and in the context of your time and situation.' We do not receive Spiritual Help to 'imitate' Christ—another basic error. The Spiritual Fire that was necessary for the Messiah to do what he did is necessary for us to do the same in changed circumstances. In this way, Messianic Action to repair the world, to redeem its historical long haul over all of time, is never imitative of Christ, or other Christ-like persons. It is always new, 'present' to its place and moment, and will always be the free self-giving of the person involved, and so it will be marked by their 'style of doing things', their own special and unique way of responding to the ancient hope of the Jews.

Thus, when we are redeemed, and redeem, we too become special and unique. We too become 'anointed' as Redeemer and King. We too will have our nobility of heart dismissed as ignoble, and we too will empty the spirit that seeks divinity, so that a different heart and different spirit can reach, and work in, and work beneath, the unredeemed and ruined heart and spirit of all humanity.

4,

Even before the Exile in Babylon [600 B.C.], several Jewish prophets warn that the first covenant between God and the Jews, the covenantal promise rooted in 'hesed', has not worked, and is thus not sufficient to bind God to humanity, and human to human. Jeremiah says there needs to be a 'new' covenant. He blatantly says the 'first' covenantal relationship between God and the Jews has been betrayed, and is ending; if the people chosen by God for some unknown purpose are to be retained at all, then it will have to be in a 'second' covenant.

This second, and new, covenantal relationship, a new promise given by God to the Jews, and through them to all humanity for all time, is Messianic. This new covenant is created by the coming of the Messiah. And for Christians, this second chance for God and humanity to really bond, to cleave, to enter a

promise that is both gift and contains obligations, is exemplified and sealed by Yeshua on the Cross. Nothing else, nothing less, 'establishes' the renewed covenant between God and his chosen people, and through them, between God and all of humanity. The new covenant holds until the end of time.

It commits God to greater effort for humanity, to more suffering to release us from hell, to more loyalty to us despite the existentially deep hell in which we are stuck. The Cross, as the exemplar of and seal on the final covenant, commits God to descent into our lowliness, to suffer it, but by suffering it in a new way, changing it at source. What is resurrected from that deep abyss is the redeemed heart and spirit, and this is also the 'new heart of flesh', no longer 'the old heart of stone', foretold by Ezekiel.

When the errors of centuries are washed away, the Messianic Reality stands before us, shorn of nonsensical accretions, and it is stark, raw, potent, ugly rather than attractive, incarnate and undergoing the worst for the sake of those unable to come out of the worst. Redemption is for those who cannot be saved, which means, redemption is for that depth in all of us that cannot be saved—yet at extreme cost, can be redeemed.

This is why the Messianic Drama is new, special and unique, different from the Oriental Salvational Way of enlightenment and all forms of up-lift. Whether salvation is kindly enough to be generous towards this world [offering its help and succour wherever it finds need], or withdraws and sets its sights on other worldliness [the mountain top spirituality of a certain kind of mysticism], it can drag us out of the 'effects' [consequences] of the profound human problem, but it cannot get to grips with, it cannot even dent, the 'cause', the abysmally deep origin of that problem. Salvation cannot change the heart in its basis, in the mysterious deeps from which it takes its stand. Benign generosity toward the other is not exposed to the edge from which redemptive action comes. The heart must be changed, fundamentally, for it to become the engine that changes the world, fundamentally.

This is the Mashiach, Redeemer and King. He is 'the first born of many.' His sons and daughters, who will become his brothers and sisters as they grow to the full stature of the Messianic Mystery, will also be redemptive and royal persons, following the visible example of the Messiah, and being inspired by the invisible Messianic Spirit.

For those who have been told by the Spirit, and spirits, that Yeshua is the Christ, the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection [three days] is the drama, the mystery, the power and wisdom, the hidden significance and harsh truth, of the Messianic Covenant.

This covenant of the Messiah -- created by the Messiah for he brings God to it and he brings humanity to it, equally, at one and the same time -- starts not on the day of Yeshua's birth, but on Palm Sunday. It is Palm Sunday when, as a prophet had said, the Mashiach will enter Jerusalem on a donkey [Mathew, 21, 1-11], not gloriously with pomp and worldly power -- imagine the

Assyrian king entering Jerusalem its victor – rather, modestly with no pomp and no worldly power, just the power of authoritativeness that emanates from his being, and which persuades the populace greeting him with fronds that he is indeed their King, indeed their Redeemer. For a moment, he is truly recognised by his people, before they forget the prophecies of Isaiah. Soon, the King is spat upon, and the Redeemer is disbelieved.

5,

Redeemer and King, not prophet, and not priest. Though Paul claims the Messiah is a High Priest 'higher' than the Jews had in the Temple of Solomon, this is simply an attempt to put a limitation on the Jewish priestly tradition, which does not convince, and is not necessary since the kingly sacrifice always exceeds, as well as differing from, the priestly sacrifice, not only in Judaism but also in Christianity. In any case, as there are times when Christ acts with prophetic powers, so there are times when he acts with priestly powers.

Whatever can be claimed about Yeshua's mission earlier on, when he teaches and instructs, heals and cleanses, does miracles, in a blend of prophetic and priestly 'ministering' to the people, sometimes more shaking them like a prophet, sometimes more pastorally caring for them like a priest, once Palm Sunday arrives and he enters Jerusalem, he is no longer even remotely prophet or priest. He is only the Davidic King and the Redeemer.

Yeshua knows this huge change in his nature, mission, and deed, will come once he enters the old capital city of Judah in the semi desert south, the heart lands of the first covenant, and the city of David where he united the two kingdoms. For most of Yeshua's ministry he expressly keeps out of Jerusalem, and often wanders further to the north, operating more closely to the old Canaanite lands of the kingdom of Israel. The capital of Israel is Samaria, and the Samaritans are seen by the stricter Judeans as lapsed, liberal, compromised, Jews who are interested only in luxury, commerce, money. Their 'life style' is relaxed, outwardly observant yet inwardly corrupt.

Entering Jerusalem is, for Christ, 'the moment of truth.'

The people soon switch allegiance from the Redeemer and King to worldly power in religion and worldly power in politics. They are perceiving their King and Redeemer as criminal and as non-sanctioned, and thus like the crowd described in the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, they are ready to Sacrifice and Deny his heart, his passion, his love for them.

There is no prophet, there is no priest, once Yeshua the Christ enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and begins the moment of destiny that will bring him to the ordeal, the undergoing, of passion. He will, as Redeemer and King, carry a load never before lifted from the depth, and test and prove a truth never before won in the depth.

The King and Redeemer is not a man of mind, not even a man of soul, rather, he is the man of heart, he is the man of passion, and this is 'cometh the hour, cometh the man.'

The Mashiach's hour has come. The Messiah, as Redeemer and King, will establish -- as the 'rejected cornerstone' of the house to be built -- the new covenantal love relationship, and this time, the love will not just save, it will redeem.

This time, the love will include yet go beyond Righteousness.

This time, something will be done that changes everything in the depth of the human heart where the problem lies, untouched, unredeemed, all the way back to the beginning of time.

The Messiah is King and Spirit-Bearer, elected, anointed, blessed, by God to do something divinity had never done, and to do it for humanity, so that by this deed humanity can become something it never was, and do something it could never do.

Love all the way, into hell.

The Cross is the new covenant, and thus the Cross 'is' Christianity.

6,

The Messiah is Kingly, and Spirit-Bearing, neither just royal, nor just spiritually upheld and directed, rather, a complete blend of these two things. A strange kind of spiritual kingship, a strange kind of kingly spirituality. For the Jews, the spirit power of a king exceeds that of any prophet or any priest. It is what the king is sent to do, from God and for humanity, that makes the Messianic calling so different, so particular, so rooted in Jewish tears and blood, and erupting at a specific time and a specific place, for the sake of all times and all places irrespective of when or where.

The Palm Sunday hymn [622] of the Anglican church captures the Jewish reality=

"All glory, praise and honour
To Thee, Redeemer King..
Thou art the King of Israel
Thou David's royal son
Who in Yahweh's name comes,
The King and Blessed One.
To Thee before Thy Passion..
Accept the prayer we bring
Thou good and gracious King."

And Isaiah [50, 4-9]=

“Yahweh has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.. Yahweh has opened my ear, and.. I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For Yahweh helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint.. he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand together.. Behold, Yahweh helps me..”

Paul [2 Corinthians, 4, 8-12] describes our own coming to the Cross when we are in the heart and spirit of the Messiah= “troubled on every side yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. Wherever we go we carry.. in the body the dying of Christ that the life also of Christ might be made manifest in our body.”

When the Messianic Spirit expounded, acted upon, suffered and paid for, by Yeshua the Mashiach rules the world, then a kingly spirit, and a spiritual kingship, is enthroned in the heart of the entire world process, and the passion that fires up from that centre of things will henceforth work to change all things.

The whole drama of the Passion, ending in the Cross, revolves around no theme of the prophetic or the priestly, but turns on whether Yeshua’s ostensible royalness is real, and whether he has from God any genuine spiritual sanction. These are the Messianic themes.

In Mathew, chapter 27, Pilate asks Yeshua if he is the king of the Jews, and Yeshua does not give an unambiguous answer, just replying= “You say it.” Pilate asks Yeshua if he knows all the derogatory slanders being thrown at him, and all the accusations being heaped on him? He does not answer. The people prefer that a career criminal is released on a Jewish feast day than that the tide of lies that Yeshua is disreputable and unsanctioned be dropped. This denigration and doubt is necessary to the drama, and hidden meaning, of the redemptive process that is beginning to unfold. This is why Yeshua, aware of Isaiah’s Four Slave Songs, says little, not seeking to justify himself, explain himself, or rebut all the false charges against his heart and its spirit. Pilate, not so involved, realises his wife is right that Yeshua is ‘just’, and echoes her word to the Jewish chief priests and people moments later. For them, the very term ‘just’ has echoes going back far into Jewish history. At the time before Saul, David, and Solomon, when the Jews had no king, they did have ‘judges.’ These were not someone presiding in a court of law. They were war leaders, ‘warrior chieftains’ as North American Indians and Celts would recognise them, and they were only called into activity when they were needed, usually in a national crisis. They resemble the Lakota elders who sit in council, to decide ultimate matters bearing on the tribe’s destiny. Pilate, in his urbane and cynical Roman manner, is recognising that Yeshua is the prototype of one of these ancient Jewish ‘Just Men’, and hence is ‘judging’ him as Righteous. Pilate cannot comment upon, and has no competence toward, the trickier questions surrounding the Messiah, and so he has no view on Yeshua as king or redeemer. Both were fraught with danger for the

governor of a rebellious and turbulent outpost of the Roman Empire. Pilate is simply saying, 'this man rings true.' He doubts, therefore, that the terrible things which are being said about him can hold for a truthful man. He doesn't want to get dragged into anything beyond that. The Messianic themes are a no go area for him.

Despite Pilate asking the Jews, when they preferred Barabbas be freed rather than Yeshua, 'what evil has he done?', the die is cast. Yeshua is in the room of no exit, and there is no escape. The fated suffering, the fated carrying of the weight, the fated paying of the cost, has begun. Nothing can stop it. Nor should it be stopped, though Pilate would be the last to realise that what is about to happen is what must happen. Famously, he washes his hands of the Jewish nit picking over obscurities of kingship and redemption with which he has no relation whatever. He may be a decent man, even. It is all too dramatic, too deep. He wants to quiet the tumult, which is getting out of control. So, give the zealous fools what they want. A human sacrifice.

A human sacrifice which is, at the same time, a divine sacrifice. A sacrifice of God to humanity, a sacrifice of humanity to God. Each side makes radical Give Away. God might prefer to be in heaven's bliss. As Kazantzakis showed in 'The Last Temptation of Christ', humanity might prefer a whole slew of 'good things' of the earth, from a good marriage and happy sex through the joy of human sharing to mystical illumination. Feeding the doves on a back balcony of a noisy city, glimpsing the warm light that fades in the evening through a lattice of trees, a snatch of some melody that tugs at you as it roars past in a car; there are endless gifts of goodness on earth, as in heaven..

It is too late. God and humanity, together, enter the room of no exit. It is done. What was initiated on Palm Sunday is reaching its first climax. In front of the soldiers of the Roman army, Yeshua is stripped naked, and they put a scarlet robe on him, to show that as warriors of the king, they deride his pretensions to that high estate. The sacrificial king is sneeringly and contemptuously 'enrobed' in royal splendour. He is also 'crowned', and by making the crown of thorns, and the robe blood red, they unconsciously bear witness to the true nature of this kingship. A king not above the pain of human existence, but given up to it, given over to it, immersed in it. The unrealised accuracy of their reaction to the Messiah – even the soldiers of Rome implicitly 'get' that it is the Messiah in front of them – continues, when they put a reed in his right hand, as his 'sceptre.' In Isaiah the non judgementalism of the Messiah is described by using the metaphor of precisely this reed, for the old text says human beings are a 'broken reed', and the Messiah has not come to make our brokenness worse by condemnation; the reed will be healed, changed, transformed, to become upright again. It will not be 'straightened out' brutally. Even when the soldiers hail this man they find piteous, and absurd, they are true to Isaiah's account. They are giving praise, even if ironic, to the Messianic reversed King and inverted Spirit-Bearer. This is, actually, who they laugh at. The Messiah is there, and the soldiers pick this up, oddly, even bizarrely. For 'God is not mocked.' The truth will out..

The soldiers call him king of the Jews, then disrobe him, and beat him. Then they take him to the Cross. The hard road up the hill to the bleak place of crucifixion is the second climax in the drama. The Cross itself is the third climax.

On the Cross the mocking sign is put up, 'this is Yeshua, King of the Jews.'

Bitter vinegar and gall, rather than wine, is forced upon his mouth. The jokes are mounting thick and fast now. This is turning into a good day out for Auntie Enid and the kids.

The wine of Eros, the vinegar and gall of the Daemonic. The room of no exit seems smaller now, more cramped, with less opportunity for manoeuvre. It is all coming down to a last place on the edge, a last struggle on a narrow ledge. It is all starting to come towards a point, and everything will hinge on what the last deed of the Slave and Suffering Servant of Yahweh does then. Time is almost over.

It is now, in the last brief time before time is up and it becomes now or never for the Messianic Deed, that salvation is held up to jeering. Those passing by revile him with the accusation: 'you who could destroy the Temple and raise it again in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' The chief priests take up the same chant, 'he saved others, yet himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, then let him come down from the Cross, and we will believe in him. This man trusted in God, and said he was the Son of God, so let God save him now.' The thieves crucified with him take up the challenge to Yeshua to save himself, or get God to save him. Why is it that the man who saved others can neither save himself, nor get God to save him? It casts into doubt all his salvational work for others if he himself is not saved.

Mathew does not recount the story of the good thief, who breaks the script, and asks Yeshua to have mercy on him. The crowd go on in this vein, even after Yeshua cries out in the climax of the drama before he dies, when strange phenomena of the earth and sky acknowledge who he really was and what he really did. Even at this climactic moment, which the crowd recognises tacitly as a profound crisis, they go on with their fixation about 'salvation.' They talk about the prophet Elisha, the disciple or spiritual 'son' of Elijah who went up to heaven in a fiery chariot, and wonder if this ancient and semi magical prophet will 'save' Yeshua.

If Yeshua really is the Mashiach, then he was born into the world for this, the trial, getting up the hill, the Cross. He was not born to be saved; he was born to be sacrificed as King and emptied as Spirit-Bearer, so he could redeem.

Earlier in his calling, he saved many, and thus continued the salvational way common to the Jews and everyone else in the Near East to the Far East. We are 'saved' from something horrendous, but in redemption, we are given over to, given up to, something pained, heavy, costly, deeper down at the very

point where the root digs in. Our royalness must be sacrificed, our spirit must be emptied, for this to happen.

On the Cross, it happens, for real, and there is no escape for Yeshua because he is the Christ, and he is enacting the Messianic Story down to its last dregs in a sharp cup of ultimate sorrow. He is the 'man of sorrows' born for this. As he took his first breath upon entering this world, something in him shuddered, because he had a foreboding of the room of no exit even then. It always called to him. It always came closer. He always knew he would enter it. He would not be saved from its clutches, but sacrificed in heart and emptied in spirit as he fought with, and accepted, its Daemonic summons.

The time would come when time had run out, and then salvation would end, because the horrendous last struggle for the new covenant of redemption would be inaugurated.

On the Cross, salvation recedes and wanes, while redemption races in and waxes. On the Cross, the promise of redemption is given and enacted.

The climax is reached in two things Yeshua the Christ cries out, from the hell into which he is descending, but in that abyss these things will become deeds.

He joins humanity in our heartbreak, when he says, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.' This echoes David in the Psalms, yet is fully sincere in him, and in all of us. God will not save us. Indeed, 'God saves' is inoperative at the place in the world where the two roads cross, where everyone of good heart is crucified, where even the good heart faints, and where the abyss looms up from below, threatening to swallow any passionate action because there is no heart in God and no heart in humanity to sustain its risk.

God will not save him, nor you, nor me. God did not save the Aboriginals of Australia. God did not save the Indians of the Americas. God will not save the children who die, or who are so damaged, their life is over before it starts. God will not save our innocence, nor protect our vulnerability. Yes, we can be raised out of the general mire by salvational practices. But the deeper tragedy remains.

Yeshua not being saved, and everyone mocking him over it, is happening just the same to us. We too are not being saved and the world crows in merriment at our discomfiture. We don't understand. Some of us are more complaining about it, some of us more stoic, some of us react viciously, some of us put up with it more generously, but it is there, just the same, in all of us.

Salvation is not working, and cannot work, at the profounder base of life.

Yeshua's other cry is for Yahweh to forgive all humans, when they crucify the best as if they were the worst, 'for they know not what they do.'

Salvation is no more, but on the Cross redemption begins.

The Messiah joins us in suffering our tragedy at depth; and we will join in this suffering, whereby we can be dragged through the depth to the other side, and undercut hell as we pass through.

The result is the resurrected heart and the resurrected spirit. The reignited passion, and the victorious heart.

The victorious heart is golden. Its passing through the depth, redemptively, is black and red. The new dawn, afterward, is golden.

The sacrifice and the emptying reaches resurrection, and at this point, the heart has triumphed, and passion will never be undermined or stopped by any obstacle.

The golden heart, the heart of the new dawn after the endless night, a goldenness sometimes ochre, a warm yellow brown, because the earth is included in redemption.

Not to believe in the earth, to reject the earth's redeemability, to despair of the potential for change in the world process of history, to give up on tikkun olam and refuse to repair the world and instead yearn to escape to heaven—all this is the repudiation of the Messiah, all this is crucifying the Messiah yet again, without let up.

For those touched by the Spirit of the Messiah, those redeemed in some measure however small and redeeming in some measure however small, what the Jews always said about the love of God applies equally to the Messiah. 'You can never do enough.' You can never do enough to repair the world, and redeem the buried treasure hidden in the earth.

7,

This is what began on Palm Sunday, moved through a trial, moved up a gear on a bleak hill travelling to a bleaker place that stank of death and defeat, and a final despair, and ended on the Cross. There it happened. There it was done. There the Messiah said, 'it is finished.' Not Caesar's stupid 'I came, I saw, I conquered', but 'I did what had to be done. Now you can do what before was closed to you.'

That old stone tomb is done. Now real existence, real action, starts.

It is fitting that, even if the vast crowds must continue to demand his crucifixion, we thank the Messiah.

His deed, which finished him and he finished, is our new beginning-- and promises better things to come 'in the end.'

As you accepted our weeping, accept our praises for joining it, and changing it only because it made you suffer like we suffer.

This is the new mystery of the Cross. This is the new covenant. Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection.

It goes all the way, and undoes what is fixed, and brings back what is lost.

The death of the Messiah on the Cross, because of our deadness, is the dying through which he, and we, are reborn.

WHY THE 'PASSION' OF CHRIST?

We do not speak of Love Week, or Agape Week, or Eros Week. We speak of Passion Week.

You cannot speak of redemption and ignore the cost that can only be paid by passion.

Passion starts where knowledge ends. It is an existential position which moves, or drives, one to go beyond what is directly available, beyond what is readily understandable, and beyond what is easily obtainable.

Passion — that with which we make a difference to what could turn out either way.

Passion — that through which we undergo what cannot be changed.

Passion — that by which we arrive at some far shore that is inexplicable.

THE KOAN OF THE CROSS= He Joined Us In Our Desolation

Letter from John Chryssavgis=

“Jamie

[1] You know? Of course, people prefer to say that ultimate hope doesn't die. Because it is scary to say otherwise. Or else, they are clinging to an empty, pietistic concept of hope in God. The truth is, when you go through this [as Christ did on the Cross] then it certainly does not feel as if there is ultimate hope. I mean to say, it would be like Christ going through the Cross, only because he knew he'd pull off the resurrection three days later. That would be a lie! He was resurrected BECAUSE he died, hopeless, shamed.

[2] Few accept this, you say. Well, of course. What did you expect? It hurts like hell. Even those who know what you say is true would prefer it to be otherwise; it would hurt less. And you are right= it becomes either a turning point or final ruin; sometimes, it feels so scary not knowing which will ensue!

[3] Yes, you are right to say – and here I do agree – that monasticism has for the most part lost that; it has become institutionalized..”

HEART AND WORLD

The very term 'heart' loses all meaning if you confine it to God and remove it from the world. The heart is sent by God to the world. Its inner is for the outer.

The world is the fate that the heart cannot escape; and the world, when assumed by passion, becomes the destiny to which the heart is called.

The calling comes 'through Christ, in the Spirit.'

Action in fidelity to the Cross is the core of Christian witness.

To be nailed to the place of hell in this world-- where something immense for the heart's victory in God is at stake. In this place, where you know you must act for something at stake, you sweat 'white beads' and even blood.

Let our stand be clear cut.

To honour Christ, in action, with blood.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

1,

John the Baptist refers to Yeshua's baptising in terms of Redemption's Fire of Spirit, and contrasts it with his own baptising in terms of Salvation's Water of Life.

"As the people were in expectation, and all persons questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire' [Luke, 3, 15-16].

Yeshua tells the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well what the 'living waters' in Salvation are really like= "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I will give.. will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" [John, 4, 5-14].

Yeshua cryptically refers to the coming ordeal which is necessary to kindle the Fire of Spirit in the world and on earth when he speaks of his own 'baptism' into the Daemonic Fate of the Cross= "There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress until it is over" [Luke, 12, 50].

Though Yeshua has consented to be subject to the old Way of Salvation, in allowing John the Forerunner to baptise him in the Jordan River, the new Way of Redemption is the baptism in Fire that looms over him, and distresses him until it is finished. His words on the Cross, 'it is accomplished', refer to this finish. Only then has he done what had to be done. Yet it is so distressingly hard, he asked to be spared it in Gethsemane, and almost buckled under it as he went up the hill to Golgotha.

Even for the Messiah, this deed would not have been possible unless he had been immersed in the Fire of Spirit. Unbeknownst to the world, he was fighting the flames of hell not with the Light of the Logos, not with heavenly brightness and glory, but with the Fire of Spirit, the Daemonic God who is "a consuming Fire" [Paul, Hebrews, 12, 29].

2,

Dostoyevsky's novels more than 'give the devil his due', indeed, these supreme stories of the 'lower depths' allow the devil to speak in multiple voices of doubt, despair, and nihilism, putting the case against God with stunning power [Ivan in 'The Brothers Karamazov' is only one example], a power so great, intellectually such voices cannot be answered.. No religious doctrine can address, much less confront, these abysses that open up beneath our feet as we walk over seemingly solid, but in actuality, flimsy ground.. Dostoyevsky, whose faith fathomed every nook and cranny of dark

and abysmal places in human existence, constantly asked, can anything in religion embrace and dent 'the worst case scenario' that he honestly exposed and explored? In his novels, Dostoyevsky found that no Light, mystical or rational, could penetrate the mystery of what in the world is so terrible, it defeats every attempt at reclamation, reform, repair.

Dostoyevsky was already disturbed by, and wrestling with, a numinous sense that even the very best of humanity, indeed precisely the very best, will inevitably be laid low in the world when he visited the Bale Gallery and saw Holbein's painting of Christ being taken down from the Cross.

This depiction affected him profoundly. "No hint of resurrection: no hint of anything but the obliteration of the best thing that had ever happened. There is a replica hanging in Rogozhin's house, of which Myshkin observes that it might cause people to lose their faith. Ippolit saw it there and was overcome by it. 'It suggests the conception of a dark, insistent, unreasoning, and eternal power to which everything is in subjugation.' [The painting conveys] the hopelessness of it all.. a this-worldly despair" [p 120, A. Boyce Gibson, 'The Religion of Dostoyevsky', 1973].

There is something real in this fatal 'blow' to faith. The description of a 'dark, insistent, unreasoning and eternal power to which everything is subjected', without any hint of resurrection from its devastating obliteration of the best that can happen in this world, is true. It is a moment in time and an aspect of existence that hits everyone.

It is the end of the line, and in the passionate who go all the way, it comes sooner rather than later. For the many people who eschew passion, it comes later, in the dread of death, when they desperately try to see something in the abyss below, and find that the terrible reality of nothing is all that is staring back up at them.. Whether immediately, or postponed, the point comes when all hope in life in this world crashes into a huge and implacable obstacle opposing it, literally not permitting it..

Like Myshkin, we can retreat into madness to avoid facing the icy clear reality of final defeat for the best in us, yet this tragedy comes to everyone irrespective of any and all attempts to deny it. In the quiet moments, it is there, whispering to us out of alien shadows with no source.

Not even the blind frenzy and sick fantasy of consumerism in the false earthly paradise can expel the ghost at the feast, turning it into a crazed dance of the dead.

3,

The tragedy is real. It is more real than anything else in the world.. In a certain sense, it is the world.

The only question is in regard to its finality.

Is it the last word which will be pronounced on the world?

Or, could this end of all hope for the world paradoxically become the start of a new chance for the world?

One thing is undeniable. No difference to the way things are, the way things work, is possible that bypasses this chillingly remorseless reality of the world, this most heart-destroying truth.

To stay in the world, and endeavour to change it, means coming face to face with this nameless and faceless force that 'subjects' us and everything to its destructive purpose. If it is evaded, then spirituality has to abandon the world. Some spiritualities hope to retreat into nature as the cities burn= but the toxic smoke will kill all of the earth.

For anyone of heroic temper, for any spirituality gambling on the human heart, the reality that killed the Messiah is the sticking point.

Face it, and we can remain on contested ground.

Refuse to face it, and we are not really here, but in various kinds, and stages, of retreat.

Flee it, and it comes after us, and we expend our substance in trying to get away from it..

Falling to our knees to demand a divine rescuer to ferry us out of 'here' to some better place 'there' is the most ignominious defeat of human nobility..

The sticking point is the reality conveyed by Christ's defeat on the Cross, his broken body taken down, stripped of life, its fire put out.

This is the sticking point for passion.

If we run from this via religious or secular escapes, then we are swept away by terror. The hostile reality has 'put the run on us', as my grandmother would put it. Our life becomes running to get away from the pitiless force right behind us, always catching up.

We cannot run.

What is mocking the world's possibility?

For many people, the very existence of evil – however they explain it, or fail to explain it – is the deal breaker with any God.

Father Zosima= God has made himself like us from love.

What love can defeat the power of evil in the world?

4,

The Fire of God has different roles over time, it changes in its activity. There are at least 3 different ways in which the Fire 'deals with' the evil power. Each is necessary, yet only the last is decisive.

[1] Isaiah, 10, 12; 16-18=

"Yahweh.. will punish what comes from the king of Assyria's boastful heart.. Yahweh is going to send a wasting sickness on [the Assyrian king's] stout warriors; beneath his stout plenty, a burning will ignite like a consuming fire. The [God who is the] Light of Israel will become a Fire, and [Israel's] Holy One a Flame burning and devouring thorns and briars.. [This Fire] will destroy the luxuriance of [the Assyrian king's] forest and his orchard. ..his soul and body.. will be like a sick man passing away.."

In this passage -- referring to the much feared Assyrian Empire and the harsh armies that spread its reign of terror all over the Middle East -- the Fire of Spirit attacks the evil in the hearts of those doing evil, and vitiates them from within, so that they can no longer keep going in their crimes.

Paul Tillich argued something similar= that evil contains the seed of its own downfall.. In the Jewish Bible, there are times when God repays evil with evil= hellish fires are met with destruction by the Fire of Spirit. As in 1 Samuel, 16, 14-15, God 'sends an evil spirit' to wreak havoc on certain evil doers. This means the Fire of Holiness will in fact do evil to the agents and servants of the evil spirit. God, seen or unseen, thanked or unthanked, will push hard against the edifices of evil, to topple them.

But this is no real answer to the pre-eminence and pre-dominance of evil in the world. At best, as happened in World War Two with Hitler's Nazi Empire, it puts a stop to the advance of evil at a certain time and place, but the fall of the Assyrian king did not protect against the rise of Hitler, and the fall of Hitler will doubtless not protect against future evil doing that, for a season, takes over the world.

Further manifestations of evil will keep rising up to plague the world until the end of time.

Such 'giving of evil for evil' draws a line in the sand, to protect the world from complete take over by evil; none the less, necessary as it is, it cannot get rid of evil with any finality..

Every small boy wants God to zap the evil doers, and the evil spirit who has mastered them, 'once and for all.'

But it does not happen.

This 'solution' does not face the existential crisis brought by the sheer freedom of evil 'to do its thing' in the world. Getting rid of evil by superior force

meeting its force virtually descends to its level of operations, and even if protective in motive, fails to answer any of the questions and challenges that evil's operation in the world puts to the heart.

God requires a more inward wrestling with evil. The heart is fated to have to confront evil more interiorly, as David does in the Psalms. He says to Yahweh= "You require truth in the inward parts" [Psalms, 51, 6].

[2] Isaiah, 33, 14-16=

"..horror and fear seizes the godless. Which of us can live with this devouring fire? Which of us exist in everlasting flames? He who acts with integrity, who speaks sincerely, and rejects excessive profit got by extortion and oppression, who waves away bribes from his hands, shuts suggestions of murder out of his ears and closes his eyes against crime."

Contrary to the theologies, East and West, that see heaven as Light, and hell as burning, devouring, consuming, Fire, so that fieriness and hellishness are equated, this passage in Isaiah presents a different reality.

Even the righteous must be, and will be, burned in the Fire of Spirit, as well as the unrighteous; this burning does not spare the former, and confine itself to the latter.

The Fire of Spirit tests and proves what mettle of strength and truthfulness of intent we are made of in the heart. The steel of its backbone, and the raging of its love, is forged in Flame= or, the trials of existence causes meltdown and discouragement; or a more positive sell-out of uprightness to weakness and falsity of heart.

Such burning scorches righteous and unrighteous no different, because its task, as can be seen in so many psalms of David, is to alert people to 'what heart is within them.' The burning confirms and intensifies the righteous heart within, yet it also exposes and disquiets the unrighteous heart within.

This burning is necessary, because it helps the person differentiate the good and ill, truth and falsity, within their heart, and wrestle with its active impulsions, its conflicts, its ins and outs, its ups and downs. The person begins to understand the motives, and dynamics, of the heart that drives their action.

Some commentators interpret the process of differentiation brought by the Fire of Spirit as an eternal division. Those proved worthy, go to heaven, those proved unworthy, go to hell. There is a final accounting. Worthiness is like earning wages= if you earn big wages on earth, that is what you have in the afterlife; if you earn little or no wages on earth, that is what you have in the afterlife.

Yahweh declares that, in Redemption, there is no such accounting. Our sins, indeed our tragedy, does not determine, like cause and effect, our eternal 'station.'

Paul, 1, Corinthians, 3, 12-15=

"The foundation.. is Jesus Christ.. on this foundation you can build in gold, silver, precious stones, or in wood, grass and straw, but whatever the material, the work of each builder is going to be revealed by fire.. That day will begin with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If his structure stands up to it, he will get his wages; if it is burned down, he will be the loser, and though he is saved himself, it will be as one who has gone through fire."

St Paul is more merciful than the view which insists upon strict accounting, because he says that the Fire of Spirit which assesses the worthiness of our work will never the less still save the person, even if their action in the world has been proved unworthy. Thus heaven is open to the worthy and unworthy alike, yet the worthy 'have something to show for their time on earth' whilst the unworthy have 'nothing to show.'

But that is only true if God honours the righteous, and dishonours the unrighteous, eternally.

Whilst there is certainly a difference in heart between the one person who has spent their life 'fighting the good fight', and the other person who has spent their life 'giving in to evil, within and without, and giving up on the good, within and without', would God really want the former eternally celebrated and the latter eternally shamed?

This is not a possibility, given the Reversal brought by the Cross. The redeemed are given over to a mystery more big and more profound than even the truthful revelation of whose heart is true and whose heart is false. There is something more than the revealing of righteous and unrighteous.

A truer way to understand purgation by the Fire of Spirit is that it is not eternal, but is focused on this life, and even if it continues into the afterlife, it does not go on forever. There is no cut-off at which point we are stuck with the high wages/bright jewels or low wages/burned up wood that we have attained up until then.

But the more important point, entirely focused on this life, is the realisation that in each and every one of us are the 'two hearts', and that means in every righteous person there is unrighteousness, and in every unrighteous person there is righteousness. Therefore, purgation is to help us become aware of these contrary hearts, and take responsibility for them, so that we more consciously stand up for the one and with-stand the other.

We do need to feel, and understand, the very different burning in our heart when we are true and worthy and when we are false and unworthy. This, in turn, will lead us into unexpected abysses, recesses, mansions, of the heart.

What the purification by the Fire of Spirit really inaugurates, and makes us aware of, is the need to reach singularity of heart. But no person attains this singular heart simply through the admirable, and very laudable, endeavours to walk the good road and fight the good fight, or loses the singular heart through the despicable, and very condemnable, walking and fighting on the evil path.

The paradox of the Cross ends all such contrasting, division, duality, as everlasting. It inverts the prior need for differentiating, by going an unexpected route towards the new heart that is singular. This final crowning of the heart is not attained through the necessary, but temporary, difference of righteous and unrighteous.

For if only the righteous could attain singularity, then the unrighteous would never attain it.

The Cross will not tolerate this ungenerosity, this judgemental separating, as final.

The Cross attains the new singular heart more mysteriously.

The Fire of Spirit does not kindle the human heart at the level where some people's work is proved worthy whilst other people's work is proved unworthy, but at the more fundamental level underneath that valid, but relative, differentiation= the level where we are all broken.

It is this brokenness which the Cross joins suffering hands with and lays powerful hands on.

The Fire of Spirit kindles us in our brokenness of heart, our final defeat, not our temporary victory.

This might offend the righteous, because they justly claim they have 'made an effort.' But it is not that straightforward. Yes, they have – and the unrighteous have not. But, we are all inter-dependent. The righteous were helped by many others in making their effort. The unrighteous were hindered by many others in not making any effort. We infect each other, limit each other, and no one simply, out of nothing, decides to not try the heart, whilst others, out of nothing, decide to try the heart. We carry things for each other, and let down each other. No person is a moral island and a 'purely' individual moral agent.

Some people get a chance to shine in Eros whilst other people get no chance. Some people get a chance to burn in the Daemoniac whilst other people get no chance.

To those to whom more Light, more Fire, is given, from them more is asked..

But so intricate is the inter-weaving of sanctity and sin, holiness and tragedy, among all people affecting and affected by one another, any attempt to keep accurate accounts of who is big and who is small are doomed to failure. We do not see into the human heart as God does. An unrighteous person may be carrying damage from his past we cannot 'calibrate' in its burden on him, and so some small deed he does out of true heart might be more worthy of respect than the ostensibly bigger deed of the seemingly bigger heart. How hard is it for this person? We do not know, really.. What if more temptation were placed on the righteous, would they crack? What if less temptation were placed on the unrighteous, would they improve? Only God knows..

The Fire of Spirit is Truth, and it will differentiate the Truth from the Lie, yet this same Fire will do more, it will Suffer and it will Love to the bottom of fathomless Abysses.

Yahweh in Psalms, 82, 6-7= "I have made you like gods, but you will die like men, and fall as princes."

We were created for divinisation, but tragically fell in our primal nobility, and hence die like any ordinary human animal.

This is why divinisation not only proves the heart in righteousness, but in redeeming it, accepts its tragedy. We are divinised not in spite of, but through, our physical, creaturely limitation, and the tragedy of the crown we threw into the dust.

We will be raised in our brokenness.

This brokenness, and its consequences, are in everyone. The unrighteous manifest it directly, the righteous manifest it indirectly= if they descend further into the heart, they will confront the lost god-likeness, the tragic fall of our nobility, the worm food we are fated to become. The paradox, at depth, defeats everyone.

At this underlying, profound level, we are all in the same boat.

We must all rise together.

[3] Paul, Romans, 5, 5-8=

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.. While we were still weak, ..Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps even for a good man one will dare to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

While we were yet defunct, all of us no different in foundation, the Fire of Spirit accomplished a new and ultimate deed through the Cross of Christ.

5,

The new Fire of the Spirit is a power of depth, not a power of height.

In the height, the things of divinity are impregnable, radiant, joyous.

In the depth, the things of divinity are put at fundamental risk, black, suffering.

Depth is for life or death, heaven or hell.

Depth is the life risked to death, the heaven risked to hell.

Depth is the life only won from death, the heaven only won from hell.

In this process, the losers become the victors.

That is all of us.

6,

Only the Cross can defeat the evil power ruling this world.

We need to undergo its mysteries, to demonstrate its muscle.

The Light-Bringer= the sanctity of the past.

The Fire-Bearer= the holiness of the future.

If we don't try it, how can it happen?

ONLY PASSION BRINGS US TO HOLINESS

“Dear Jamie,

In regard to your passionate descriptions and probings of ‘passion’..

I think what perhaps most Orthodox church people don’t get is the active passion, heartfelt doing and suffering – although individuals certainly do ‘do’ it, but no-one describes it in this way.

Passion is only used in Orthodox church tradition to refer to “the passions” – the things we suffer from, and that hurt us [greed, lust, pride, and so on]. Although everyone refers to Christ’s Passion – which clearly does not mean the same.

I think people mainly think of Christ’s Passion as Him allowing this to happen to redeem us, by paying the price for us – but it is not presented as an action, but as passivity [that ‘pass’ word again]: groaning, he accepts the punishment.

That’s why I think we get a lot of ‘gentle Jesus meek and mild’ and what Fr John refers to as ‘whey-faced Christians’ – but this is a travesty of Christianity.

Karin”

Christ declares= “I lay down my life.. No one takes it from me. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and take it again” [John, 10, 17-18].

The most powerful heart deed of God acting in and through humanity is misunderstood as passivity, simply as ‘putting up with it’ passively. Christ takes the hit in order to confront it at its point of origin in human existence.

Christ’s Cross= where divine passion inter-sects human passion, to be reversed by its failure, and to reverse its failure.

No more active deed than this will ever be forthcoming..

It saves nothing because it permits everything.

It redeems the basis for everything, revealing the one thing that can reclaim the lost chance of humanity= to be God’s heart in the human heart.

This is the divine-humanity the Messiah recovers for us, and passes on to us.

CHANGE IN THE DEPTHS

The root of the term 'redemption' means= 'the act of repurchase, as of something sold; recovery by repayment, as of something pledged.'

Redemption is not so much 'deliverance from' sinfulness, but more a matter of coming good in the end through a process that undercuts evil by excavating the good buried in it; by uncovering the 'grounds' why good lapsed into sin through evil's power, it finds something more powerful than evil to stand on.

This is the immeasurable change in the depth of the heart effected by Christ's Descent into Hell.

This breaks the devil's power.

In saving, things in darkness – human and demonic – are brought into the divine Light; in redeeming, the darkness itself is plumbed, or searched out in depth, and changed at foundational source by the divine Fire. Thus, heaven really is born from hell.

Christianity as a whole has not yet penetrated this great mystery.

THE THIRD WAY OF THIS WORLD

Christian 'other worldliness' is cowardly, and ultimately a great evil..

Of course, there is a kind of 'worldliness' that is also evil, because it consumes, ravages, possesses, destroys, the earth and the world. Christ espoused a Third Way beyond the opposites of 'other worldly' versus 'worldliness.' He counselled us to be 'in' the world but not 'of' the world.

Be 'in' via love, suffering love, the passion of love.

Whatever you lose here and now, for the sake of loving the world passionately, is everlasting gain.

Whatever you hold on to, possess, 'have', consume, here and now, causing you to betray the call to love the world, is everlasting loss.

Only those who lose the world for evil ends regain the world for the ends of love.

AN OLD LETTER FROM A FRIEND

In cleaning this chaotic stable of years' accumulation, I find things. I found a letter from a friend, reacting to something I had sent him=

"Depth only comes from a wound – yes, I agree. Yes I believe that is true. We can't even avoid it. If we avoid it, it only hurts more. Sometimes I believe that life is only a process whereby we gradually learn to embrace this wound. It is still so difficult though."

Amen.

It is always worse than we ever imagined it could be.

But it is true that, in the Daemonic, "life is only a process whereby we gradually learn to embrace this wound."

You are dying for the Daemonic and you will only be raised for the Daemonic.

Not many people, and certainly not many Christians, have got that two-sided paradox yet..

Both the ancient Celts and Jews start the New Year in winter, death, dark, and move onward into summer. Unlike the 'naturalistic' year that dawns and sets, the Daemonic year starts in the finish of things, the sunset, and then travels to the dawn, to the beginning of things. This is also West to East along the 'bad black road of worldly difficulties and war.'

If you are suffering inexplicably and unbearably, you have been switched out of the Eros Way, and put on the Daemonic Road.

This is also Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection.

Bear and endure in the hard place.

THE PLACE OF DESPAIR EMBRACED BY THE CROSS

1,

Letter from John Chryssavgis=

“The Cross is not ‘hope enough.’ It quite simply is! And it is ALL we need to know.

And in fact it is all we have.

But, Jamie, I have come to the conclusion that Nobody wants to hear that. Very few come close to saying that. Ironically, so many experience it. It is our only truth; the rest is crap.”

And=

“You see, Jamie, people like to HEAR about rejecting consolations, etc. But when it comes to the crunch, it is hard for people to acknowledge that this rejection – the Cross – is in IN ITSELF the resurrection; that there is simply no other way.

But to acknowledge that, you really have to be broken into pieces; you really have to have given up everything, including hope of resurrection. You basically have to drown, even if you are holding a blue plastic bag. That’s when the shoe appears.”

2,

My friend refers to an incident in Crete.

It was a stormy day, and my wife and I were on a wave swept shore. I was trying to shout over the wind, warning her not to drop her purse, as she stood a little way into the lapping water, but all this achieved was to distract her, so that she could do nothing to prevent the swirling water lapping at her feet from stealing away a blue beach shoe, which the waves carried out to sea.. Regretting having caused this, I dove into the water and swam after the retreating blue object, bobbing on the swell, and retreating ever further out into the bay.

I kept to the pursuit, swimming for all I was worth, to catch up.

I took no notice that, with the winds and the tides so heightened, I was soon far out in the bay, quite far from shore. The people standing there were little stick figures.. As I finally caught up with the blue object that I had slowly been overtaking, I realised two things= it was a discarded blue plastic bag full of rubbish, and I was probably several hundred yards from the shore. And I was totally out of breath..

Then I made a dispiriting discovery. My shortness of breath prevented me from breathing properly, and this in turn, prevented me from relaxing and floating. I kept going under the waves, as I gasped for breath. I had never realised how swimmers drown, but now that I was gasping for air, and could not stay afloat, I understood only too well.

I also understood there was no 'intervention' that could save me.. I had to disregard my breathlessness, and despite it, swim for shore. Bobbing up and down in one spot, I was actually beginning to drown.

With almighty curses uttered in the heart, I forced myself to swim. I made exertions on zero breath in my lungs. It was an effort beyond all effort, the effort that the will makes when all effort is impossible. This made me very angry, yet anger was part of the will that kept going despite being finished.

When I staggered out of the water and fell onto the sand, my wife was the only person left on the storm darkened beach. It took ages before I recovered my breath. We went up a hill..

Sitting in a taverna overlooking the angry sea, my anger had not abated. I was not grateful to have survived. I was fuming that I had to go to that extreme to survive.

The next morning, the storm had abated, and we went back down onto the shore. My sense of humour had not returned, but what I saw waiting for me as I strolled to the place where Myfanwy had got flustered in the waves, helped a little.

On a high rock set back from the strand, about ten feet above the ground, sat the blue shoe. It was upright on the rock, and sat there with an insouciant air, not a care in the world.

I finally started to laugh when retrieving it..

THE CROSS AS VICTORY

Christ is risen, it is said on Easter night.

He is risen, indeed!

In an inverse way, the Cross 'is' the victory, the turnaround in the depths.. If we could but see the Cross, and the Descent into Hell, in their actuality, then we would see them as the low point that is actually the point of break through; and that would be resurrection enough.. It will seem irrational, but it is as if we only need the actual Resurrection because we fail to see the Cross/Descent as already the victory..

This means we should not skim over the Cross and Descent into Hell in order to get to the Resurrection; but rather we should allow that 3 days to be the rest of our life..

Too many people think Christ suffered so they won't have to; thus they tolerate the Cross and Descent, but basically refuse to undergo it with Christ, as it asks from them. For, he suffered not so we won't have to, but to bring us through the really deep suffering where we are stuck. In this deep stuck suffering – 'hell' we rightly call it, speaking experientially, not theologically – the victory occurs.

Thus, it is inaccurate to think of Cross as defeat, and Resurrection as victory. No, on the contrary, the Cross is the defeat which paradoxically and unaccountably turns into victory, and that means the Resurrection is confirmation on the outer of what has already come to pass on the inner.

The Resurrection acts as a gateway, inviting us to trust the depth process, and therefore let it be re-enacted in our life.

St John Chrysostom's Easter Homily=

“..Let none lament his poverty,
for the universal kingdom is revealed.
Let none bewail his transgressions,
for the light of forgiveness has risen from the tomb.

He has destroyed death by undergoing death.
He has despoiled hell by descending into hell.

..Hell was filled with bitterness when it met Thee face to face below;
filled with bitterness, for it was brought to nothing;
filled with bitterness, for it was mocked;
filled with bitterness, for it was overthrown;
filled with bitterness, for it was put in chains.
Hell received a body, and encountered God.
It received earth, and confronted heaven.

O death, where is your sting?
O hell, where is your victory?"

Holy Saturday Hymns=

Today Sheol-Hades cried out groaning: "Would that I had not received the One born of Mary, for he came upon me and loosed my power; He shattered the gates of brass; the souls, which I held captive of old, as God He raised up."

Today Gehenna-Hell cried out groaning: "My authority is dissolved; ..this One I am powerless to contain; with Him I lose all those over whom I had ruled."

Today the Void of Nothing cried out groaning: "My power has been trampled on; the Shepherd has been crucified, and Adam He raised up. ..all those I had the power to swallow, I have disgorged.."

St Macarios of Egypt=

"When you hear that the Messiah in the old days delivered souls from hell and prison and that he descended into hell and performed a glorious deed, do not think that all these events are far from your soul. So the Messiah comes into the souls that seek him, into the depth of the heart's hell, and there commands death, saying: 'Release the imprisoned souls which have sought me and which you hold by force.' And he shatters the heavy stones weighing on the soul, opens graves, raises the true dead from death, brings the imprisoned soul from the dark prison. Is it ..[impossible] for God to enter death and, even more, into the depth of the heart and to call out dead Adam from there? If the sun, being created, passes everywhere through windows and doors, even to the caves of lions and the holes of creeping creatures, and comes out without any harm, the more so does God ..enter caves and abodes in which death has settled, and also souls, and having released Adam from there, remains unfettered by death. Similarly, rain coming down from the sky reaches the nethermost parts of the earth, moistens and renews the roots there and gives birth to new shoots."

THE MESSIAH'S DESCENT INTO HELL

Christ's Cross, Descent Into Hell, and Resurrection, is the 'existential trinity' that constitutes the Messianic Mystery. Like other radical and fundamental shifts described in the Jewish Bible, it takes 3 Days.

It would seem that no one in Western Christian tradition speaks of the Descent Into Hell. The phrase used in the West, 'Harrowing of Hell', implies that hell is 'upset, traumatized, shocked, disturbed' when the Messiah enters and seizes hold of it. Nevertheless, the real purpose and consequence of this unexpected confrontation is not understood. Indeed, many Westerners who believe in the dualistic reward and punishment scenario reject any such mysterious event. The gulf between heaven and hell cannot be bridged. You have one chance in this life to book your future dwelling place, in heaven as one of those who are 'saved', or in hell as one of those who are 'damned.' The implication that the Cross ends this dualism, that by going through hell the Messiah makes it the most reliable 'stairway to heaven', is too much of a reversal against the run of play. St Isaac of Syria understands this reversal= "the Cross is the judgement on judgement."

Things are not much clearer in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition. For though it is spoken of by Macarios of Egypt in the early days of desert spirituality, none of the other monastics follows his pioneering descent into the unfathomable abyss of the heart, and over time monasticism as a whole loses all connection with the Daemonic, and becomes instead a ladder of ascent, as in St John Climacos, and is codified as such by Evagrios, with the growing differentiation of the monastic path into 3 steps-- [1] the practical or ascetic, [2] the visionary or illuminative, and [3] the mystical or divinizing. In effect, later monasticism becomes a yoga of ascent to Eros, the Light which bestows life, goodness, beauty, abundance of philanthropy; it ceases being the descent to the hellish depth of the heart in all humanity, to change its basis.

There is an Orthodox ikon of Christ violently seizing Adam and Eve by their wrists -- of their own strength they cannot change the truth of the human condition -- and dragging them out of deeps of deadening, hellishness, vacancy. Christ's Resurrection resurrects Adam and Eve; Christ brings humanity through, and raises humanity, with him.

But what is Christ's heroic battle and victory in hell?

It is not to be understood as Christ 'saving' humanity for the next world.

Nor is it to be understood as Christ regenerating human nature in this world, by freeing it of the sickness of fallenness [the impact of sin, death, the evil one], in preparation for transforming us through uniting Christ's divine humanity with our created humanity. Such healing is ontological, focused on the soul, and concerned with life and death. It misses the existential drama of the heart.

The Messiah's Descent into Hell, in its heroic deed of active and suffering passionate love, changes the deep existential 'heart ground' on which humanity stands, and from which humanity acts. It removes the ancient block on the heart acting in this world for the sake of the future world.

The Cross initiates the Descent Into Hell and the Resurrection completes it, crowns it, fulfills it. In a sense, the Descent Into Hell is central, and the Cross is the gateway into it, while the Resurrection is the gateway out of it into the New Land of Heart.

As the Hell descended into by the Messiah is the tragedy in all humanity, so the Resurrection points to the redeeming of that tragedy for all humanity, over the whole span of history. The Resurrection inaugurates the New Age in which there is a movement toward the New Land of Heart for all humanity.

The key transition, then, is the Descent Into Hell. It is not just central, but crucial. To overlook its dramatic significance, as the end of the old way and the start of the new way of heart is to miss the Messianic Redemption.

Apostles Creed= "He descended into hell." Paul, Ephesians, 4, 9= "He descended to the dead." 1 Peter, 4, 6= "Why [did the Messiah] preach to the dead? In order that although in body they received the fate common to men, they might in their spirit be alive with the life of God."

These cryptic but stark lines are pointing toward the existential meaning of the 'Descent Into Hell' that occurs after the Cross and before the Resurrection. This necessarily intervenes between the going down and the rising up, the dying and the rebirth. That is why the process takes 3 days. It is like a pregnancy, compressed. It is happening underground. We see what leads into it, we see what emerges from it.

Only in the heart do we apprehend what passes in the gap between the initial death and the final rebirth, because the heart undergoes it.

PASSING THROUGH HELL

[A] Myfanwy's Thoughts On A Cold Autumn Day

Over breakfast in a café, I told Myfanwy that, having poured out my life blood in the passion writings, I am now empty. I have forgotten all that was said, and can say no more!

She laughed, and as always with these crises, told me the fallow times are necessary to a new spring..

Then she gave me her summary of all that we had worked on in Crete.

[1] The second passion book is about how you deal with the pain of existence.

This pain makes some people evasive= they try to laugh it off.
This pain makes some people bitter= they take it out on others.
This pain makes some people moralistic= they have to apportion blame.
This pain destroys some people= leaving them in despair.

[2] The quandary is, how to let suffering deepen you-- so you have a fellow feeling with humanity, and you cease playing games but are left standing naked before God.

[B] A Reply From Karin

"Thanks Jamie, YEP – quite right, how do you let it deepen you rather than mess you up. It seems to me that this is dependent on God's action/the action of the Holy Spirit who 'groans within us' until the day that the 'sons of God are revealed.' One way is if we reject bitterness, moralism, despair and evasiveness: some people, for example, choose bitterness and seem to enjoy it. They even make it part of their identity. These are the traps we have to avoid. We have to avoid identifying ourselves with bitterness, moralism, despair, and evasiveness, and say 'no' to them.

In fact, we have to be able to tolerate not having an easy identity because there might be quite a long gap before our true naked selves start to be more apparent to us and before we assent to living as our naked selves. This long gap is where trust comes in -- trusting that we will come through in the end. God trusts us. He trusts that we will come through. We don't trust ourselves however – or rather, we can't tolerate the suspension of knowledge and so opt for an apparently easier solution – such as bitterness. For this transformative action [the becoming of ourselves] to take place, it is not necessary to 'know' the Holy Spirit consciously, or to believe in any creed, though that might make it easier, or it might block it; what is necessary is to go through the process – to walk the narrow way into and through the dark and unknown.

In this walking no conventional form of living helps – not the social networks, friends and family – although the best of them may encourage – not the conventional life of any kind, not the church [except in the sense of signaling that there is such a road to walk and in some advice as to how to do it, in its liturgies, and prayers-- at least there you don't have to pretend 'to be on top.' And very few priests – and even fewer startzi – can help, because there is no recipe for this walking – it has absolutely nothing to do with 'doing the right thing', or 'being good.' It is essentially a journey taken alone with only the Spirit as guide – the Spirit who whispers and groans in our hearts and in the heart of every person, however corrupt, however sick; however great, however small. If we are attentive we will hear his voice.”

WHAT RESURRECTION MEANS

What does the Messiah's Resurrection actually mean for us?

Given that the Resurrection is impossible without the Cross..

Given that the Resurrection completes what the Cross inaugurates..

Given that the Resurrection is impossible without the Descent Into Hell..

Given that the Resurrection manifests the turn around, the reversal in the depth, accomplished by the Descent Into Hell.

The Messiah's Resurrection is not simply to reassure us about the next life. It signifies our remaking for this life.

The most radical message of the Resurrection is about overcoming the death and hell of passion which it suffers in this world, so that raised from that tragedy, passion can plant heaven on earth, and even plant heaven in hell, in this world of time and space and matter and history.

THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION

I have a fellow lecturer at work who was a child preacher of a rather fundamentalist, or evangelical, Christianity. He threw it over as he grew older. As an adult, he is very open, tolerant [in the real sense], and friendly. The students love him, because he is so truly accessible. He is someone who never courts trouble, and never judges. He reacts to diversity with real interest..

I gave him a lift a while back, and we discussed Easter in the car. He told me that even as a child, the thing in the Easter story that moved him was Good Friday. It had 'pathos', he said. He still felt that way.. Somehow the Sunday Resurrection is not as moving as the Friday Passion of the Cross.. He is the only person I have met in a long time who shares my feeling about this. He asked me what I reckoned about why this feeling exists in us, because he has not been able to delve it.

I could only share with my friend what has crystallised for me out of this paradox.

Good Friday, and what leads up to it, moves us at the deepest because it addresses the hell we are all in, deep in the heart. Through Christ's passion, God shares our heartbreak about God, about life, about our futility and dereliction. In our deepest heart hell, we believe the devil has won his wager with God [in the Book of Job]. God takes all this on, rather than remaining above it. It is not sufficient even to be 'with' us; Christ must be 'in' the same brokenness of heart we are deeply in, 'down' in the very ground of the human heart. On the Cross, he declares this going all the way 'in' to our hell when he repeats David's famous cry, 'My God, why have you forsaken me.' The hell is starting to bite, at that very moment. His Descent Into Hell completes this journey begun on the Cross.

The problem with the Resurrection of Christ is that it leaves us out. It is 'his' Resurrection, not ours. We are not yet in that place he reached, but still in the hell into which he descended, to effect a change there. But this change has not yet happened for us.

Christian Tradition, East and West, has misinterpreted the Resurrection. The idea that it guarantees survival of physical death is not its real meaning, because humankind has had assurances of a Spirit World beyond the physical realm into which people go after death since the beginnings of time. Moreover, the Old Testament also gives assurances of this. The prophet Elijah going in the fiery chariot straight from earth to heaven is one such; but many Jewish commentators point out that when Moses was told the divinity confronting him was the 'God of the living', this means that some kind of ongoing 'aliveness' in God is more ultimate than the grave.

Even if we say Christ's Resurrection 'proves' these old 'intimations of immortality', that still misses something vital.

The Greeks love the Resurrection largely for pagan reasons= it exemplifies their ancient love of Life in battle with Death, and Life triumphant over Death. Their 'Zorba' tendency.. Zorba the Greek embraces life with both hands, and faces death in the same indomitable way-- he dies standing up, accepting and defying death in one life-affirming gesture. That feeling and motif of life-affirmation is old in Greek culture, and the Resurrection carries it. The 'sting', the 'pangs', of death are overcome by the Resurrection.

However, there is a more Jewish understanding of Christ's Resurrection. It's what came to me as I was discussing it in the car with my friend.

The Messiah, in the Cross and Descent into Hell, reforges the connection with God in the very place where it is most broken. This place is the deep heart.

Reforging the link to God in the place where it is most broken means restoring to humanity our passion, and rendering our passion no longer stopped by suffering, nor intimidated by death.

The message to our ruined heart passion is, if you follow Christ, and become a Christ, then like him your suffering and death will not extinguish your flame, but will plant it as a seed in the depth of the world.

You will burn bright after the suffering and death that comes to all those who trust heart passion, and live by it; and sparks like seeds planted in the ground will remain in the world, to go on growing and transfiguring everything, after you are gone.

What is lost and frozen in despair in us, deeper even than all the guilt and shame of sin, is our calling to redeem the world.

We are Resurrected to become God's organ of fire in the world.

Thus, as the Cross is in time, so the Resurrection is in time. The Resurrection inaugurates and is the beginning of a new age, a new time. In Hebrew, one of the names of the Messiah is 'dawn.'

THE HEROISM OF THE CROSS

1,

It is one thing to change sin, by changing the way we act.

There is a more radical problem which is far harder to dent.

This is to remove the 'grip' of evil on the human condition in the very 'ground' where it takes hold.

In the former case, something wrong is put right, error is corrected.

In the latter case, something much more profoundly amiss is exposed and challenged. The evil that holds the human 'basis' captive is overcome and the human depth is set free.

2,

Christ took upon himself the wrecked passion of humanity, for 'humanity is a passion'-- a venture, with a price, with a weight. Christ took on the wrecked passion of humanity, and if we follow Christ through these narrow straits, then he gives us our passion back restored in foundation and thus resurrected to do in the world what was always called to do. From the wreck of human passion, Christ gives us the divine-human passion.. In Christ, our passion is made fearless and unstinting. It is radicalized. It can pay the price, it can lift the weight..

Christianity's record on this heroism is patchy. Let us have more of this heroism, and let us make clear that it is not an optional extra, but is central to Christianity. For example, why did no Christians in America die trying to prevent Indigenous Natives being slaughtered in millions? The history of Christianity is ugly. Christ has been dishonoured.

3,

"I chose you. I appointed you to go on and bear fruit, fruit that will last.. If the world hates you, it hated me first.. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you out of the world, for that reason the world hates you.. As they persecuted me, they will persecute you. They will follow your teaching as little as they have followed mine" [John, 15, 16].

They hate you because you are trying to do God's work. Ultimately such hate comes from the devil. He wants to stop you.

In Christianity, West and East, true religion and authentic spirituality is feared and under attack from the institutional power structure and its lackeys.

The Christ-like is crucified, wherever it appears.

REDEMPTION IS NOT 'INDIVIDUAL'

God makes no promises to redeem individual lives in their short life span; the promise is to redeem all of us over the long haul [all of humanity over all of history]. The way all this adds up, and works out, will seem strange to us, at the end. We don't see this pattern at work now.. It is a storied pattern, to do with how lives are woven together in a fabric. That fabric woven in time has everlasting veracity and aliveness. It is what survives, when much folly and damage has faded away.

Mary's life was 'hidden in God.' To an extent, this is true of most of us, because our life can seemingly end in despair, and real ruin, yet redemption remains on track, and even our abject failure, as we judge it over the span of our 'individual' existence, still is a necessary and contributing part of the warp and woof of that strangely beautiful fabric.

At the end, seeing the whole at last, we may judge our own life differently.

EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN 'SHARE' OF SUFFERING

1,

Here is a paradox worth pondering.

The root term in Greek from which *daemonic* may have evolved is *eudaimonia* – happiness! It means, good fortune, your share of the Goodness of Eros predestined for you. Everyone has a share of the good fortune.. A Greek friend confirms that “*eudaimonia* means blessed with a good fortune or genius. It does indeed have the spiritual sense of providence – and sometimes the material sense of wealth.”

Over time, the ‘eu’ – meaning ‘good’ – got dropped, and Daemonic remained more as Fate which befalls us, and we do not choose. ‘What is meted out to each of us.’ None the less, it is still, in a sense, our share or our portion of suffering.. Yes, some people seem to get more than their fair share of wounding by Fate, existential and divine, yet the connotation of the term still suggests ‘you get a share, your share [of what you can bear? – though it may well feel unbearable], of the common fate of human suffering, and human tragedy.’

Christ on the Cross took on all of it.. But we each get our share of it, our portion of it, and it is up to us to use this fated suffering, this blow and wound of the Daemonic, for learning redemption.

Suffering, in short, is not punishment for sin – sometimes it is, in the sense that what we do has consequences, and so we bring harm onto our own head – but rather, suffering is the route to learning the mystery of redemption.

In Christ, we encounter a suffering God, and this is the deepening that can change our suffering into radical love for all humanity.

2,

This is why passion begins as acceptance= ‘to suffer it’ in Old English means ‘to accept it.’ It is so= so be it. This acceptance ‘takes to heart’ the ‘suffering position’ in which we are primordially existentially placed by God.

This is why the ‘Daemonic’ also refers to the evil God does to us, but for our good. In the Jewish Bible there is no pussy footing around the fact that God does good and God does evil; God announces himself as the author of both. However, since creation is a deed of pure generosity, of gratuitous goodness, it follows that whether God metes out our share of goodness or metes out our share of evil, it is for some more ultimate good we cannot fathom, and are not privy to. It is a matter of faith.

It is our suffering position which evokes, inspires, kindles, our true passion, and becomes the generator of our sacrifice, and also our creative genius.

This is why passion encompasses both the extremity of what is done to us that we cannot escape or alter, and the extremity of what we 'do' in reply that shakes the foundations.

Passion is marked, then, by the theme of not being able to do anything and doing the most crucial thing of all.

Passion is the source for the heroism of love.

God is a mystery of passion.

Passion= our fated suffering in the suffering of all humanity. It is our dignity, our worthiness, to carry this.

It is like the man who helped Christ carry the Cross up the hill. He was told to do it. He had not come to do it, as far as he was concerned. Yet Fate brought him, and events conspired to tell him, now, and here, do this!

God gives a different 'share' to each of us. We carry a different weight.

If you refuse your 'share' of suffering as a Christian, you refuse not only your own redemption, but also your calling to redeem the patch of time, the patch of the world, that has made you suffer.

This redemptive deed of yours, or mine, is unrepeatable – no one else can step into the breach for you, or for me.

If you do not step into the breach awaiting you, as your Fate, out of which you have the opportunity to carve out your destiny, then no one else can fill up the gap your absence opens up in the fabric of lives.

It is the same for me.

It is the same for each and every one of us.

Hence, the Daemonic is our providential suffering. We have a destiny, but we will not find it, or advance it, or complete it, if we avoid the Fate that brings it. We have possibilities aplenty, but they are all built out of the one and only Fate that awaits us in this world, as it did Christ.

To find our destiny is easy enough= look where our Fate bites, is pained and burdensome.

We do not need to be broken to come to the Light.

We need to be broken to come to the Fire.

There is nothing more Anti-Christ than refusing our 'share' of the fate of suffering humanity.

The demand for happiness without suffering= the Anti-Christ.

PSEUDO DESTINY

Martin Buber ['I and Thou', 1958]=

“The self-willed man does not.. meet. He does not know solidarity of connexion, but only the feverish world outside and his feverish desire to use it. ..and what he terms his destiny is only the equipping and sanctioning of his ability to use. He has.. no destiny, but only a being that is defined by things and instincts, which he fulfils with the feeling of sovereignty..” [p 60]

“Feelings dwell in man; but man dwells in his love.. ...love is between I and Thou. Love ranges in its effect through the whole world. In the eyes of him who takes his stand in love, and gazes out of it, men are cut free from their entanglement in bustling activity. Good people and evil, wise and foolish, beautiful and ugly, become successively real to him; ..set free they step forth in their singleness, and confront him as Thou... love is responsibility of an I for a Thou.” [pp 14-15]

“ I know no fullness but each mortal hour's fullness of claim and responsibility” [pp 295-296, 'To Deny Our Nothingness', Maurice Friedman, 1978].

Existential Guilt is the guilt one has taken on oneself in a situation, out of recognising that as a person, I did not answer the call of what summoned me out, in relation to that situation. I have injured the common life, I have betrayed the common jeopardy.

THE SATANIC ACCUSER AGAINST, AND THE MESSIANIC ADVOCATE FOR, THE HUMAN HEART

PRELUDE

There are 3 main faces of evil.

[1] Mephistophles= 'Man, the elevated, overlooking mind.'

Abstraction; false transcendence into a thin and life-destroying air; perversion of **Knowledge**, whether mystical, esoteric, or scientific, which turns the mind into an elevator to the 'higher realms' that either abandons what is below, or imposes 'one size fits all' solutions on ground-level reality, squeezing all the life, pith, juice, spark, out of it. This is the sickness of **mind**. [Examples-- Platonism; Scientism]

Mephistophles raises us to shrink our humanity.

[2] Lucifer= 'Man, the self-divinizing god.'

Wholeness; false polishing of the diamond of the self to a brilliant sheen; perversion of **Giftedness/Charisma**, which turns the riches of imagination and its creative power into a seduction that devours the **soul**. [Examples-- Gnosticism; Jungianism]

Lucifer flatters us to deceive our humanity.

[3] Satan= 'Man, the miserable sinner.'

Accusation; false moralism or false judgementalism; perversion of **Moral Discrimination/Moral Consequences**, which turns the distinction between good and evil into a weapon with which to kill the human heart. [Examples-- Puritanism; Fundamentalism]

Satan accuses us to murder our humanity.

1,

Lucifer flatters and corrupts the soul, to romantically 'woo' us out of the heart..

Mephistophles abstracts and inflates the mind, to idealistically 'raise' us out of the heart..

However, the real enemy of the heart is Satan. To have a heart, it is necessary to face up to the Satanic, for his evil spirit seeks the final defeat of the human heart. He is not joking. He means it.

Satan= hatred of the human, in its 'passibility'; that it can be affected and is malleable, and hence that the human has an inherent vulnerability, is dismissed with profound spiritual contempt. Satan upholds the invariant and unfailing, even the mechanical [hence William Blake's "dark Satanic mills"]. He detests the messiness, the ambiguity, the paradox, of the human condition.

All forms of evil work through a false dualism between 'higher' and 'lower', which is really 'angelic versus human.' All that changes is what is higher and what is lower.

Mephistophles= intelligent versus stupid [sophisticated versus backward, etc].

Lucifer= charismatic versus mediocre [colourful versus dull, etc].

Satan= right versus wrong [rectitude versus transgression, etc].

This duality sows seeds of dissension among humanity, whatever its context. This duality is false, and creates rivalry rather than solidarity among humans. The premise of the evil spirits is that the angelic is superior and the human is inferior, whether this takes a more mind [Mephistophles], soul [Lucifer] or heart [Satan], format in human culture.

This false dualism of superior 'angelism' versus inferior 'humanness' is also the delusive distinction into 'this' and 'that' referred to in Buddhism. 'Not to judge' intellectually [Mephistophles], creatively [Lucifer], morally [Satan], is not the way of the evil spirits! Because their judgement is that all of humanity is inferior, they aim to divide humanity into the angels [the successful] and the mere humans [the failures], so that thus divided, humanity will tear itself asunder.

The good spirits serve humanity, as helpers. They accept God's judgement on the human, which is that it is basically good and beautiful, at its beginning, and whatever its twists and distortions along the way, can 'come through' and reach an end which, precisely because it is tempted and tested, proves something 'fearful and wonderful' in the way humans were made [Psalms, 139, 14].

Most unacceptable to the evil spirits is that God, in creating humanity as his vessel of embodiment and partner for co-action in the world, has preferred to do this by way of depths, abandoning the impregnable heights in which all the angelic spirits come to birth. That the divine depths, never before searched out, should become the very engine of the human venture is a mystery to the good spirits, a terrible and holy paradox they humbly accept, but an offense to the evil spirits, an incomprehensible injury to their high station. That some pathetic material creature, so below them in being, could carry the depths of God that no angel can fathom is beyond comprehension, an insult to 'reason', a demoting of 'excellence', a disrespect for 'worthiness.' That the route to depths so deep nothing in heaven or earth can fathom them is not by means of the high but through the low is the ultimate offense against the angelic,

which is high by nature and origin, because of preferring the human, which is low by nature and origin. The evil spirits are jealous of the human, and seek to spread their jealousy into the human, thereby reinforcing the division of humanity.

Even if some humans who are higher beings 'go up' in the end of days, whilst the rest of the humans who are lower beings 'sink down', this will be a victory for the evil spirits. Depth will be defeated, as a way, unless it includes all humans, and all humans include each other. If time ends with a division into 'winners and losers', then the risk God has taken with humanity will have failed. Angel-ism will have won out over human-ness..

Though the mind can be deep when it looks under the surface, and the soul has psychic depths like the innermost recesses of the ocean, only the heart has the spiritual depths of God, for the heart rests on nothing, 'behind' the heart is only God; this is why the heart stands on, or falls into, an Abyss. The Abyss is beneath the ground of all things visible and invisible.

Because 'the heart is deep', and 'Good requires the heart', and everything else in our being 'passes through the heart', so the Satanic war against the heart is the most intense, the most malicious, the most vicious, of all. The heart is not just abstracted and inflated, the heart is not just seduced and deceived, the heart is attacked. Satan means to bring the human venture, risked to the heart, to a juddering halt, by killing off all heart for this world.

2,

Here is a peculiarity not much noticed, or commented upon.

The oldest written text, and thus in reality the first book of the Jewish Bible, is the story of Job who suffers innocently. He is made to undergo terrible torment at the hands of Satan the 'Accuser' of humanity. Now, the odd thing is that Satan in his role as Accuser is mentioned again in the Revelations of John, the last book of the Christian Bible. Even the way in which Satan is accusing humanity 'before the throne of God night and day' in the story of Job is echoed in the verses of the Apocalypse. A full circle is traced..

Satan is present both at the beginning and the end of the entire Jewish--Christian Biblical canon because as humanity's "adversary", or "hinderer" as Martin Buber nuances it, his Accusation of our failings clashes with the Messiah who is the 'Advocate' of humanity. In a subtle but real sense, the whole story unfolded in the Bible is really the drama of the adversarial battle between the Spirit of Accusation and the Spirit of Advocacy in regard to the human venture in its passion and pathos, its glory and tragedy, its fire and grief.

There can be no fudged compromise, and no happy reconciliation, between these contrary stances toward the human heart in its freedom to love, or to refuse to love.

--The Satanic Judge and Jury moralistically condemns, and thus in the end damns, the human experiment, totally and finally. This is Satan's aim= the murder of the human heart for existence. The Moral Law is used as a weapon of tyranny, oppression, inhibition, and ultimately murder.

--The Messianic Advocate and Redeemer does not judge, nor does he condemn; rather, he brings the human risk through its failures and follies, by paradoxically uncovering the best in the worst, through his own willingness to suffer, to carry, to pay for, what the human cannot. This is Christ's aim= the reforging and vindicating of the human heart for existence. The Sword and the Cross are used as a weapon of freedom and love, truth and depth, dying and resurrection.

The Satanic is final hell for the human heart.

The Messianic is heaven lost to and unexpectedly, even impossibly, refound in hell; heaven resurrected from hell. In this way, hell is faced, wrestled with, 'suffered' and accepted, yet overcome in its depth and in its core.

Between a hell that precludes and eliminates heaven, and a heaven that includes and only by that vanquishes hell, there is a gulf.

You cannot relativize such a gulf, it is absolute. Humanity either ends in hell, as the Satanic intends, or humanity falls into hell and paradoxically finds heaven at its greatest and deepest only by passing through hell, and emerging on the other side, through the Messianic. This is the real either/or. Such opposition, such contention, such 'spiritual war' is real. This war is serious and unremitting. A Greek Orthodox writer has aptly called it 'the contest of love.' The fight between an ultimate love for humanity, inspiring a love of human for human -- against an ultimate hatred of humanity, urging dissension and judgement among humans.

The difference between this clash of 'hell and heaven' -- or more accurately, this battle between an 'exclusive hellishness' and a 'heavenly that extinguishes hellishness by taking it into itself, and suffering it in a new way, carrying it in a new way, paying for it in a new way' -- is ultimate. When this war ends, time ends. The war between the Satanic and the Messianic, the key rationale to time, means that time will not end before that war is over. When this war ends, there will be no more time.

The Satanic and the Messianic fight each other down all of time..

The Accuser wins, or the Advocate wins.

This is the spiritual warfare that cannot be risen above spiritually, nor rationally explained away; it cannot be calmed by worldly panaceas and answers, nor can any premature peace be imposed upon its fundamental existential contention.

This journey and battle plays out, to the end.. It plays out fairly. Hell cannot be suppressed by morality, nor defeated by force even if supposedly good.

Nietzsche= 'Beware that when you fight monsters you don't turn into a monster.'

Only the Sword and the Cross, Righteousness and Redemption, are capable of fighting the good fight, which is the true fight. When a person becomes a genuine warrior, we can call them true-heart.

3,

The Jewish moralists try to convince Job he must have sinned to be suffering so much. He loses money, house, family, reputation. The story is very familiar. The key note in its depiction of Satan is that he comes and goes in heaven, freely, and challenges God to a wager. The challenge Satan lays down before God is, if human beings are made to suffer innocently, this suffering not being punishment for transgression but just the cost of existence and the cost of the strange way that God's Love works out in existence, then human beings will turn on God. They will throw away the human heart called to carry and be the 'stand in' for God's heart in the world.

In effect, Satan is saying human beings are only 'cupboard lovers' of God; they love God not primally, come what may, but only secondarily, as an effect of all the good God bestows on them. Once God ceases bestowing good on humans, they'll walk away from him. God takes the bet. He allows Satan to destroy all of Job's happiness and fulfilment, only preserving his life..

The Satan here, and in other places in the Old Testament, is setting himself up as the 'Judge and Jury' on human 'failures to hit the mark' [the Greek for 'sin']. Thus is Christ, and all the holy persons in the world who preceded him and anticipated him as prefigurements and foretastes, the Advocate for Humanity', because it must be understood that this Advocacy stands as our only protection against the awesome Power of the Accusation mounted by the Evil One. Satan says we humans are basically no good in our very root--and all our failures, deviations, weaknesses, flaws, twistedness, smallness, evasion, 'proves' we are worth nothing at all. The Advocate for the human says that despite all these 'falls' from any true 'standing', we are redeemable. Indeed, this Advocate says more= there is something deep in all human beings, and this depth can become the crucible and ground for raising up in us that which becomes great. Even our flaws and most terrible instances of repeated falling-down can be part of the deepening that transforms our base matter into gold.

Clearly, God and Satan are locked in battle for the human heart.

If Satan prevails, the heart becomes hell, full stop and end of story. If God prevails, the heart becomes the hell that gives birth to heaven, the hell through which heaven is tested and proved.

4,

This battle between *Accuser of the human heart* and *Advocate for the human heart* is spoken of not only in the Jewish Old Testament, in Job and elsewhere, but is carried right into the Christian New Testament, appearing in the weird and terrifying visions of John on the island of Patmos. Thus, consider Revelation, chapter 12, verses 7--12. Here too, right at the end of all time, do we witness again the wager and battle between *Accuser against* humanity and *Advocate for* humanity, but now it is reaching a climax.

The text recapitulates the whole story of Lucifer being kicked out of heaven, and falling to earth where he digs in, becoming Satan, the 'prince of the world' who wants to end up its king, its ruler, its chief and determining power.. But it adds a prophetic voice in verse 10, saying that redemption has come through Christ, "for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, [he] who accuses them day and night before God." This passage does not support the traditional teaching that Satan is locked into hell; on the contrary, he is at liberty to go before God, and in that intimate place he accuses all of us humans, all of our brothers and sisters, day and night. And that same Voice of Accusation is in our own heart, accusing each of us, very personally and by name, day and night. The Accusing of humanity never stops.

God fights fair, God lets the bet play out fairly. But the cost to us, in our heart, as well as to God, in his heart, is to have to put up with and hear the Accuser droning on all the time.. This is the real subversion of the heart, the undermining guilt and corrosive doubt, the shame and self-loathing, into which the human heart can fall and fall, without reaching any bottom..

In verse 11, it says how Accusation is defeated= through the sacrifice of Christ, called 'the blood of the Lamb'; and this Lamb's blood was shed even before the world began, to ensure the redeeming of the world and all in it would not fail, but would win out 'in the end'-- even against its most cruel antagonist and implacable foe. Satan is the Big Obstacle on the road of redemption. This means redemption is opposed by the chief 'earthly' evil spirit, Satan. It will cost.. But God was willing to pay that cost even before the creation was made.

And verse 11 says something else that is awesome= many people who gave -- and will give -- their blood in sacrifice, exactly as did Christ, will join with him in the redemption he wrought. It is not his work alone-- though without him no one else could do it; rather, it is his work in conjunction with all those persons who make the same sacrifice of their blood as he did. Christ and these sacrificial humans together 'conquer' and defeat the Satanic Accusation, and together bring about and make real the Christlike Advocacy for the redemption of all the world. The persons who enter Christ's redemptive action as co-workers for and co-lovers of the world's 'possibility' are those who 'loved not their lives even unto death.'

These persons give and empty the heart, pouring out all its passion, yet in doing this they gain the knowledge before anyone else that 'love is stronger

than death.' For the rest of us, this is a heartening reassurance; for those who have lost their own heart to gain redemption for the whole world, this is what they know in dying, and thus even in resting in death, they are awaiting the coming rebirth of all.

Verse 12 sounds a warning in regard to this lengthy Middle-time after the Beginning but well before the End. For it says 'woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows his time is short!' This suggests that Satan suspects he will finally lose his wager, lose his battle, with God, so in the limited time he has to cause mischief, he attacks the human situation with unrelenting ferocity, doing all the damage he can muster.

But verse 12 says something else very interesting= the evil spirit who was once a good spirit in heaven, indeed as Lucifer the very brightest spark of heaven, has been expelled from God's holiest place, and is coming down to the earth and down to the sea in a rage.

This implies that the earth and the sea become the new dwelling place of the disgruntled and now evil spirit. Earth is Satan's dwelling, because Satanic evil is on the ground, materialistic, this worldly; the sea is Lucifer's dwelling, because the sea is more mysterious, other worldly, psychic and spiritual. Thus, we might say Satan stalks the mean streets and the day and the workaday; but Lucifer stalks the palace of beauty and the night and the exotic. Satan is the temptation to transgression and the murderously harsh punishment of the 'law' brought to bear on that transgression. But Lucifer, as a passage of the Old Testament says, 'has his throne in the sea'; this means Lucifer takes up residence in the unconscious, the psyche, the twilightzone or borderzone between the spiritual and the psychic, in order to take possession of the soul, and by that, seize the body, corrupting its life and desire. Freud's Super Ego and Id, in their endless conflict, are merely flip sides of the Satanic; but Jung's Self, ensconced far down in the unconscious psyche, but seeking realisation in the totality of the personality, is Lucifer. Freud ended in Satanic dogmatism of right and wrong; Jung ended in narcissistic self-love and self-completion.

The Messianic Advocate is the wild card in the pack, the Reversal, that changes everything.. By death, he defeats death; by descent into hell, he undercuts hell.

Once, years ago, the name that came for him= Warrior of the Abyss.

When the Bible tells us, 'fear not', it is in the awareness of this friend of the human heart, the hero who rouses it to a final heroism.

THE THREE FACES OF EVIL= Lucifer, Satan, Mephistophles

PREAMBLE

Thomas Hardy= "It is love, not reason, which is stronger than death."

Dotted through-out past email conversations with many friends are questions they have raised in regard to 'Lucifer', 'Satan', 'Mephistophles', as 3 kinds, or faces, of evil.

What this differentiation means existentially is that qualitatively different 'themes' of evil assail us, in our life. Each evil targets something necessary to human existence in its ex-stasis 'outside' itself toward reality, and distorts this dynamic factor. Hence, Lucifer= soul; Satan= heart; Mephistophles= mind.

Thus we have no choice in the matter= we are forced to struggle with the existential question of how to meet evil.

How do we face what faces us?

The view of evil in Martin Buber is a third way beyond either Oriental monism, or Western dualism. This approach says that we must both, on one level, stand up to and draw a line in the sand against evil, yet on another level, 'suffer and redeem' evil. This is the Jewish and Christian message concerning evil. The third way beyond monism -- where evil tends to disappear or be relativized -- or dualism -- where evil tends to be reified and almost become eternal -- has to do with the Jewish-Christian revelation that the world of matter, space and time, history, will in the fullness of time be redeemed. If Oriental monism and Western dualism are both in error about evil, this is because neither understands the true meaning of Redemption.

The Orientalising tendency puts mysticism in the place of Redemption, and the Western tendency confuses Redemption with something moralistic that speaks part of its language but in spirit betrays it.

Redemption is not merging 'back' into God, nor is Redemption God helping the good guys 'beat up' the bad guys, which is God's authority and morality suppressing, or eliminating, the devil's rebellion and immorality.

1= Lucifer and Satan

Both the prophet Ezekiel, 28, 1-19, and the prophet Isaiah, 14, 12-20, and Christ echoing and interpreting them in Luke, 10, 18, see the primal evil spirit called 'Lucifer' ['light bringer' in Hebrew] fall from heaven, like a shooting star, to become prince of this world. As "shooting star", evil is originally 'Lucifer', but as "prince of this world", evil becomes 'Satan' ['adversary' in Hebrew].

Lucifer is named only once in the Bible, in Isaiah where Yahweh addresses him thus= “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the spirits of God.. I will be like the Most High.” In Hebrew, Lucifer’s name is the noun ‘heylel’, which is derived from the verb ‘hawlal’, which means ‘to shine, to glory, to boast.’ Ezekiel clarifies the motive for this spiritual self-elevation rooted in a crazy and foolish presumption; thus Lucifer is the evil spiritual power behind the worldly prince Tyrus, who proclaims “I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas” [he is enthroned in the unconscious psyche], but it is also made clear that Lucifer began as a very high and exalted spirit [a 4-fold Cherubim “anointed” by God as a protector] who was “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty”; this originally marvellous spirit had “been in Eden, the Garden of God” and “upon God’s holy mountain”, and had “walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” in heaven. But God says to him= “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by virtue of your brightness”, “your heart is lifted up because of your riches” [of talent, giftedness, imagination, as well as money and worldly goods]. Lucifer is always associated with material riches, no less than spiritual sheen= “Such is your skill in trading, your wealth has continued to increase, and with this your heart has grown more arrogant; your busy trading has filled you with violence and sin.” This originally bright and dazzling spirit was “perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created until iniquity was found in thee”; thus God vows to Lucifer/Tyrus= “I will cast thee to the ground..” Lucifer will be humbled, finally, for he is a false spiritual power demanding to be worshipped as ‘god-like.’

In the Luciferian guise, evil is 'spiritual', or other-worldly= false dawn, and false enlightenment; deception, seduction, flattery; charisma and vanity as spiritual states of pseudo flowering in which we think we have become godlike, without having been first purified and sanctified. False divinisation, which creates not the compassionate suffering of the greater for the lesser, but a self-satisfied sense of superiority, in which one treats with contempt inferior beings; in Buddhism, this is the evil at the root of all human compulsion to 'compare' human being against human being, to decide who is better and who is worse.

In the Satanic guise, evil is 'material', or this-worldly= darkness and fear where no spiritual light can reach; a lack of nous [direct and penetrative spiritual seeing, and intelligence], thus stupidity and blindness about spiritual matters; bribery, intimidation, condemnation; avarice and hatred as materialistic states of seeming ego expansion in which we think we can become all powerful in the world by possessing the biggest slice of the pie, and eliminating the opposition. Satan both tempts us into materialistic sins, and also, as William Blake says in his visionary poetry, moralistically condemns us for those failings afterward. In the Book of Job [chapters 1 and 2], Satan is the ‘witness for the prosecution’, seeking to prove to God that humanity is unable to fulfil the trust God places in us.

Thus Satan is both the tempter who plays on our weakness, producing a 'giving in' to it, but also the judge who places a crushing, severe judgement

on that weakness once it is succumbed to. The more we judge sin, the more we sneak off and entertain it in secret. Hiding from the light, clinging to the dark, is Satanic; it implies no forgiveness of weakness and failure and transgression, no compassion for human vulnerability and temptability. To admit sin, to expose it to light, implies believing we are still loveable, by God and by others and by oneself. But Satan makes us feel totally worthless. Thus in despair we give in, then despair more, then give in more to console ourselves= an endless cycle of indulgence, guilt and self-loathing, and then more indulgence. Satan is also, therefore, the spirit of compulsion, of rape and murder. Force, not love, is Satan's way. We are Satanic even when, gripped by a lack of patience and a lack of endurance, we 'force the issue' before it is ready.

William Blake lays bare and denounces the pitiless judgemental spirit of Satan= "In Hell all is Self Righteousness; there is no such thing there as Forgiveness of Sin; he who does forgive Sin is Crucified as an Abettor of Criminals, and he who performs Works of Mercy in Any shape whatever is punished, and if possible destroyed, not through envy, or hatred, or malice, but through Self Righteousness that thinks it does service to God, which 'god' is Satan."

Lucifer is the worst of the Orient; Satan is the worst of the West; though every culture knows of both evils. In Lakota, Lucifer is akin to 'Iktomi', who once was the spirit of wisdom, and beauty, but fell, becoming a deceiver who stirs up rivalry, while Satan is akin to 'Iya', the cyclone of destruction that rages through the earth, laying waste to everything in its path.

Wilmer Mesteth once told me that according to Lakota teaching, the chief evil in human beings is 'prematurity.' Either rising above the world, or forcing the world to conform and measure up, are both prematurity. The one abandons the world in the name of 'spirituality' [Luciferian pseudo ripening], the other crushes the world in the name of 'religion' [Satanic pseudo uprightness].

Opposed to prematurity is 'hard wakan', on which the Lakota of old staked and built their life. A hard holiness, a hard struggle, a hard walk, slow, painful, but transformative in its result.

2= William Blake On Satan the Accuser Who Is The 'god' Of This World

William Blake speaks of 'Satan the Accuser' at various points in his work. "A Vision of the Last Judgement" is a description of a painting now lost, which was found in Blake's notebooks after his death, and assembled from fragments by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Blake says that Christ came to deliver humanity, "the accused", and not to deliver Satan, "the accuser." The 'Last Judgement' will be the defeat and end of Satanic Accusation. Blake develops a powerful, and chilling, vision of Satan as not only the worldly tyrant who uses politics and economics to suppress human freedom, but also as the false god behind most if not all organized religion; the churches and the priests and ministers are servants of the Satanic Accuser and his religion of Judgementalism= which defies the warning of Christ 'to judge not, lest you be

judged.' But Blake is really saying something radical= the 'god' many people worship, the god of authority, harshness, severity, punitiveness, moralism, is in reality Satan the Evil One.

In the poem "To The Accuser Who Is God Of This World", Blake pulls no punches in addressing Satan directly=

"Though thou art worshipped by the names divine, of Jesus and Yahweh, thou art still the Son of Morn in weary night's decline, the lost traveler's dream under the hill."

The 'Son of Morn' is an allusion to Lucifer, expelled from heaven, appearing in the sky as a false dawn, and plummeting to earth to become Satan, the secular and religious prince of 'worldliness', which Blake calls "the empire of Nothing."

The connection between Blake's 'Satan' and Dostoyevsky's 'Grand Inquisitor' is clear. Every worldly authority, whether secular or religious, tends toward the Satanic in so far as its real motive is what E.G. Howe used to call "power over the other." It was this Satanic Ruler, both secular and religious, who crucified Christ.

The battle for the Redemption of the world is thus, in William Blake, the battle between Satan and Christ.

In the old Celtic Shamanic vision of evil, Satan is regarded as an invader who holds the inherent goodness of the world captive; the goodness native to everything and everyone is still there, despite human frailties and sins, but it is 'set in concrete' by a layer of evil= a false skin of opacity, which prevents the goodness being freed and coming to full realisation. Satan's morality murders the 'fruitfulness and flowering' that God seeks from the creation and in the world.

Blake also reveals how it is Satan gets a grip on us through self-doubt= having first created this illness in us, Satan then uses 'Authority' as the cure for it. In short, he creates a sickness and then offers to remedy it provided we do exactly as he commands! It is a neat, but closed, circle.

The circle goes like this. Satan is the evil spirit who makes human beings feel so radically despairing about their flaws, failings, and sin, that they cease to trust anything in their own spiritual experience, but are crippled, paralyzed, undermined, and therefore become easily cowed by Authority= it is Satan who makes the 'sense of sin' in humans so darkly negating, shriveling, shameful and guilt ridden, that they put no faith in their innate capacities and independent discernment, but become obedient to the Authority that tells them they are indeed 'wrong with God', but at the same time also tells them how they can 'get right.'

Blake sees any order/organization/structure that is coldly and fixedly set as machine-like; and the 'machine' as *mechanicalness* and as *machinations* is

Satanic. A major consequence of this Satanic System is that desire as such, passion as such, life in its pith, juice, and thrust, come to be regarded as inherently evil. In the kingdom of Satan, it is energy which is evil, and only the 'moralic acid' that constrains energy is good. Hell is energy, and heaven is restraint of energy-- which is why hell is active and alive while heaven is passive and dead. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", Blake inverts this Satanic heaven and hell, showing that its angels are really devils, while its devils are really angels. Milton is infected by the Satanic upside-downness, and so Blake says that Milton only wrote at liberty and with inspiration when depicting hell and devils, but wrote in the boring and inhibited good boy/good girl vein when writing of heaven and angels. One commentator on Blake says that Satan has engendered the 'human heresy', which instills in us a sense we have no right to live, and should be suspicious of our very thirst and hunger for 'life more abundant', or what St Peter describes as the state in which the human 'spirit is alive in God's life.'

Satan is therefore the spirit who limits the human, always compelling the human through fear and guilt. We fear and are guilty about our imperfection and so we try for perfection, in Satan's grip, but it is a stilted perfection. We try to be good, but our desire and passion are always stirring beneath, and they might lead us into sin! This fills us with the moral terror of transgressing, and so we arrange our face, our public mask, of behavioural correctness, but we are none the less always found out when the beasts of soul desire and heart passion erupt, breaking out of the cage. Freud's 'super ego versus id' is a portrayal in more psychological terms of the Satanic structure in which the whole of the world is imprisoned. Freud also uncovered something that Blake announces= for Freud is saying both the id and the super ego are flip sides of the same coin, both are intrinsically selfish and intrinsically aggressive. Or put another way= the Rebel and the Tyrant are secretly the same, which is why every Rebel becomes a Tyrant.

Thus in a poem addressed to Satan as a 'Spectre' [from "Milton"], the Satanic purpose -- reflected in his priests and in his churches -- is exposed; this is to "impress on men the fear of death", and by this to teach "constriction" of the human, which drives it into "abject selfishness." The true spirit of divinity is that "each shall mutually Annihilate himself for others' good". The Last Judgement is "deliverance from Satan's Accusation." Therefore Blake encourages us "to go on in fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn [Satan's] Laws and terrors", and shaking down his temples as if they were as flimsy as a spider's web. We should not be cowed by "Self Righteousness in all its Hypocritical turpitude." Self Righteousness is the false righteousness, the false rectitude, of the person infected by Satanic Accusation= such 'rightness' is heartless, cruel, non-compassionate and non-merciful.

Against this stands Christ's suffering to Redeem all the world process, from beginning to end. St Isaac of Syria said that the Cross of Christ is God's 'judgement on judgement.' Through the Cross, Satanic right and wrong, blessing and damnation, ends, forever.

But from the Catholic Inquisition through the Protestant witch burning to the Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals of today, it is Satan the Accuser who is worshipped with the holy names of Father, and Christ.

3= Mephistophles As The False Spirit of Abstraction

Mother Maria Skobtsova was, along with two other monastics, killed by the Nazis for hiding Jews in her refuge in Paris. Other examples of monastics who understood the need to leave the monastery as a spiritual haven in order to fulfill Christ's call to work and die for the redeeming of the world include, for example, St Philothei of Athens [1589], a nun who was killed by the Turks because she was helping slave women to escape; or, St Kosmas the Aitolian [1700 AD], who left Athos to preach widely the urgent need for education and was also martyred for the stand he took.

Thus not all monasticism is understood and practiced as 'other worldly.' According to John Demakis ['Raising Lazarus', ed. Stephen Muse, 2004, p 17], the early Eastern Christian church in Byzantium supported many philanthropic institutions, including homes for the poor [ptochotropheia], homes for orphans [orphanotrophia], homes for the aged [gerokomeia], and hospitals [nosokomeia and xenones]. Indeed, "rival Christian factions often vied with each other in who would do more good works" [J. Demakis, p 17]. Moreover, as Patriarch of Constantinople [from 398 AD], St John Chrysostom thundered against slavery and on behalf of the equality of women, and threatened fire from heaven upon the luxury and vanity of the rich [R. Payne, p 217]. He followed the example of St Basil in combining the way of contemplation and the way of action= the former he likened to night, when the dew falling from heaven heals our hurts and calms our griefs, while the latter is likened to the fierce heat of the day which scorches and burns us [R. Payne, p 212].

But the link between quiet and tumult did not last..

Perhaps over time as the church increasingly sided with the rich and powerful, in effect backing the most worldly, so monasticism became increasingly other worldly. Whatever the cause, the ultimate danger of monasticism is to embrace the heresy of 'Angelism'-- the desire to be raised above human frailty, so as to become pure spirit without body. This is the road to total heartlessness. The heart as such is transcended, as the monastic becomes more ethereal, and confuses this etherealized state with 'spirituality.' It is nothing of the kind, rather it is the Faustian problem of knowledge as escape from existential wrestlings.

This is the evil of Mephistophles. The name in Greek means 'foul air.' Angelizing spirituality is in fact a too rarified air. The person becomes too attenuated, too thin, to really live. This 'thinness' is not the more abundant life brought by the Spirit.

Mephistophles abstracts the human into Angelizing spirituality, philosophy not embodied in reality, and science as a tool for controlling the world's rigid outer

shell, not delving the world's fluid inner mystery. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoyevsky, all warned against the increasing abstractionism of Western culture. All in the head, only a spectral life= the idea of life but not the reality of life, according to Dostoyevsky.

Nikos Kazantzakis= "Yet I also know that mere ideas within an idealist's hot head are snug, pure, untainted, free of blood and dirt-- but entirely barren, sterile, superfluous" ['Letters to Galatia'].

Whether religious or secular, this abstractionism is anti-incarnational; it is transcendence of the world.

The worst manifestation of the 'poisoned air' that suffocates our humanity, depriving us of the true air in which we breathe in the Spirit, is in metaphysical philosophy, esotericism, hermeticism, occultism, 'Sophia Perennis', and similar traditions [such as Rudolf Steiner's 'Anthroposophy']. A 'spiritualized person' is a Thinker of Higher Thoughts, a seeker of Higher Ideas, not disclosed plainly here below, but only hinted at in symbols, puzzles, conundrums. The seeker can read these for the secrets they contain. Thus he is a hierophant, an adept, an initiate, in Higher Knowledge beyond the ken of the mass of people operating at a lower level of reality.

Consciousness is higher and matter is lower. So, raise consciousness out of matter, above matter, in order to climb the ladder up to the Higher Realm. Then pull the ladder up! The Higher Knowledge of the Higher Realm is for the few, the illuminati, the cognoscenti. Example= John Dee, conversing with angels..

To rise above matter means to rise above the body; you rise above food, sex, physical needs, to free the mind. You then float on air in mere abstract 'essences' freed from the constraints and influences of the material.

In effect, 'god' is the ultimate Abstract Mind. This deity without passion is a fiction of the human mind that abstracts itself out of life. It is impassible, eternal, never moving. Thus it is radically uninvolved in human affairs. It is detached, a Mental Entity above and outside everything and everyone. At most, it allows lower 'reflections' of its Serene Constancy of Immutable Consciousness, but humanity would be serene and immutable only if climbing up the ladder of the ever more 'insubstantial' air until Abstract Mind is discovered in its fullness, and the seeker at last is privy to the Highest Knowledge.

Those 'in the know' about the Higher Realm are higher than those lower people imprisoned in the bodily.

This appeals to people very damaged below the neck, who feel threatened by emotions and drives, and cannot distinguish them from feeling and passion. Mind is superior not only to the body, but also to affect in its entirety. Such people cannot love, and excuse themselves from immersion in the active

energetics of love by recourse to the claim that the mind's cool and calm appropriation of 'living mysteries' is better, because it is higher..

Such over-mentalisation of the divine mystery, which leads to over-mentalisation of the human mystery, entered modern Judaism through Maimonides, under obvious Greek Hellenic influence.

Martin Buber= "There are those who wish to reach God by joining hands with him 'above' the world, whereas we wish to join hands with him 'around' the world" [pp 295-296, 'To Deny Our Nothingness', Maurice Friedman, 1978].

4= Martin Buber On Redeeming Evil

The view of evil in Martin Buber is a third way beyond either Oriental monism, or Western dualism. From his perspective, this is the truer vision of evil embedded in Jewish tradition, but often distorted, by Jews and Christians alike.

--Oriental monism plays down evil, and tends to see it as merely the product of Spiritual Blindness and Ignorance, which makes evil the by-product of a state of mind. When mind is illumined, evil disappears.

--Western dualism over plays evil, almost to the point of Zoroaster's notion of there being two opposed, but equal, spiritual ultimates, one good, one evil, in endless war with one another in the cosmos as a whole. More commonly, Western dualism sees evil as arising from the motive, or intention, of the heart. In some guises, it is believed a person is either of one motive or the other motive= each motive gives rise to fundamentally different kinds of people, those of Rectitude vs those of Wickedness, and these two kinds of people invariably clash for which motive is to gain the supremacy. On this approach, whatever happens in the short run, in the long run the evil motive will be eternally punished by God with hell, while the good motive will conversely be eternally rewarded by God with heaven. The only difference between this kind of dualism and Zoroaster's Persian variety is that here the good motive finally defeats the evil motive, because God backs the former kind of people against the latter kind of people. The latter might seem to win for a time, but in the end, God guarantees the former will win.

Oriental evil= a matter of vision, seeing, enlightenment or ignorance.

Western evil= a matter of motive, intent, ethical disposition for virtue or for vice.

Buber explicitly rejects both these positions. This rejection is part and parcel of his understanding of Redemption.

--Against Oriental monism, he says that evil is very real and very far reaching in consequences. Even if evil lasts only a time, its damage to the creation is more serious than the attempt by Oriental Monism to treat it as only 'relatively' real can admit. The Orient is too light weight about evil. Moreover, change of

heart, not just bringing spiritual light to the mind, is needed for the human to stand up to the assault of evil.

--Against Western dualism, Buber says that evil can be redeemed, and our task is precisely its redemption. Buber does not read his own ancestral Judaism in the Western dualist way many Christians do, especially fundamentalists/evangelicals. Redemption means releasing good from the 'hindering' effect of evil, and defeating evil's attraction and lure by putting in its place the full blossoming of human nature, energy, being, doing. Buber therefore rejects Western dualism as giving too 'absolute' a reality to evil, not realising that though damaging, this very damage can be 'made good.' This is Redemption. Evil is not defeated in a dualistic war by good= rather, the truth of heart that evil distorts comes through, and undercuts evil's very basis. Hence, in the end, evil disappears, and even serves a 'good' function by being the prod that pushes people to go deeper and farther than they otherwise would. Without evil, we would be like the Hobbits living in our little and cosy earthly garden; when evil invades, the Hobbits have to grow up, and learn to wrestle with existence's dilemma in a more big hearted way. Though loss and suffering come, so also comes heart courage and generosity, heart patience and fortitude, and a seeing of the heart that goes under the surface of existence and grasps difficult existential truths.

In fact, both in Hinduism and Judaism, in more existentially oriented circles, we come across this claim that evil is the spur to human deepening and the prod to human greatness. It is a risk worth taking, though as with any radical risk, if it comes good in the end it must be a close run thing, for it could have gone the other way. God plays fair with evil, and gives evil its head, allowing it a real run for its money. The human must really wrestle in this high stakes drama, because though God is involved, God is not some childish rescuer who will do it all for us. We still must 'fight the good fight', and 'do our part.' Yet faith precisely is willingness to dive in with this divine risk, and see it through, trusting in its ultimate good in the end. This is because what we really have here is not 'good vs evil', but 'love vs evil', and by wrestling with and being tormented, tempted, and torn by evil, love ends up deeper than evil and greater than good. Nietzsche= "whatever we do for love is beyond good and evil."

Buber, therefore, situates evil in a cosmic 'drama' that could end up real bad, but the person of faith trusts that it will come good in the end, whatever has to be borne and undergone along the way. But this faith is severely tested and even smashed, before it can come through.

It is in the context of Redemption, and Christ's paradoxical way of love – not only fighting but also suffering evil – that the 'problem' of why we are free to become evil, and why evil is free to deceive and sift us, needs to be set.

Evil is serious, and a 'deal breaker' for many people in their refusal to go on trusting God. Yet we have in Christ's Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, a pledge of victory if we will go through it all, and not give in and give up along the way. The Biblical 'fear not' doesn't offer us the

traditional Christian consolations of 'hope'; rather, it encourages us to 'go on' when the going gets tough, indeed, even when the going seems undercut and blocked, and turned on its head, so as to make neither rational nor moral sense. There is no hope for us, if we opt out prematurely. Had Abraham refused the terrible instruction to give up his most treasured son, he would not have reached the later point in the unfolding encounter where the Spirit told him no such sacrifice was asked by God, and nor would it ever be asked by God. Abraham undergoes a divinely driven Daemonic Reversal, like that which will be necessary for and defining of the coming Messiah, but those glued to the ethical as avoidance of the existential dynamis, the journey and battle of faith, still try to 'judge' this odd story, making God wrong, or Abraham wrong, or the whole shambles wrong. That is to miss the point.

It is too easy to say of Abraham's ordeal of existential faith that God never intended to ask for child sacrifice [a practice widespread in the pagan religions of the Near East before and after Abraham's time]. What works out later on is not guaranteed before you make the 'leap of passion' into the unknown. The risk is real. The risk is real because existence is unfixed, and can 'turn out', and 'go', in different directions. We change the existential landscape by our action, even affecting God, as well as affecting the world, when our heart steps forth from hiding, and gives itself up to everything= to the good and bad of the shining path of Eros, and the loving and the evil of the hard road of the Daemonic.

The statement in the Gospels [Mathew, 12, 18-21] of Christ as Redeemer, echoing the prophecy in Isaiah about the Messiah to come, takes on ultimate meaning only in light of the 3 evils that will be overcome, by finding the more profound truth of love which they block, and conceal, if we will go through what they throw at us, to stop us in our tracks.

"Here is my servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, on whom my favour rests; I will put my Spirit upon him; And he will proclaim righteousness among the nations. He will not strive, he will not shout, nor will his voice be heard in the streets. He will not snap off the broken reed, nor snuff out the smouldering wick, until he leads justice on to victory. In him the nations will place their hope."

THE THREE HELLS

[1] The Pit

Hades in Greek, or Sheol in Hebrew.

[2] Hell Fires

Gehenna in Greek, and Ge-Hinnom in Hebrew [named for a valley outside Jerusalem].

[3] The Empty Abyss

No Greek or Hebrew terminology, but linked to mistrust of the deeps 'below' everything, thus the Nothing, the Fearful Void, into which we fall forever..

[1] THE PIT

The Pit is the 'falling in', or collapse, of all vigour and vitality of passion. This speaks not of what we do that is harmful; rather, it refers to what we fail to do that was required for the good and the true to stand a chance of prevailing. Sometimes the devil tempts passion into positive, active, evil deeds; this is the 'burning' Hell. At other times, the devil undermines passion through inducing it to give way, to yield, to back down. We funk the difficulty in the task.. We let other people down, and we also let down our own heart. It does not step up to be counted, but sinks down and down.. This is the evil not of commission, but of omission. The Pit is not burning; it is the condition of the heart bogged down, stuck, unable to move ahead decisively with 'what must be done.'

Therefore, the Jewish Bible describes the Pit as the place of 'desolation' where things that should have been done were left undone, and things that should have reached a creative resolution were let go and allowed to rot. The earth is laid 'waste', because we have wasted our time, letting everything that mattered slip by.

This weak surrender of passion, or giving in to passivity in the face of challenges to step forth, leaves the earth that it was the job of passion to creatively work with 'ravaged', 'despoiled', 'withering on the vine' [Isaiah, 24, 3].

Thus Isaiah 24, 4-12 describes the Pit in poetic imagery=

"The earth is mourning, withering; the world is pining, withering: the haughty people of the world are languishing..

The wine is mourning, the vine is languishing away, all glad hearts are sighing.

The merry tambourines are silent, the sound of revelling is over, the celebratory lyre is over.

They no longer sing over their wine..
The city.. is in ruins..
There is lamentation in the streets: no wine, joy quite gone, gladness
banished from the country.
Nothing but rubble in the city.”

This is the condition of a heart ‘lukewarm’, neither peaceful nor ardent, sitting
on the fence, soggy, endlessly sighing, yet always well within its comfort
zone.

Most people are leading lives of ‘quiet desperation’, withering away and
languishing, not vibrantly here in the now, but sucked down, lowered in
energy, subdued like an extinct volcano. In the Pit are multitudes of human
beings, their legs virtually planted and growing into the wet mud, hardly able
to take a single step; ‘all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.’ Thus,
day in and day out, unremittingly, everything remains dreary, dismal,
miserable, and barren.

This is about cowardice of heart, which vitiates passion of its life, its élan, its
potency. The ‘ghosts’ or ‘shades’ in Sheol, or in Hades, symbolise a half-life,
a living not alive, but permanently ‘pressed down’ in flame. Thus no
‘gladness’ of heart, no enjoyment of the sheer heartbeat of existing in time.
The heart cannot move in time; it is in stasis..

[2] HELL

The apocryphal Hell is linked to the heart’s embrace of what the Bible calls
‘wickedness’, a state where the heart actively, ‘positively’, does evil, and in so
doing, also has to lie about it. The Anger for Truth, the Fire of Truth, if we
resist it by lying about our departure from it, ‘burns’ us, so that evil passion is
always ‘hot and bothered.’

Hasidism calls this ‘the heat of destructiveness.’ Yet it also includes ‘the cold
indifference’ that is equally hellish. Thus Hell is both sulphurous burning fires
but also cold as ice.

Indeed, the two metaphors are easily combined in one= this fire of betraying
truth, the fire of evil that lies about its motive within and effect without, is
actually a deeply cold fire, even when hot and agitated. This ‘fire of the lie’ is
chillingly cold. By contrast, the fire of truth is warm.

Gehenna has a purgatorial implication, in Hebrew, which is that when you
admit your evil, and cease to lie about it, and so when you ‘truly’ repent, then
you are no longer ‘burned’ by it, or rather, the burning is purgatorial, it is a
conscious and penitential suffering of the wrong you did which actually burns
away your adhesion to evil. ‘Truth hurts.’ But truth accepted heals.

A Lakota prayer=

“Truth is coming

It will hurt me
I rejoice
You can heal me.”

Jesus Christ refers to this Hell more than once, when he speaks of the ‘worm that never dies’ as a kind of remorse, or deep regret, that goes on rebuking and ‘convicting’ the heart of evil, unendingly. – Until we repent, and accept the truth of our history of heart deeds, however much this stabs us..

[3] EMPTY ABYSS

This is the state of acid bitterness, boredom, alienation, futility, and despair, when we cannot trust the Abyss, and therefore cannot make the leap of passion that is faith. This Hell is vividly described in ‘The Sheltering Sky’ by Paul Bowles. It is very modern= the vacuity, lack of meaning, lack of purpose, at the base of things.. The sense that nothing matters, and even if it did, all passion is burned up, and cannot find the ‘spark’ to act. Accidie comes in here= we abandon our post. We put down the calling of passion.

This is the final Absence of God beneath everything where passion has become burned out, its heart for existence defeated by the ‘clarity of the devil’ which sees nothing good, and nothing true, anywhere or in anyone. Hence existence is entirely futile, pointless, meaningless, a con trick, a bad joke= not even a tale told by an idiot but a sick joke spun by a sadist having sport watching things fall off the cliff..

Because there is no God, the heart stands on nothing, and as a result, there is nothing to uphold the risk of the heart’s giving its sweat, tears, and blood, to the world. This is the Vacuity that drags everything downward, like a Black Hole, the Void, or Groundless Abyss that we fall into, forever.

Pit= the loss of life. Existential Shame.
Hell= the betrayal of truth. Existential Guilt.
Empty Void= the extinguishing of faith. Existential Despair.

FURTHER NOTES

The Pit is mentioned by the Bible more often than any other hell. The Jews, like the Greeks, loved Life, valued Life More Ardent, and so the shadowy life, the half-life, the life with its guts sucked out, no belly, no thymos, no Dionysic life overcoming death-- for both Jews and Greeks this was terrible.

But the Jewish Bible, because of its sharper ethical sense than anything in Hellenism, also has Gehenna, the hot and burning hell -- full of heat like in a sulphurous volcanic eruption, or a toxic furnace, which is, at core, colder than ice; we create this ‘cold heat’ when our passion allows its Anger For Truth to be ‘snared’ by evil, and it not only does evil but lies about what it is doing. The hellish flame in our passion is ‘relentless’, becoming ever more determined to take what it demands, ‘and to hell with the consequences.’ This hellish passion is robustly damaging in its effect upon everything it seizes hold of; it

has tyrannical potency and pitiless toughness, with little conscience to cause it to stop, or even pause to examine what it is doing.

To act in this manner, passion must be 'converted' to the lying which is inherent to evil. Thus, though some people are unapologetically forthright about the evil deeds they commit, many more will never face the 'bad heart' driving their action. Their nefarious deeds will be hypocritically covered up by a cloak of respectability, legitimacy, probity.

Their only concern is that their action succeed in attaining its goal, so they can proceed with confidence. There is no truth to challenge the fierce hotting up, and boiling over, of this 'cold hearted' passion tempted to accede to evil; it proceeds, unopposed, ever further into the labyrinth of undiluted 'pure' spiritual hellishness which is the Fiery Gehenna, from which there is no escape-- unless we repent.

Then a purgatorial change can occur.. We burn painfully as we purge or expel our adhesion to evil, and experience our evil deeds' effects like daggers turned back on us. We feel the harm we did, in short, as its victim.. But this does not last forever. It lasts a time. Once through it, we 'burn' with the fire of truth in the Fire of Love. This is a different burning, the burning of divine love in human passion. There is no fulfilment more than this for the heart. Purgation in Gehenna is a deep 'conversion' for the heart.. The deeper evil doers, who repent and allow hell to be burnt out of their heart, acquire in their heart the deepest fire of truth and love..

Thus there is a strange and hidden route from Gehenna to God's Holiness. The Jews call this 'the Turning', the Way of the Return.

THE SATANIC FREUD

“I have found little that is ‘good’ about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publically subscribe to this or to that ethical doctrine or none at all.. If we are to talk of ethics, I subscribe to a high ideal from which most of the human beings I have come across depart most lamentably” [pp 61-62, ‘Psychoanalysis and Faith’, 1963].

Given what we today know about Freud’s trashy deeds on so many fronts, this statement is the projection of his shadow, his own trash, on the rest of humanity. Freud’s denigration of ‘most human beings’ masks itself as ‘realism’, as ‘critical reason’, as ‘sober assessment.’ The “great stoic Freud” [Ernest Becker, p 276] is just another believer in – like any fundamentalist -- ‘man, the miserable sinner.’

THE LUCIFERIAN, MATRIARCHAL JUNG

A letter to a friend=

M. put your questions to me, in the wake of your visit to see Jung's Red Book. As M. conveyed it, you wanted me to comment on, 'how Jungianism is like Buddhism', 'is the Self like God?', 'what did it mean that Jung died all alone in his tower?'

Jung died in despair, proclaiming that his life work had failed.. He knew he had blown it. And he was right. People treat him as a giant, but he was a pigmy. I met him in extreme youth, and was hugely unimpressed by him -- probably because next to my mentor of the time, Eric Graham Howe, he seemed small and just full of a typical Germanic Metaphysical Hot Air. If you read the book of the Tavistock Lectures [published in the 1930s in London], you will see how long on grandiosity and short on substance Jung really is. In the book, E.G. Howe questions Jung and he replies in a way both pompous and fatuous.. Jimmy Wallerstein, the uncle of a friend, in college wrote Jung -- and got back an incredibly condescending and unctuous letter [such as only someone 'up himself' could bother to pen].

In midlife, Jung had a severe psychotic breakdown that later he attributed to a pre-vision of the coming World War One. This is typical of Jung's inability to face unflattering facts about his psycho-pathology-- his wife despaired of this to Freud. Jung was narcissistic, as well as schizoid, and that means he was both grandiose and over obsessed with his injured self; this self had to be 'spiritually' over cooked as well. His whole account of Individuation, and the growth of the Self, describes the process we now understand as 'Self Repair', or 'Narcissistic Healing.' No more, no less. No need to give it spiritual pretensions.

In fact, rendered as spirituality, it is misleading, and false.

Martin Buber tears Jung to shreds in a debate they had, from which Jung fled, stung in his narcissistic omnipotence. Buber discerned something Luciferian in Jung, and summed it up in a sharp critique= "Jung wants to divinise the soul without first sanctifying it."

Lucifer is spiritual self-love. Part of Jung's despair, alone in his tower, is that this is a perfect symbol for his inability to love what is Other to this injured self. Many therapists and psychologists have pointed out there is no I--Thou, no real relationality, in Jung's writings; as suffering from a narcissistic illness, this is understandable, but as a so-called spiritual path, this leads only to 'Lucifer, the god within.' The 'Gnostic Myth' Jung evolved in the aftermath of his psychotic collapse is Luciferian.

Narcissistic pathology forms in childhood, and can be repaired in adulthood. But when we find the self, we no longer go looking for it; we give it away to life. A truer mantra would be= find the self to forget the self.

Hence.

No, there is no similarity between Jungianism and Buddhism. Jung himself tried to assimilate Buddhism to his notion of Individuation, and the rise of the Self, but it won't wash. Jung and Buddhism are operating on different levels. The Buddhists speak of the No-Self-- and much else that Jung ignores, including hard ascetic discipline, and the difficult yoke of meditation practice, which works toward the nous mind, which is neither what Jung calls conscious nor unconscious. Most importantly, Buddhist 'Emptiness' is not to be confused with the psychic area of the unconscious that Jung was beguiled by [the fate of the psychotic person]. Many transpersonal therapists and psychologists, like Jung's patient and student Assagioli, or Ken Wilbur, have pointed out that Jung confuses the psychic unconscious with other kinds and levels of spiritual faculties and spiritual realities that are not the same as, and are indeed beyond, the 'collective unconscious.' Jung does not seem to have had visionary, or mystic, experiences, but did have vivid imaginal experiences of the psychic unconscious [precisely the psychotic bias]. Thus Jung is confused about what lies outside the conscious sphere, and dumps it all together, calling it all just an extension of human consciousness. That it is not..

Bewitchment by the unconscious, and being deeply confused by it at a below the head level, is the heritage of psychosis. Jung over values the psychic unconscious, and over extends its reach. He deifies it, it is his idol. [This reflects the family drama, where the mother is powerful and witch-like, whilst the father is weak and conventional. Jung is taken up in the matriarchal= patriarchy is absent. Moreover, the mother's family were heavily involved in 'spiritualism', a movement that conflates 'psychic' with 'spiritual' as a matter of course].

Some credit can go to Jung. He raised the issue of the soul, and the psychic unconscious. The 'self' is an identity of the soul that, as Jung says, unites conscious and unconscious. But so what? Jung makes this a bigger issue than it really is. Many things in life re-unite the conscious and unconscious parts of the soul= creativity, love, situated action and its peak, being 'in flow' [or in the zone].. Some gifted children already have a tacitly united soul. This theme is 'an area' of life, but not as Jung made it, 'the area' of existence. Existence has more meaningful, and challenging, fish to fry. In any case, St Anthony of the Desert anticipated Jung 1600 years earlier when advising people, "become what you are."

Spiritually, three more points can be added to Buber's critique.

[1] If cleansed, the soul can become a vehicle through which God works, and to use a Biblical Jewish and Christian symbol, a House in which God indwells. But there is no sense in which the Self simply is God, or is a 'god.' Being touched, energised, illumined, inspired, by God via the soul as the receptor is a Gift of the God who remains always Other to us, however much

he draws close to, and enters, us. Jung was narcissistically offended, like Lucifer, at the very existence of Divine Otherness.

[2] There is more to the soul itself than the two-fold conscious--unconscious dynamic which Jung was so interested in. The soul has other dimensions that Jung misses. For example, the mystical soul that unites with God, nature, art, other people, in ecstatic joy. Jung misses Eros. The marriage of Eros and Soul is quite different to claiming the soul is already potentially divine, and just has to 'develop' itself to become explicitly divine. That is Luciferian. The soul is divinised through cleansing [the hard ascetic side], and as a gift of God's Love. Another dimension Jung misses is the Shamanic 'converse' with Nature, its Energies and Spirits, which are also real, and Other, to the soul.. Jung champions the inner, but misses the 'in between' [or inter-subjective] where inner communicates with another inner. Such inner to inner connection also involves Love.

[3] But more primary than the soul relationship to God, from a Jewish and Christian viewpoint, is the heart relation to God that involves our deepest, most tormented and tumultuous, passion. There is no heart in Jung whatever, no existential cutting edge. Again, this is down to his thought refusing Otherness, and wanting to keep everything within the circle of one consciousness. The common Jungian mantra about 'expansion of consciousness' leaves out the struggles and sacrifice of passion, as well as its personalness. The heart identity is personal. Its passion is personal in its heroism [and again, Joseph Campbell misses this heroism in its existential reality, as does James Hillman].

For people with no respect for organised religion, Jung seems to offer an alternative 'way' to something that might be called spiritual [or might not, depending on how 'discerning of spirits' you are prepared to be]. Consequently he has been guru-ised. I saw as a youth that this guru-isation was like a deathly palace surrounding and squeezing the life out of him. He wanted out, yet more secretly he needed it. The narcissist prefers admiration to love. Jung knew, at the end of his life, he had not broken out of his own lonely tower to enter the risk of love, and thus his work suffered because it misses the whole key that unlocks all dimensions of the soul= Love. This is the real meaning of the Eros--Psyche myth of ancient Greece. The soul has riches and gifts, but as with Lucifer's charisma, without love and loving, these fruits go corrupt, and rot on the vine.

You can spend your life polishing the diamond of your expanded selfhood, your enlarged consciousness, but so what? What do you have at the end of that? Nothing much.. This was Jung's despair. Spending your life polishing the diamond until it shines means that the diamond remains hard and cold-- it never bleeds for anyone, it never breaks due to love.

The Diamond Self, radiating light and colour, thus becomes the block on having a heart, and having your heart broken by love. This is the adventure of life. Those who miss this know, as they die, that they blew it.

Love is necessary to awaken and unlock the soul. But Love goes farther with the heart, breaking it, and remaking it, as part of the fight for the redeeming of the whole world process.

Cante wasteya.

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY

1,

The tragedy of humanity deeper than sin, and lodged deeper down in the mysterious abysses of the heart, cannot be understood in the context of Western Christian teachings about the Fall. This is why Western Christianity has always, more or less, seen fallen humanity as puny, nasty, silly. There is no gravitas afforded our human error..

2,

The Christian West has always belittled the human, so that we are small by definition, and lorded over by a huge, majestic divinity far above. This reflects nothing but the immense and destructive gap between the monarch, at the apex, and the peasants, at the bottom. They must bend the knee, in fear and enforced but insincere 'respect', in an act of obedience that acknowledges they are subject to the big boss. Such lowly 'subjects' of the exalted monarch have no freedom, no dignity, no bigness of their own. There is no love lost between such small beings and their vast 'lord.' They do as he wants-- or else. When he is patronisingly charitable to them, he feels no warmth for them, nor any compassion for their reduced circumstances. They belong where they are.. If he throws them a few crumbs from the master's high table, he does so merely to show off how magnanimous he is. The 'cold charity' reinforces his superiority to the inferiors who need it.. Thus it humiliates any remaining pride in them to take it. They are forced, by their impoverished station, to take the hand out, but they resent needing it, and resent having to accept it.

To say that the relationship between the 'top and bottom' here is loveless is to put it mildly. Yet on this model, Western Christians try to please the remote patriarchal deity, and so it is hardly surprising they could not see anything in the Cross except Christ taking the punishment meant to come to humanity for their sin, sent by a cold and exacting 'father.' How does love ever enter this relationship of father and his disobedient children? It cannot..

In Protestantism, this internalised self-loathing of the lowly and insignificant masses toward their high and important 'lord', was taken to a final extreme. Thus, as a result of the Fall, humanity has nothing good left in them. Humanity is wholly devoured by evil. Consequently, we are like worms, crawling face down in the filth of this world, and anything God does to rescue us from that perilous condition must be on the model of the 'condescension' of the all-wonderful lord towards his useless subjects; the divine perfection has to engage in an arbitrary, deus ex machina, lifting of the imperfect human out of its debacle of sinking totally into sin. There is, on this extreme Satanic belief, nothing like God, nothing of God, in our humanity that can inherently and voluntarily respond to God, when God holds out a helping hand to us.

This is why it is only in Western Secularism that attempts have been to find in the human a hidden god, a potential similarity to, or an analogy with, divinity. Many of these attempts to excavate an inherent, or innately given, 'human bigness' are Luciferian [for example, Jung's 'Individuation' and Nietzsche's 'Superman'']. But that is the result of official Western Christian doctrine conveying such a low estimate of humanity.

That low estimate is Satanic.

3,

It is only in Eastern Christianity that the tradition -- officially and as a whole -- asserted the teaching that not only is there a God-created, and thus innate, bigness in humanity, from our beginning, and surviving even after the Fall, but something further which is far more radical. God created humanity not 'to be the best we can be', for why limit yourself to being the best person in the world? We were destined to be as God. This means, we were called to grow from our original humanity into a final divine-humanity, or Godlikeness. According to the Biblical description, we start as 'the image of God', but we continue to grow over the whole span of evolution and history, into the 'likeness to God.' We will end up still human, yet divinised; and this possibility was always in us, and not destroyed at our Fall. The Fall put the Image on ice, and therefore blocked the dynamic movement toward the Likeness. None the less, the seed and spark of our divinization remains the key to our humanity. We are great and hooked on the valueless, deep and caught in the shallow, at once. We wrestle in that paradox.

Those who try to be big by getting rid of their smallness -- the Lucifer path -- come unstuck; the attempt to be a god to ourself fails. Equally, those who try to be small by getting rid of their bigness -- the Satanic path -- are derailed; the attempt to find a god outside ourself fails. 'Neither this, nor that.'

If our destiny is to become the divinised humanity, which is also a humanised divinity, then Christ came to help us recover the Image, and continue growing toward the Likeness. The point is, the Likeness to God is Christ, and the Image is a pretaste, a foreshadowing, a prefigurement, of Christ. Thus long before Christ came, intimations of the Likeness abound, and Christ affirms, and confirms, these old ways of bigness in the world. He validates all of human bigness, not condemning it as inadequate, but dragging it further along its own trajectory of dynamic motion, revealing it as incomplete. He is where it was always aimed.

Thus Eastern Christianity's outlandish claim, 'God became man, so that man might become God.'

However, Christ also accepts the human paradox, that despite the eruptions of bigness in human cultures all over the globe in the past, the harsher truth is that human bigness has in the main tragically failed. The sins that follow from this put the seal on the tragedy. Yet they do not cause it.

The Fall of our bigness, not the resultant unworthiness in all our sinning, is the real problem.

This has slowed, even stalled, our evolution, and turned our history into a nightmare. This is more than 'sin' could have achieved on its own. The absence of any bigness of heart has meant humanity has hit existential shipwreck, and closely related to this, has lost the gumption needed to fight to take the world back from the devil.

'We need a hero.'

It is the absence of the Image of God – the non-functioning and in-action of our primordial akinness to God -- that is the human tragedy which becomes the world's tragedy. We cannot really become what we were created to become; as a result, all natural beings flee us and nature hides her secret from us, while the world that is open-ended in possibility becomes, in the absence of any human heroism to challenge it, the playground of the devil= people swept up in evil rule the roost, set the agenda, make most of the running.

Where are the heroes to step into the breach?

4,

Eastern Christianity saw the Image of God in humanity, the promise of our destiny to become the Likeness to God, the divine-humanity, in mystical, and sacramental, terms. Restoration of the Image becomes Temple based.

This is not wrong but it is incomplete. If its incompleteness is taken for completeness, then it becomes seriously misleading.

The Image of God is, fundamentally, existential. The Image of God is the big heart, and its ardent passion; it is the heroism of the king, the warrior, the prophet, the reversal clown, the wise sage, and all other holy callings, which trust the heart and therefore give the heart to the world.

This heart-ful and passionate deed toward the world is markedly evident in St Peter. Whatever the tragedy of this enworlded bigness, it is open to redeeming precisely because of, and in the thick of, its tragic failure. St Peter, the most impulsive and variable of all the disciples, only became the Rock of steadfastness and long-suffering, bearing the unbearable and enduring the unendurable, through the paradox of the human condition. He was the first to step up, and the first to fall down; yet by courageously facing this failure of heroism and weeping over it, and staying with the tragedy, not bailing out from it prematurely, his was the most extreme 'weakness' that could receive Christ's ultimate strength. St Peter was the fiery and the broken heart; giving this contradiction to the Redeemer is our crucial cooperation with redemption.

The Image of God is enworlded. It cannot grow to the Likeness to God if the world is 'left behind.' It cannot come to itself in the sacred precincts of the

Temple, or in heaven far from the earth. Our true name 'names' the heart we have, and its peculiar passion, for the repair of the world.

The Image of God is the innocent heart, the primal passionateness, that loves trustingly, and un-self-consciously. Its radical calling is to the destiny of the world. Our outcome 'as God' is bound hand and foot to the outcome of the world. If the world goes down, the Image of God goes down with it.

Given this existential reality of the Image and Likeness, then we need to not only have more compassion for human error at all levels, and in all forms, but we need a genuine respect for human suffering-- for what we have wrestled with, however badly or well. God respects this human suffering.

That is why he sent the Messiah-- to validate and encourage it, to change it at source, in the foundation, in the depth.

Saving= the Goodness reclaimed from ignorance, greed, hatred.

Redeeming= the Truth only 'won' from the dark, the suffering, the deep.

Saving= 'reasonable worship.'

Redeeming= 'inexplicable hard road.'

HELL AS THE 'EXISTENTIAL CONDITION' OF THE HUMAN HEART

1,

Hell is not an objective location to which we go, after death.

Hell is a 'place' in the heart where we fail, betray, block, the love inspired by the Fire of Spirit that 'passes through' the heart. Thus Hell is experienced already in this life, as an existential condition of the heart which acts for God's love, or more routinely resists it. The only question is whether we remain in the hell of the heart, in this life and even beyond, or are redeemed.

The heart is the battlefield of the forces of life and death, truth and lie, wisdom and nullity.

2,

Oliver Clement, in 'The Roots of Christian Mysticism' [pp 303-305], points out that Eastern Christianity never believed, nor accepted, that hell is 'punishment for sin.' Hell is the existential consequence of using our freedom to avoid love. This creates the experiential dynamics, the phenomenology, of hell in our depths. Oliver Clement, in discussing this point, quotes St Isaac of Nineveh and St Gregory of Nyssa=

"..It is unthinkable and contrary to the very spirit of the Christian revelation that God should abandon anyone. God, in Christ, gives to everyone the fullness of his love. But this love can be experienced as torment by those who reject it. In its light they discover how much they have sinned against – betrayed -- it. The fire of hell is the fire of love that gives remorse a terrible clarity:

'As for me, I say those who are tormented in hell are tormented by the invasion of love. What is there more bitter and more violent than the pains of love? Those who feel they have sinned against love bear in themselves a damnation much heavier than the most dreaded punishments. The suffering with which sinning against love afflicts the heart is more keenly felt than any other torment. It is absurd to suppose that sinners in hell are deprived of God's love. Love.. is offered impartially. But by its very power it acts in two ways. It torments sinners, as happens here on earth when we are tormented by a friend to whom we have been unfaithful. And it gives joy to those who have been faithful. That is what the torment of hell is in my opinion – remorse' [Isaac of Nineveh, 'Ascetic Treatises', p 326].

We must pray, however, that the fire of God's judgement [which is God's truth] ..will not consume the wicked, but only that part in each one which is evil. The division into Sheep and Goats.. would thus be made, not between two crowds of human beings, but between two kinds of character within each

individual. ..other parables.. like that of the 'wheat' [good seed] and the 'tares' cannot be interpreted in any other way. ..What is 'sown by the devil' [Mathew, 13, 36] is destructive suggestions, the seeds of idolatry and folly. Good seed and tares are human dispositions. To destroy the thoughts sown by the evil one is not to destroy the person but to cauterise him=

'The body is subject to various sorts of illness. Some are easy to treat, others are not, and for the latter recourse is had to incisions, cauterization, bitter medicine.. We are told something of the same sort about the judgement in the next world, the healing of the soul's infirmities. If we are superficial people, that amounts to a threat and a process of severe correction.. But the faith of deeper minds regards it as a process of healing and a therapy applied by God in such a way to as to bring back the being he created to its original grace.

In fact those who by incisions or cauterization remove.. warts.. on.. the body, do not bring about the healing without pain; but it is not to do harm to the patient that they carry out the incision. It is the same with the 'warts' that have formed on our souls.. [for] at the moment of judgement they are cut out and removed by the ineffable wisdom and power of him who is, as the Gospel says, the physician of the sick' [Gregory of Nyssa].

Certainly [no] limits can be put on our terrible freedom as human beings.. Nor, however, can one limit [God's love].

..Deeper than hell is Christ the conqueror of hell."

3,

There is no greater heartbreak than to use the heart, put it out in the world, then come finally to the doubt that there is any point to having a heart at all.

In the ultimate, it is this despair Christ suffers for, to resurrect from it a trust in the heart after innocence has been abused, a trust born of trials and pain in this world.

Nietzsche said= "The world is deep." The Jews have a word for this; 'nisayon' means 'the world as arena of the test.' This test is spiritual, and physical, because it is existential.

The broken-hearted have entered the worldly arena, taken it on, accepted its wound, but for one reason or another, also hit the wall.. This is the point where Sartre's final judgement bites= "Humanity is a useless passion." If your passion is futile, over the longer run, what point in giving your heart? Are you simply a fool?

The Cross is, at its deepest, the entry in and commitment to the arena of the worldly test. You will not find this test anywhere in nature, the cosmos, the being and becoming of things. You will find it in the world, and it has the power to afflict the heart with a doubt so corrosive, the heart dies in you even

as you still stand, go about your business, breathe, and move. But it is no good.. There is no heart in any of it.

Losing heart is having the stuffing knocked out of you. You have no sand. You become insubstantial. A leaf could knock you over.

I have seen in this world how few are the people of heart.. People are remote from the heart, but do not understand this is so, because they would not want all that comes with the heart.. These people not of the heart pursue other things, some materialistic, some spiritual, some political, some cultural.. It doesn't matter. This is not 'bad.' It is just without heart.

Every person of heart I have met in this life I have seen come to despair with it; having risked heart, ending in the place without heart.

The Jewish word for honour -- kavod -- is much debated in Judaism, but its meaning is clear, and pained, to anyone who ever had a heart and lost it.

Thus kavod as honour means 'heaviness' or 'weight', it means the dignity or 'gravitas' of a person. It is the heart that has to bear and endure, lift and carry, the heavy weight in existence so deep, the heart is crushed under it. Yet kavod also means 'the seat of honour in the inner man, the noblest part of humanity.' This is the heart that tries to lift, and tries to carry, what humanity long ago put down..

This is the heart that carries the weight, and buckles, because it is too heavy to carry.

To try the heart, and see it fail in one's own life and in the lives of others, is the final heartbreak.

Humanity has lost its dignity, its gravitas, its nobility, because the weight remains un-raised. We have let ourselves become light-weight. Thus evil walks in and takes what it wants, it sweeps us aside, as a strong wind blows away thin paper.

Never the less, the heart remains the true place of God, and even in our deepest doubt in the heart, there remains a cry, and this cry is our prayer.

Becoming Nothing is to see every idol of heart, every previous imagining and desire, every idealistic hope, finally burned to ashes. The heart is the furnace of the active engine of the world, every action for the rectification of the world -- 'tikkun olam' -- comes from the heart. To lose heart is to despair of the 'repair of the world.'

This is the same as the heart concluding, 'there is no God.'

There is no Redeemer, there is no Messianic Power of Spirit, at work in the world, helping the heart raise the weight, and by this, become weighty

enough to dent the massive stone on the heart, holding it down, in all humans.

This is coming to the Nothing.

Humility? Who knows.. It just means, my heart is out of juice and pith, and does not ignite any more..

This is the deepest hell.

For the people who have tried the heart, it can be final in this life.. It is possible never to find any way back from this extremity.

If there is a way to reignite the ashes, you will know its veracity if it has the weightiness to enable you to lift the weight under which you stumbled and crashed to the ground. Otherwise, the way is light-weight, and can do nothing for your heart.

What lifts the heavy weight on your heart will enable you to carry the heavy weight in existence as it bears down on other people's hearts.

Anyone who carries the weight reveals the heart, broken in everyone.

If you are not capable of any heavy carrying, it is all right.

Stay in the Nothing. Do not try to do, or understand, more than you actually can. Continuing to punch above your weight, at this moment, is no good..

The Nothing is pregnant because it is a paradox. The point where the heart fails is the only place where the heart can be renewed.

Will you make a last gamble on that? Will you try a last trust, take a last risk, on the heart in that paradox?

PETER THE UPSIDE DOWN MAN

PRELUDE

Some months ago I came across a passage from the letters of Peter by accident. I have always found that the things I most need to read turn up out of nowhere, unsought for, yet always personally compelling at just a moment in time when needed..

There were words before, and after, the single phrase sizzling on the page that amplified and contextualised it, but I hardly was aware of them. I was suddenly on fire with the words of Fire that the Spirit had inspired in Peter in regard to the meaning of Christ.

“..because Christ suffered on your behalf, and thereby left you an example; it is for you to follow in his steps”.. [1 Peter, 2, 21].

The full passage from which this line comes runs from 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 19 to 25. But the phrase that still burns me every time I return to it remains= where he went and what he did is a heroic journey and heroic battle which you must travel and you must fight, if you want to belong to Christ.

You can respect, even admire, Christ at a distance, and then going where he went and doing what he did is not incumbent upon you. Its yoke does not rest on your shoulders, nor does its summons trouble your heart. His passion is not exemplar, guide, and helper, of your passion. Christ's passion need not, in equal measure, hurt and rouse your passion. You can look at where he went and what he did and not really see it with the heart, and without it striking you hard and creating compunction, you need not ever consider that, one day, you too will follow a passion that puts you out on a limb, out over the deep, suspended and in suspense over the Abyss into which you fear to fall if you risk too much. That Christ risked everything, so you could risk more and finally come to the supreme and final risk will remain dormant. You will know it is so, because the heart knows the score, but for that very reason, you will choose walkways of life that need not ever call upon the heart.

1,

Those who are followers of Christ 'must go where he went and do what he did'; this is the meaning of the Cross.

Thus, the Cross does not absolve us from making its ultimate sacrifice with our own life and action, but on the contrary, what Christ did by embracing the Cross is an example which invites us 'to follow in his steps.' But what is the Cross an example of?

It is an example of heroic passion, or passion at its most heroic, the extreme heroism that goes to the end of the line. Indeed, in saying we must go where he went and do what he did, it is being asserted that Christ's action takes on

a wound and a burden that we cannot take on; it lifts the old weight we cannot lift, and pays the old cost we cannot pay. It comes to the very place where the most heroic human passion fails, the narrow straits where we are stuck, the deep place in the heart where we hit the wall, and the killing ground in the world where we cower and fall flat on our face into the dust. Christ enters the primordial place of human defeat, to do there what no human being can do-- including all the enlightened ones, the illumined teachers, the wise elders, none of whom who could take on the wound and the burden, and therefore all of whom left it in the dark and suffering depths where every human being knows everything is lost. What Christ does in that place of human heartbreak is to forge a way through, a heavy and a costly way, but a way which enables us to pass through 'in his steps.' Through Christ, we can go where he went, and do what he did.

By our own strength, as Christ tells Peter, we can 'do nothing'; we will always step out on the wave tossed seas and walk a few steps, and then start to sink, certain we are going to drown. Or, we will step up, and then falter, and finally run, betraying what we vowed to stand up for. Passion goes farther than anything else we can humanly come up with, but human passion fails at a certain step which is 'a bridge too far.' Drama is the story of heart, but in the truest dramatic story telling, the human heart gives its all and by virtue of that, comes to the point where it cannot give; the human venture is a tragedy precisely because when we truly reach the sticking point, at that point we cannot stick. Where we need to be most staked to the ground for what is most at stake in existence is precisely where we fall. The criminal, the weak, the lazy, the self-indulgent and self-righteous, do not even get near this staking point, but the tragedy is, even the heroic, even the most noble, even the very best, cannot stand it at this point, and will inevitably give up and give in. Tragedy is the fall of what is greatest in us.

This 'fall' is prior to sin. It is more akin to humanity leaving the kitchen because of not being able to bear and endure the heat-- rather than cooking up poisoned food to kill others, whilst greedily cooking up the richest food for oneself. By the time sin arises, the fallenness in the heart is already established. The fall is existential.

There is an innocent suffering inherent to existence -- to which the righteous Job was subjected -- that precedes sin, and is in fact the existential pre-condition for its arising. This has a vital bearing on what Peter is saying about the Cross of Christ.

2,

There is a suffering fated to existence in this world, and this is the suffering that wounds and burdens us, requiring us to lift a weight and pay a cost. Such suffering is inherent because of the material limits in which we live, the limits on what we can ever know, and the basic reality that our roads as human beings cross, so that we affect and are affected by one another. A weight you refuse to carry is put on my shoulders and crushes my back, causing me to start to buckle and crash into another brother only precariously standing, and

when he hits the ground, several more brothers can no longer stand upright and come down with him. The weight you will not carry becomes the heavier burden your brother must carry, the cost you will not pay becomes the more expensive debt your brother must pay.

The weight was put down ages ago. The cost was refused ages ago.

It hurts too much to speak of this. No one speaks of the weight not carried by our passion and the cost not paid by our passion. It is too shaming. It is too hurting to remember it. But we are reminded of it every time our greatness loses its way and loses its footing, falling into the human tragedy. The human tragedy is that, when it really counts, our greatest is not up for it. Sin may be a sign, or consequence, of tragedy, but if we were simply sinful, there would be no tragedy to the human condition. There would be an error, inviting correction. Tragedy is not like that. It is far more profound. It hurts us to look into its depths. Its agony and anguish is too close to home.

On the Cross, Christ takes on the human tragedy, and by joining with it and diving into it, leaving nothing of himself immune from its ravages, intervenes and changes it from the inside. This process of embracing the human tragedy, in order to redeem it in the very depth of its most powerful affect upon the human heart, starts at the Cross, is suffered and fought out in the mysterious '3 days' of the Descent into Hell, and its victory proclaimed in the Resurrection. The Resurrection declares the turn around and reversal in the depth effected by Christ's entry into the hell that has captured the human heart and held it in slavery from the beginning.

The divine-human passion redeems the human passion. This is the Cross; this is why 'you will go where he went and do what he did' is the Christian litany, the holy mantra honouring Christ's unbelievable sacrifice, unbelievable deed, unbelievable victory, in the deep place of human defeat.

Consequently, we must be clear on the issue Peter understood, not doctrinally but existentially, and this is that Christ passes through the point in innocent suffering, existential suffering, the suffering inherent to existence, where we faltered, and faked it, declining to take it on, and then finding the refusal 'set in stone' and increasing our incapacity over the ages upon ages of human existence in this world. "The world is deep"= in our fall we fail the world's depth, making our depth and the world's depth the indwelling of hell.

This, however, is what Christ's innocent suffering changes by suffering what we cannot suffer. It is prior to the Cross as 'atonement for sin.' Christ's sacrificial death, at the deepest level, is not because of carrying and paying for people's sinfulness; it carries and pays for something prior to and profounder than that. Certainly, it must be acknowledged that there is a suffering that is passed around and gets inflicted upon us all when people 'behave badly'; this is the sin that becomes so entrenched, so widespread, so magnified over time and distance, that its consequences cannot be removed by any effort of human good will on its own. According to Isaiah in the 4 Slave Songs of the Messiah, the Messianic King suffers and dies for his people,

because of carrying and paying for their cumulative sins. Peter is referring to this passage of Isaiah briefly and elliptically when he adds to the more primary meaning of the Cross he has pointed out the secondary, atoning meaning= “In his own person he carried our sins to the gallows, so we might cease to live for sin and begin to live for righteousness” [1 Peter, 2, 24]. But the key to the primary break-through in the place of deepest human breakdown is earlier= “But when you have behaved well and suffer for it, your fortitude is a fine thing in the sight of God” [1 Peter, 2, 20]. ‘Behaving well’ is a short hand, almost a euphemism, for passion; this is even more clear in the opening shot of this passage= “For it is a fine thing if a man endure the pain of undeserved suffering because God is in his thoughts” [1 Peter, 2, 19]. When God is in our heart, deeper than any thought can reach, then we can act for God from passion, and accept the ‘undeserved’ suffering this brings us as a consequence of such a deed; this accepting of undeserved suffering, in effect being punished for the good we risk doing, is what we have primordially repudiated and this is why we cannot do good beyond a certain limit. It is the greater in us that is blocked, imprisoned, stopped. Peter is claiming that it is this very limit that Christ crashes through, and so when we follow Christ, we too discover we can accept innocent suffering as the consequence of passion. This allows us to act like Christ who “committed no sin, [and] was convicted of no falsehood”; and who “when he was abused ..did not retort with abuse, when he suffered he uttered no threats, but committed his cause to the One who judges justly” [1 Peter, 2, 22-24]. The last phrase is the most important. When Kierkegaard articulated passion as a ‘leap of faith’, he was pointing to the same reality that Peter describes as not giving sin for sin, not returning evil with evil, or using injustice to repay injustice, but standing by the passion that holds God in its heart, and risking its entire fate to the justice of God.

In short, the Cross is an example inviting us to walk in its footsteps, because the Cross is prior even to our own sinfulness, and refers to our greater and deeper passion, showing us a way in which we can go to the maximum with that passion, no matter its weight, no matter its cost, without retaliating when the world rewards our best with its worst.

The teaching on the atonement puts humanity as guilty before Christ’s innocence, which is perfectly just when you look at our smaller side; but that is not the whole story, as the West of Christianity has mistakenly and even heretically tried to render it, for Peter’s teaching in this passage puts humanity as innocent with Christ, which is just to our bigger side. We need to be forgiven of sin by the Cross in the secondary atonement meaning; yet in the primary heroism meaning of the Cross we need to forgive sin, as Christ did.

Christ’s undaunted heroism tells our shattered heroism, ‘take the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.’ The bravest and most giving way of heart passion is what is restored by the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, and therefore Christ’s suffering invites us who are moved by its strange drama to go where it goes and do what it does.

This was always necessary, and the true calling of humanity, whether there had been any fall, and lapsing into sin, or not. We lapse weakly into sin as the easy way in the existential situation which has been abandoned by our capacity for the hard way of greatness and depth; in other words, given we cannot suffer for passion of heart, suffer innocently and carry the weight and pay the cost, so there is no strength, no flame, in us to contest the existential arena and stand up for a harder but truer way of acting in it. Sin dominates the existential arena, easily, because there is no bigness in us to overcome our smallness.

Peter is simply saying that Christ has shown us the way to live and enact the heart, without losing heart; Peter simply declares that Christ is the hero, the real hero, who goes all the way, and if we learn the secret to this heart and its passion, then we too can go all the way, not counting consequences, but no matter what. We too can be Christlike in our action of heart, conveyed through passion.

It isn't an imitation; it is a 'cleaving' to him, a dual yoking. He is yoked to our tragedy, and cannot escape it, by any *deus ex machina*, magical, supernatural, means; we are yoked to Christ's suffering way through our tragedy, which inverts it and reverses it, turning defeat into victory, the lostness into a finding of our feet and our way ahead that will never be lost again. But we have to accept his suffering which accepts fate; and we have to accept that this is an inversion, or reversal, of everything we hold dear, and makes sense to us. We have to embrace that Christ's way of dealing with the absurdity of existence is itself, by our lights, 'absurd.' The solution to the problem feels like the problem intensified; thus Christ's way is the last thing we would ever turn to for a way through the existential dilemma. We know our own weakness in its grip only too well= we smell our own stink all the time. But Christ does not appear to be the strength and the wisdom we seek as a way through the exactions and rigours of the existential arena. On the contrary, Christ's way appears that of a fool, and a weakness.

But this is the secret that Peter realised very personally. Christ is the man not only of constant sorrows, but the Reversal Man, the hero who turns inside out and turns upside down the triumph we might have expected, and preferred. In Christ, God accepts reversal to join with our loss of any way forward and we accept reversal to join God's way forward.

This is the heroism of Christ, accepting both kinds of reversal in his heart, the reversal of God to be in humanity, and the reversal of humanity to be in God. Such is God's binding to humanity, and humanity's binding to God. The innocent assumes the compromised, and the compromised assumes the innocent.

The human passion that embraces Christ's divine-human passion at the deepest is Peter, not Paul and not John. Peter knows the secret of how Christ's kingly heart passion restores humanity's kingly heart passion, and establishes it as the primary 'stand' in us facing up to all the innocent suffering the world imposes upon us, some of it coming from people's sinful

proclivity, but some of it coming from the existential fate that conditions existence. In this world, we lose. In this world, injustice rules. Should that stop us? Should that become the measure of our puny passion, our excuse for not giving our heart to the world, but withholding our heart from the world? The suffering is too savage.

Peter signalled his very personal understanding of the reversal Christ underwent out of passionate love for us in his refusal to be crucified right side up, and his preference to be crucified upside down. He understood that in Christ, God is reversed for us, and we are reversed for God.

3,

At a certain moment, Paul gets confused about the atonement, and seems to be substituting the priestly 'offering' for the people's sin that ritually occurs in the temple for the real 'sacrifice' in the world for all the people which only the Messianic King can make. The king can make sacrifice for the people in a manner, and with a power, unique to his spiritual role.

There is a place in the letters of Paul which echoes, and fills out, Peter's experience and understanding of Reversal. Peter 'went into this' deeper than Paul could, a fact revealed by the way Paul elected to die. Far from being crucified, either right side up [God's reversal for humanity] or upside down [humanity's reversal for God], Paul insists on his rights as a Roman citizen, and both defends himself at his trial, which Christ did not, and elects for a quicker death.

None the less, there is a passage in 1 Corinthians which is so close to all the implicit resonances surrounding Peter's account of Christ as the hero of passion -- the hero of the story of heart -- that it is worth considering at length [1 Corinthians, 1, 17-31; and 2, 1-16]. The passage is well known, and commented upon widely, but its key significance is not necessarily always appreciated, for it concerns the reversal. In effect, the bigger in us reformed by Christ, in and through the Spirit, operates in a way that the smaller in us regards insane, irrational, unsupportable, not sensible, not reasonable, not even decent.

Paul starts off his long discussion of the meaning of Christ's Cross by pointing out he has not come to people as a priest= "Christ did not send me to baptise, but to proclaim the Gospel; and to do it without relying on the language of worldly wisdom, so that the fact of Christ on his Cross might have its full weight."

Referring to, and sparking, human passion is so that 'the fact of Christ on his Cross can have its full weight.'

"Scripture says, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the cleverness of the intellectual.' ..God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish.. Jews call for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom; but we proclaim ..Christ nailed to the Cross; and though this is a stumbling block to Jews, and

folly to Greeks, yet to those who have heard his call.. he is the power of God and the wisdom of God” [1 Corinthians, 1, 17-24].

The way of heart passion brought to humanity from God by Christ is the true power of God and is the true wisdom of God, though by human standards and criteria, it reverses what we want as power and reverses what we want as wisdom.

“Divine folly is wiser than the wisdom of man, and divine weakness stronger than man’s strength. ..to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly, and to shame what is strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order” [1 Corinthians, 1, 25-29].

This is why God rarely chooses people as his vehicles and vessels of heart passion ‘men of wisdom, by human standards’ or persons who are ‘powerful [by virtue of being] highly born.’ Out of the worst of humanity God is going to raise humanity’s best, or to put it differently, from those lacking respectability and truly washed up in the eyes of society will come the restored heart passion. Both the socially ambitious, climbing the ladder of success, and the religiously pious, are far from the place in the heart that needs redeeming and can be redeemed, once it embraces the way of reversal.

Paul goes on to say that ‘Christ nailed to the Cross’ is “..God’s hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory. ..in the words of Scripture, things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him; these it is that God has revealed to us through the Spirit” [1 Corinthians, 2, 7-10].

This last -- a direct borrowing from Isaiah -- is vital, because even the example provided by Christ would not be enough to change us. For in the process of loving and following Christ, it is the Spirit who brings the new reality of divine passion and human passion re-linked into our own heart, to rekindle it. Earlier, Paul says “..there is no place for human pride in the presence of God. You are in Christ.. by God’s act.. And so in the words of Scripture, ‘if a man is proud, let him be proud of Yahweh” [1 Corinthians, 1, 29-31]. ‘God’s act’ means the action of the Spirit. No one can know that Christ is the way that God’s wisdom and God’s power works in the world unless the Spirit reveals this to them.

Though Christ enacts the way of heart passion, it is the Spirit who leads and inspires him in this way. The Spirit drives him to its radical extreme, and plunges him into its unfathomable depth, to undergo the secret mysteries of heaven hidden in hell and heaven only won from hell. These mysteries are only disclosed to those who cry out to God in hell, and can receive Christ as God’s reply to the ancient human crying from the depth that is ruined yet still holds the secret of the turnaround, the inversion that upends conventional wisdom and strict morality, and reveals that it is all still to play for. The heart can come back from terrible ruin.

The Spirit searches out the deep things of God and of humanity, it says in the Jewish Bible. Paul adds to this theme= “For the Spirit explores everything, even the depths of God’s own nature. ..only the Spirit of God knows what God is. This is the Spirit that we have received from God, and not the spirit of the world, so that we may know all that God.. gives us; and ..we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it..” [1 Corinthians, 2, 11-14].

4,

The Cross does not provide us admission to heaven, saving us from going to hell. This long-standing, and wide-spread, interpretation is radically false. It betrays the Cross, in fact.

The Cross is not about getting to the next world. It is about remaining in, indeed being wholly bound to the fate of, this world.

The sacrificial action of the Cross – not priestly self-offering, but kingly and warrior self-staking and even self-emptying – is necessary because it suffers the wound, takes the risk, carries the burden, pays the cost, for the redeeming of this world in its materiality, freedom, and historical arena of grief and strife. The Cross is passion of heart ‘suffering anything’ for the sake of loving the world in order to redeem its tragedy. The Cross is love without restriction; nothing can stop it, break it, curtail it. The Cross declares, I will die rather than throw away this love supreme.

The Cross is the power and wisdom of God that redeems the entire world process, from beginning to end. Despite the paradox of its reversal of humanly expected power and humanly expected wisdom, only this wisdom of God that is folly to the worldly and only this power of God that is weakness to the worldly can contest the nightmare of history from which we cannot wake up ‘for’ God and humanity, ‘against’ the Evil One. The Satanic Accuser who makes a bet with God in the Book of Job seeks to ‘rule’ the world and make its long journey end in hell. God gambles with us because he has faith in us finally coming through. We will not in any sense, or on any level, avoid hell but we will pass through its check mate to emerge on the other side. Satan has no faith in us, but seeks to convince God of our utter futility. Satan accuses, judges, condemns, all of humanity as not worth the gamble, as a bad investment by God. Satan wants God to look down on humanity, as he does, and so uses the ‘trappings of God’ to belittle, dismiss and sneer at, humanity. Wherever harshly dismissive, and non-redemptive, attitudes prevail against the human venture, and the religious paraphernalia of ‘church, scripture, tradition’ is used to intimidate and imprison its willingness to brave uncertainty, Satan is at work. For example, Satan knows the Bible better than any human ever will, and can use Biblical quotation as a weapon of universal condemning, individual oppression, social tyranny. Many people who think they are defending the honour of God, by disallowing humans to question or defy God, or honestly be hurt by God as was the innocent Job, the trusting

Abraham, the battling Jacob, are 'of the devil's party' without knowing it, as William Blake said of Milton, but could be said of all forms of religious fundamentalism. The Inquisition, the witch burning, the bombing of infidels -- and everything else in this spirit -- is Satanic.

Thus, far from enabling us to escape the world, so that we abandon it to the devil, while we enjoy heavenly bliss, the Cross plants heaven in hell, and commits heaven to hell. To the disappointment of our human way, heaven allows itself to become 'subject' to hell, but paradoxically, this makes hell subject to the power and wisdom of heaven working to change it from within its very core and in the deep where hell has its root. The core is penetrated and exposed. The root is plumbed and undercut.

This does not mean heaven surrendering to hell, or allowing hell to have its way unopposed. It does mean that to fight hell, we must suffer hell. Heaven must undergo hell to expose its falsity from the inside and undercut its lie from the depth. There is no triumph of heaven over hell, from outside and above, like a bird of prey swooping down on a snake. There is no heaven defeating hell by destroying hell, suppressing hell, imposing superior force on hell. These scenarios are all what God repudiates in Isaiah when, speaking of the reversal of the Messiah, he announces 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways.' The Cross over turns, and upends, all our childhood hopes in the good guy with the white hat killing off the bad guy in the black hat. That dualism of 'good versus evil' is rejected by the Cross.

Yet evil is taken on and opposed. At the very point of its victory, it is overcome; at the very point of its rise to the summit, it is undermined. At the very point of our defeat, victory within and at depth is won and this prepares us to go into the world in a new way, to become the same sacrifice for all the world as the Cross was for each of us.

The Cross breaks the power of evil.

There is no compromise with hell, no indifference to hell, no evasion of hell, no rising above hell or pretence concerning the truth that, in the heart, we are flat on our back, unable to stand, or step up. Thus any premature oneness wherein everything becomes united, and the unity saves all joined with it, is equally rejected by the Cross. The Sword, when reversed, becomes the Cross; and the Cross, when reversed, becomes the Sword. The Sword of Truth crucial to righteousness, the struggle of passion for standing in the heart's abyss, is needed to pave the way for the Cross of Sacrifice crucial to redemption, the struggle of passion to extend the heart into the world's abyss.

Thus, what 'I' stand on -- the heart particular to me -- becomes in the end what 'we' stand on -- the heart common to us all. In the end, there is only one human heart, holding all persons, creatures, things, in its warm, chivalrous embrace. The killing ground where all of us inevitably contend and clash becomes, finally, the ground of reconciliation and forgiveness, and thereby also transmutes into the ground that upholds all persons, creatures, and things, over the abyss. If redemption fails, all sink into the abyss.

If only one goes down, all go down. Redemption is all or nothing. There is no salvation of a few and abandoning of the rest.

If you go down, I will go down with you.

If any human heart ends in hell, God's heart ends in hell with them.

In short, the Cross removes the ancient and otherwise irremovable restriction on how far we can go with the love that binds itself to the world.

The Cross stakes God to the ground, for the sake of what is most deeply at stake in the world. This staking does not relent, does not waver, does not give in and give up, and in it is no weighing up of pain, and no measuring of price.

This Way that God chooses, and we would not choose but can be won over to, does not bypass but accepts the deepest heartbreak= the heartbreak of God in the heartbreak of humanity. The God of the Cross is not some shallow, above it all, happiness; nor some angry old man taking petty revenge on those who dare to defy his majesty, and omnipotence. The former false god is a coward, the latter false god is a bully.

The Cross reveals the God of the heartbreak.

A human heart not broken cannot be redeemed, nor can it redeem.

A human heart broken has a second chance that seems miraculous, to be redeemed and to redeem.

You can tell the true persons of heart passion by the deep rents in their faces where tears have flowed.

'Blessed are those who mourn.' These will come to the 'hunger for righteousness', and will partake in the great mystery of redemption suffering and fighting for this world. The heartbreak in the world, concerning 'God, us, and world' is not going to be transcended by transporting us elsewhere; it is our deepest heartbreak that is going to become the deepest breakthrough in the heart.

As the mystery of the Cross happens in us, and towards the world, so hope dawns, after inconsolable sorrow and non-negotiable anger.

5,

The Cross operates between the tension, even contradiction, of the truth of standing and the never anticipated, nor welcomed, plunging into the depth.

Christ comes 'not to make peace, but to bring a sword'; this is the sword of truth, and such truth will 'separate husband and wife, parents and children, brother and sister, one friend from another friend.' The Daemonic forces us to

take sides= not in the worldly sense of egoic partisanship, or the rivalry of those with different vested interests, but in the spiritual reality of what your stand is in the heart and what you stand for in the world. The 'truth in the inner parts' required by God has to divide people and throw them into authentic battle, the righteous fighting the blatantly unrighteous and the deluded self-righteous, before redemption can unite people in the human tragedy and forgive them all.

The Messianic King is the most upright among his people before he is reversed, and then he becomes the deepest.

6,

The Cross is not a penalty, or a punishment, from God.

Worldliness will not be replaced by other worldliness. Rather, the world will be made holy in the end, and precisely as 'world.' Hence the apocalyptic image of the end of everything as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. The Cross is 'the ticket of admission' to the mystery of this world's catastrophic fall, and reversal of that fall, in time and over the entire span of time.

The penalty and punishment is imposed on any heart that challenges worldliness and the devil's way of manipulating it to evil ends. The penalty and punishment comes from worldly forces, structures, beliefs, working hand in hand with the Evil One to derail the redemptive end which God is betting humanity can reach. But there is no guarantee. The forces opposing any opposition to worldliness and the evil infiltrating it, is huge, and comes from 'wickedness in high places', but trickles down from the vultures in the rich high rise building into the jackals prowling the street. At all levels, political, financial, religious, authority serves and promotes the increasing hell that is taking over the world.

Thus, the Cross is the price the heart willingly pays, to see it through to the end, and not flinch or balk half way.

The Cross calls us not only into the world, but summons us to the hell in this world bidding to become its ruling principle and dominant force.

Anyone either righteous or redemptive, or righteous becoming redemptive, is going to be crucified in this world, either literally or in other ways, for standing on truth, and gambling for redemption. This happened to Christ, and it will happen to us, to a smaller or bigger degree, whenever we follow Christ, by going where he went and doing what he did. Worldliness, and the spirit of evil driving it, imposes a severe penalty and a horrible punishment on anyone whose love impels them to go out on a limb, and to the bottom of the abyss.

In the world as fallen and sinful, real heroism is not wanted but is harshly dealt with, intimidated and crushed; anyone touched by the warrior king, and the Messianic Spirit inspiring and driving his heart passion, will be resisted by the worldly system and those running it, to the point of a bullet in the head,

like Martin Luther King Jr in America, or Bonhoeffer in Nazi Germany, or Father Alexander Men in Russia. Even if you make no direct challenge to the 'powers that be', none the less just doing the simplest things to spread the Goodness of Eros into this world can get you killed. This is what befell the early Christian martyrs.

7,

Eros bestows a Gift upon each and all; its living out is communal. The Daemonic sends out a Call that comes from direct experience of Christ, in the Spirit; its living out is personal.

But there is a paradox many Christians have had to discover down the ages. As Karin Greenhead puts it=

"Maybe Eros is first a gift but through this gift some people start to respond to a call. ...a lot of people in church appear to respond to a gift without necessarily going to hell and back. Conversely, in gratitude for the gift some people give their life to Christ unreservedly. Then that of course means you may very well be dragged off to places you had no intention of going to and burnt.. That is Daemonic."

The martyrs were not seeking death, to escape the world and go to heaven. They were condemned by the Roman authorities because, as Costa Carras points out, they extended the generosity and charity of the Agape of Eros not just to 'their own', but to anyone and everyone. Their light shone on just and unjust alike; they Gave Away all they had to Christians and Pagans equally, without any discrimination. There was no club of the kosher excluding the non-kosher; there was no cabal deciding who was 'in' and who was 'out.' They eschewed worldly status built on rivalry and egoistic domineering, eschewed worldly possessions built on avarice and mistrust, eschewed worldly ambitions built on pride and vainglory, in order to live the life of inter-personal sharing that is travelling toward the mystery of 'being as communion.' They were nothing remotely like capitalists, but not communists either, though they certainly were 'communalists' in the Jewish sense, dedicated to fundamental and radical human solidarity and togetherness. No Jew in the whole era of the Old Testament would have sanctioned any individual advantage that is gained at the expense of collective disadvantage; the Divine Goodness is extended to the 'people of God' as a whole, 'to each and for all.' It was this faithful witness to Christ, in living out the Gift of Grace without compromise, which got the early Christians in trouble. The early martyrs accepted death as the penalty for their fidelity to the Grace of God that had changed them inwardly, inspiring them to outwardly live differently to the hierarchic society around them; they demonstrated in their death the spiritual reality of this Gift and showed by their life its workability as a basis for transforming the way in which a human society functions. The Roman State regarded the early martyrs dangerous revolutionaries.

Aristides, 137 AD, described the Christians of that time to the Emperor=

“It is the Christians, O Emperor, who.. acknowledge God. They do not keep for themselves the goods entrusted to them. They do not covet what belongs to others. They show love to their neighbours. They do not do to another what they would not wish to have done to themselves. They speak gently to those who oppress them, and in this way they make them their friends. It has become their passion to do good to their enemies.. Every one of them who has anything gives ungrudgingly to the one who has nothing. If they see a travelling stranger, they bring him under their roof. They rejoice over him as over a real brother, for they do not call one another brothers after the flesh, but they know they are brothers in the Spirit and in God. If they hear that one of them is imprisoned or oppressed for the sake of Christ, they take care of all his needs. If possible they set him free. If anyone among them is poor or comes into want while they themselves have nothing to spare, they fast two or three days for him. In this way they can supply any poor man with the food he needs. This, O Emperor, is the rule of life of the Christians, and this is their manner of life.”

In short, it can happen that we start with the Gift of Eros, but soon and without being able to anticipate it, we are suddenly taken farther than we thought we would ever go and are brought to the Sacrifice of the Daemonic. Then we would have to say with the Orthodox saint, “my Eros is crucified.”

However, there was a basic flaw evident in Christian witness by the time the Greek Church in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East and the Latin Church in North Africa and the Western Mediterranean were becoming settled organisations. This flaw seems to have only grown stronger as the ardour of the Christian love for all human beings, and the fervour to build ‘the New Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land’, cooled. At some point the martyrs began to be misinterpreted. Their ‘this worldly’ Eros was rendered, instead, other worldly.

The Christian other worldliness was rooted in the belief that, given Christ had come, so the world would soon end. In fact, Christ states he does not know, because the Father holds it back even from him, when the world will end. Redemption, it is clear, needs much time. The impatience to finish off the world, in order to quickly get to heaven, is anti-redemptive in spirit, and thus an abuse of the meaning of the Apocalypse. Those demanding an Apocalypse ‘right now’ are opposed to the Way of the Cross, and reject Christ as the Redeemer.

Thus the falsehood that ‘the world is soon coming to an end’ supported the failure of heart passion that arises from wanting to get out of this world and go to heaven. The truth is very different= the heart passion which is destroyed and reforged in the depth ‘through’ Christ’s example ‘by’ the dynamic impetus of the Spirit is called to remain staked to this world, and never leave it, until redemption has completed its lengthy and difficult task. The Jewish Bible says those who want their names written in the Book of Life – everlasting life – must accept ‘the sufferings and raptures of the Spirit.’ These are the sufferings and raptures inherent to working for redemption, despite its improbability, and hurtful exactions.

But for all too many Christians, believing the world would soon end turned into the belief that they would become a select few whisked off to heaven while the many perished as the world lapsed into oblivion. Augustine of Hippo, in his vile and heretical magnum opus written out of horror at the sacking of Rome by invaders from the Shamanic lands of the north, abandons the city of this world as the New Jerusalem, and prefers instead the City of God, far above and beyond the perils of the city built with human hands yet able to be built on the Gift and Sacrifice of God. Again, no Old Testament Jew would have separated the City of God from the city of humanity; the former indwells the latter, making them a divine and human co-operation, or co-building. The whole of history is, from a Jewish standpoint, the co-creation of God and humanity. Human hands are not despaired of, and sliced off, in redemption, but on the contrary, our active and creative capacities are crucial to God and humanity making of the world a heaven come to earth, the 'heavenly earth.' This is the 'new heaven and new earth' that Christ's Resurrection inaugurates as the 'new age', but which must be completed by us, working with God and against the Satanic Accuser. Our creativity and activity is conjoined with divine creativity and activity, and both are focused on bringing the investment in this world to final fruition, not allowing it to end in dereliction and ultimate ruination of all possibility.

Consequently, the hope for a quick end to human history -- with all its depredations and temptations but also all its radical passion of heart needed to take on these blocks -- severely undermines the stand at the Cross of all Christians. They start to think heaven is their reward for declaring some sort of creedal belief in Christ, rather than cleaving to him in heart passion, and going where he went and doing what he did. Hence putting up with any this worldly privations and assaults is accepted, because it is a 'test' that 'proves' their staunch loyalty to Christ, so it books their ticket to heaven. When Western Christians in particular refer to 'carrying their Cross' it is usually with this false connotation of putting up with this world's slings and arrows of outrageous fortune only so as to be 'saved' from the world by being removed to heaven. This is a lie; a betrayal of the Cross as the power and wisdom needed to redeem everything and everybody 'bound hand and foot' to the protracted process of the world. Indeed, the false interpretation of 'carrying one's Cross' also falsifies the refiner's fire in whose furnace the heart and its passion are burned to ashes, to ready it for becoming the human vehicle of the Divine Fire. The heart is searched out in depth, tested and proved in depth, broken and reforged in depth, by the Daemonic Spirit, so as to make its passion singular in its relying on truth, and unreserved in its service of redemption.

Nothing could be further from the Cross than this statement by the 'beat novelist' Jack Kerouac= "Avoid the world. It's just a lot of dust and drag and means nothing in the end."

The Cross disputes this assertion which unites Luciferian Gnostic and Satanic Fundamentalist.

Thomas Hardy was standing near the Cross in saying, "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst."

8,

If the genuine 'this worldly' meaning of the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, began to be lost to Christians from the time of the primitive church onward, then the real meaning and purpose of witnessing to Christ was jettisoned, or watered down, and underplayed. What should have been central became peripheral. What should have been frequent became rare. The 'Messianic' Spirit that gripped the Jews for centuries, and climaxed in Yeshua of Nazareth, was forgotten. The Christians became Greek, then Latin, then Celtic and Anglo-Saxon/Germanic/Nordic, but the vital Jewish foundation was ignored. Christianity has to be Jewish before it can spread out into other cultures, times, places. If its spreading out is not on the basis of, and guided by, the Jewish Messianic Spirit, then it will result that Christians cease to be loyal to who Christ was and what Christ accomplished.

He is the Jewish Messiah foretold by the prophets, and prefigured in the Davidic kingship. He came into the world not to judge it as Satan does; but as the Lamb Sacrificed Before the World Was Made, he came to demonstrate that there are no limits to how far love can go to redeem the world in its entirety.

Thus, whatever we do to redeem, at a price to us personally, is faithful to Christ. Even those who manifest explicitly no creedal loyalty to Christ, if their way of action in this world is redemptive, then implicitly they belong to Christ, in the deeper heart, by the presence of the Spirit in their passion and its deed. Many creedal Christians do little or nothing to follow Christ, or actively are disloyal to him by doing terrible things in his name-- like the invading Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Episcopalian, Christians who visited genocide on the native indigenous peoples of the Americas, and justified this Satanic crime in Christian terms. Those who espouse no creed may do much more to follow the hard footsteps on hard ground that Christ walked. Never mind what people say; notice what they actually do. This alone tells whether they are embracing, or denying, the Cross 'with every breath they take.'

9,

'This worldly' Eros contributes to redemption, but only the Daemonic which will not allow the devil to take over the world unopposed is the engine of redemption.

This is why the figures of Eros, priest and monk, cannot stand in for, nor in any sense replace, the Daemonic figures of king, warrior, prophet, reversal clown and holy fool, existential sage, and derelict tramp. This is why the religion of Christianity as a whole cannot be run only from the temple, but is really situated in three places, not one-- the temple is the place of the sacred, the world is the place of the holy, the wilderness is the place of the mysterious.

Temple= sacred= priest, and monk.
World= holy= king, and warrior.
Wilderness= mystery= prophet, and sage.

And at the base of all these Daemonic figures= the wrecked, the poor, the bereft, the unfixable and inconsolable. These 'losers' are us, at depth. This is the deeper ground of the human condition, the human tragedy binding all. In the Daemonic, the first are last, and the last are first, because the greater only live and act in this world as sent from God to be the 'suffering servant', even the 'despicable slave', for the sake of the lesser. In the Daemonic, the test of the Messianic king, and of his warrior and his prophet no less, is whether he can love and help the least. If their state is left out of the love and help, it is not redemptive.

It is the 'least of these' who know the fundamental heartbreak at the deepest root of all of humanity, and cannot climb out of it. No secular or religious solution changes these people's fallen down condition one iota. They are beyond all remedy-- except the craziest and least likely of all help, the Cross.

Preoccupation with personal redemption, or the redemption of an elect few with whom we identify, is a sign that the Cross has not touched our depth. We are unredeemed in depth, and thus we falsify the way redemption works for all the world. We ignore it, going over to the fallen way of worldliness, or we seek to absent ourselves from the worldly problem through some spirituality that does not engage it, or worst of our options, we pretend we can redeem but, like Christians down the ages, spread horror and poison into the world, and claim Christ's sanction for this dishonouring of the Way of the Cross 'submitted to by Christ.'

Indeed, Christ predicts that a time will come when any person truly following him -- following in their human heart the divine-human heart of Christ -- will receive calumny, punishment, even murder, from people who think they are doing God's will.

The Cross tells us, keep going. Accept your own heartbreak in the depth of your heart, so as to be able to enter upon the holy ground of the heartbreak in the depth of the world. Without embracing your deepest suffering and opening it to Christ, you will not open to the deepest suffering in humanity and become able to fight for the redemption of this suffering as did Christ.

The message of Peter is latent in the tears he wept because of betraying Christ. These tears tell the story of the heartbreak of God in the heartbreak of humanity.

10,

How could a man as impetuous, as wavering, as unstable, as Peter become a 'Rock' for Christ's most ultimate, radical and profound, mystery? The Cross is the gateway to Descent into, and Resurrection from, Hell. This threefold

sequence inaugurates the new age, it is the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth, where hell is not transcended nor crushed, but suffered, fought with, and overcome, in an unexpected way that is redemptive.

Peter was the most engaged, and committed, of all Christ's followers, always jumping in, and immediately getting in over his head, yet by virtue of that, crying to Christ from a deeper place than many people will ever go.

It is precisely because Peter was both able to dive in from the prompting of his true heart, yet got straight to the point of heart brokenness, that he is the Rock in the depth. This is the paradox of the Daemonic. Peter is always ahead of everyone else in taking on whatever heart passion is called to take on. He is not anything like a statically stable, rigidly certain man. If you prick him, he bleeds. He is as variable as the heart truly is. Thus he is not dispassionate in any sense; he has not attained the 'impassibility' that the Eastern Christian monastics recommend. On the contrary, he reflects the truth of the heart's inherent 'passibility.' Peter is neither simply lax in heart, nor is he hard hearted. He is the earthiness of the heart, the mystery of our humanity in its being able 'to go either way'= its openness to and influence by both truth and falsity, its ability to go with upright standing and stepping forth, or go with fallen weakness and retreat. Passion must come through its passibility, its intrinsic vulnerability, and it does this not by virtue of ceasing to be 'passionate', but by ceasing to miss passion's mark, and starting to hit it. Or put in different terms, passion passes through its own passible state by 'cleaving' to God; if it sticks to God through thick and thin, then though still prone to error, passion is led by God and is gradually 'stabilised' as it keeps moving over the rough ground of existence. By hitting the target, your aim becomes truer.

In coming unstuck by trying out the heart, Peter enters the deeper reality of our broken heart and lapsed spirit. From this place he accepts he can do no more, and turns to Christ. He cries out to God from hell, and God joins him in hell. Peter is not the Rock because he signifies some spurious authority of the Bishop [Roman Catholic], or of Scripture [Protestant], or of Tradition [Orthodox]; by sharp contrast, he eschews all top-down authority, and never resorts to the control that tries to get on top of things, and by that very manoeuvre builds a wall round the heart stopping its passion from making any leap. The spontaneity of his heart makes him unpredictable. Those who are rational, and self-mastered, remain high and dry, and never get to the place where Peter knows he can drown and he can burn up. With Peter, the unwavering is reached only through the wavering, and thus he signifies the authenticity that goes through the waves and flames to find the truth. He can weep for his disavowal of Christ when his heart is put on trial towards the world. Indeed, having betrayed Christ three times, his weeping is a recognition in the heart of the heart that turns him around, and binds him to Christ in a profounder way.

Peter is the Rock because he goes through it all, with no guarantee. He sinks, he burns, he goes down and down and down. Yet in this place, he knows he

can do nothing, and he turns to Christ to help him truthfully refind the real heart and be loyal to its passion.

By coming through the most narrow straits, Peter exemplifies the breadth of redemption; by plumbing the most abysmal hell, Peter exemplifies the depth of redemption. By being overcome and giving way, yet realistically and in existential veracity offering this to Christ, to come back and try again, Peter becomes the mountain that cannot be moved.

What is it that will no longer be moved?

We have to learn to make our failure the very adhesion point of cleaving to God, through Christ, in the Spirit. This would be like Peter.

The Cross reveals the redeeming of the world. Peter reveals how we humanly bind ourself to Christ's Way of the Cross. We do it through our humanity, neither judged Satanically nor flattered Luciferianly, but admitted for what it is, in its amazing potentiality but also its sombre tragedy. Peter loved Christ, but he also loved the human heart, and mourned its fallenness, and hoped beyond hope, from despair and repentance, in the recall of its defunct passion.

He loved Christ, but was allowed by the Spirit to see and understand accurately that Christ was the lover of the human= the Messiah awaited by the Jews who delighted more in the title Son of Man, signifying God's binding to the human out of love, than in the title Son of God, signifying the human's binding to the divine out of faith. We need to turn to God, but God loves us more than we love ourselves, and is far more concerned with putting us back on our feet than making us kow tow. God needs no kow towing from us. God wants to restore us to our earthy humanity that has a great and deep heart, and a passion of love unstoppable like his.

The Fire of God is in our flickering flame, and God ultimately will not let it go out.

The holy flame is kindled from the human clay. The holiness most 'other' in God is brought into the world through what is most earthy in us. This is a paradox most persons, religious or secular, reject. But look at David, the direct ancestor of the Jewish Messiah.

Peter loved Christ, yet he knew Christ loved the human heart, and felt the aching pathos of its vulnerable passion.

Peter's love for Christ recognised Christ's inexhaustible love for us.

This is why the keys of the kingdom are in Peter's hands, and why 'what he lets go here is let go forever and what he retains here is retained forever.' Peter was reached at his worst by Christ's love, and so Peter's love for the world, in Christ, will reach the worst in everyone. No one will be locked out, everyone will be brought in, everlastingly.

11,

Peter is primary in Christian witness because he shows the route by which we come to and follow Christ's Cross.

The Cross restores the 'hidden man of the heart', as Peter describes the life of passion. Yet the way this happens is strange. No one wants it. It is 'the foundation stone the builders rejected.' Like the Uncarved Block of Taoism, it is always neglected, over looked, even despised. But the least has become the most, and what we thought the most has been shown as nothing to get excited about.

LETTER FROM A FRIEND ON WHAT IS TRULY 'PETRINE'

"I wonder whether there is sometimes a confusion about the 'the world' in Christian tradition, an ambiguity between the world as fundamentally good and the Satanic forces that try to pull it down. The world is holy and has been redeemed by Jesus Christ but we must wrestle with these forces that often seem to be in control of the world while we await the new creation.

As someone brought up in Roman Catholicism who left it in adulthood to join the Eastern Orthodox tradition, I also relate strongly to your interest in the figure of Peter and what he stands for in Christian belief and action. By coincidence I have been reading an interesting book ['Peter: the Myth, the Man, and the Writings', 2003, F. Lapham] which tries to distil what is central to 'Petrine' teaching from a review of the whole body of work associated with his name, including apocryphal writings. Clearly his understanding of Christ did lose out in the early Church. It is indeed strange that Peter should come to be associated with papal authority. Nothing is more opposed to the ethos of the Roman Catholic Church than this man whom you describe as 'passionate.'

Yes, I think it would be worth your while reading the book on the 'real' Peter, as distinct from the Roman Catholic appropriation and distortion. It does support much of what you have already been led to, especially the emphasis on the Jewish roots of Christianity, and taking up the Cross. Christians both East and West use the Cross as their principal symbol, but I agree that they don't interpret this sufficiently as the need to wrestle with the world.."

Christ to Peter on the travels round the Lake of Gennesareth= "Launch out into the deep."

Neither West nor East have yet to make this launching out that Peter struggled with..

The West developed a too intellectual and busy temper; the East developed a too contemplative and quiet temper.

Neither is Peter, only proved through troubles.

The route that comes to and follows the Cross is wave tossed and fire scorched.

This route is through living out, not containing, the heart.

This route is nothing to do with 'infallible authority' because human flaws and failings are the daily bread which reveals the heart.

This route is through turbulent times, without and within, because it comes to the point where love can betray who, and what, it loves. The difference between Judas and Peter is razor thin. Both knew regret, remorse, despair, acidly chewing the bowels and guts of the heart= both wept.

Judas wept for his failure; Peter wept for who, and what, he had failed.

William Blake= “We are to abstain from fleshy [preoccupations] so that we may lose no time from the work of God.. All the tortures of repentance are tortures of self-reproach on account of our leaving the Divine Harvest to the enemy.” [‘Jerusalem’]

ROLLO MAY CRITIQUES CARL ROGERS FOR BEING NAÏVE ABOUT EVIL

Rollo May was the first existential psycho-therapist and psychologist of note in America [influenced by and building on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus, and Tillich], though he was also, as Carl Rogers insisted, an original visionary with his own slant, not just an apologist for existentialism. In his 'Love and Will' [1969], he speaks of the 'daimonic' in humanity which can result in evil, or in creativity. I remember being inspired by this book forty years ago, but if memory serves, May confines 'love' to Eros, and only the 'will' is regarded as linked to the Daemonic. This is a huge error, for in the end, the Daemonic loves more, because it plumbs the deeps where love fails, and brings love back from that place by paying an unspeakable price for the failure. Nevertheless, Rollo May includes under what he comprehends as 'daimonic' an inherent battle in humans between good and evil; or, love and creativity versus a selfish destructiveness. This is a version of the ancient Jewish doctrine that mankind has two hearts, a 'heart of stone' and a 'heart of flesh', and thus every human being is born into conflict within that invariably expresses itself without. The human heart and the wider world reflect each other, and are intimately connected.

May was much admired by Rogers, but Rogers disagreed with him on one vital point, believing in a basic human goodness interfered with and damaged by society and culture. May, for his part, dismissed this notion, arguing that humans constitute society and culture, and hence it is everyone's capacity for both good and evil that gets expressed in society and culture. Each side affects and influences the other= the world makes things harder for the heart, but the heart makes things harder for the world. May regards the belief in inherent goodness naive, and thus views the Rogerian style of 'humanistic' psychology and therapy as essentially 'narcissistic.' It flatters the human and invents a scenario of healing too easy on the human.

1,

Below some quotes from Rollo May, addressed directly to Carl Rogers..

"The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter To Carl Rogers", Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Vol 22, No 3, 1982, pp 10-21.

"In my experience, our human adventures from cradle to grave take on a zest, a challenge, an attractiveness, when we see and affirm this human potentiality of both good and evil. ..it is this.. dialectical interaction, this oscillation between positive and negative that gives the dynamic and the depth to human life. Life, to me, is not a requirement to live out a preordained pattern of goodness, but a challenge coming down through the centuries out of the fact that each of us can throw the lever toward good or toward evil. This seems to me to require the age-old religious truths of mercy and forgiveness and.. it leaves no place for moral superiority or self-righteousness." [p 249]

"I am pleading for a realistic approach to human evil. ..when you had the discussion with Martin Buber in Michigan you said, "Man is basically good", and Buber answered, "Man is basically good -- and evil." I am arguing that we must include a view of the evil in our world and in ourselves, no matter how much that evil offends our narcissism." [p 248]

"I am not predicting doom. But I am stating that if we ignore evil, we will move closer to doom, and the growth and triumph of evil may result.

I am not a pessimist. Yes, I believe in tragedy, as Shakespeare's dramas.. and others portray it, because I perceive tragedy as showing the nobility of human existence. Without it life would be pallid, uninteresting, and flat. ..optimism.. often turns out to be a reaction formation to ..hopelessness; and I turn out to be more hopeful than [those who cling to hope to ward off despair]. This is because.. one needs.. a [faith] that can stand regardless of failure.. or despair." [p 250]

Rollo May spent 18 months in a sanatorium for tuberculosis as a young man, and he said of this time= "The patients who were gay and hopeful and tried to make light of the disease frequently died. Those of us who lived with it, accepted it, struggled against it, recovered."

A 'heart involved in struggle' is the way of passion sparked by the wound of the Daemonic inflicted upon us as a fate.

In passion, the heart suffers and comes through the worst that fate can dish out. Rollo May does not think it is remembering the good times of Eros that gets us through. After the Cross, when Christ Descends into Hell, what is the break through and turn around there, which leads to the Resurrection? For Rollo May Christ is not in the equation, but he does speak of something that is implicated in getting us through the 'season in hell', the dark night, the unending desert. He claims the human 'will', our 'intentionality', is needed and makes the crucial difference to 'recovery.' Rollo May has stumbled on something important.

2,

The will, or intentionality, is the backbone of steel for passion's fire. It is neither a wilfulness [power over things= master], nor a will-lessness [in the power of things= victim], but is in reality a 'willingness' to have a go, jump in, accept all that follows, and see it through to the end, though it cannot be known what that end really will be, or if it will be. Willingness is a deep affirming of it all, a yes to yes and no, the life and the death, the all, and as my friend Andy Harmon says about the hero in drama, this willingness will keep going to the end of the line. It does not give in or give up, even when defeated, broken, fallen down in the dust. It is aggressive, even angry, but most of all, it is willing, cooperative with something it cannot prove, but has to trust, even when all reasons for trust are gone.

This has to be put mystically and radically to get anywhere near it..

Coming through hell involves the will, or intentionality, affirming its passion for the mystery which passion serves. Thus, even in the deepest hopelessness, there is something in us that keeps going. It can be called an 'affirmation', a final yes to all we suffer, cannot understand, and must let go, but this sounds too positive. It is not 'positive', because it operates where the negative has vanquished all positive. This is our yes in our no, our yes beyond yes and no. We do not know. Passion starts where knowledge ends, and keeps going even in the bowels of despair and under the hammer of the fate most unsupportable. We are down and out. Yet something ultimately mysterious in the heart cannot be killed off. It may be laid out as on a slab in the mortuary, for all intents and purposes dead, finished, undone and all over, yet there is a word that Christ speaks from the same place in the heart to our heart, and this word is an angry cry, a willingness to go to any lengths and beyond all lengths; this is the word Christ shouted into the cave where Lazarus lay dead, and it says only one thing, 'get up!'

And the heart gets up.

You cannot count the human heart out. We may need another heart to say this word to us, and in the final reckoning we may need Christ to shout its anger at us, but there is something in the human heart that can get up, and can come at you again. It may be battered to shreds over ten rounds, and put down in the fourteenth round for good, yet in the fifteenth it can get up and come at you again.

This is passion's willingness, its utter self-giving and complete self-sacrifice that cannot be exhausted, because it comes out of a depth that is fathomless and bottomless. This is not Nietzsche's pathetic 'will to power', but a different will, a will to trust God's passion in our passion, no matter what. 'Bring it on', bring it 'all' on, this willingness declares to God, nature, world, evil spirits, the whole cosmos. Its strength, its power, rolls like a giant wave through everything. In ancient Celtic myth there was a 'shout' which, if uttered, could kill enemies, even shake the foundations of the earth. This willingness, when pushed to extremis, and especially in the midst of the blackest and most inexplicable pain, in the depths of deadness, is that shout of life even in death, that going on even in hitting the wall and crashing. Even if we can do no more, and are truly finished in what we can humanly give, it cannot be extinguished.

The flame smoulders even when it has gone out. The steel is scorched, scarred, broken into pieces, yet it is not finished.

We are defunct, our heart is broken, yet we are not 'done and dusted.' Even in our breaking, the fire flickers and the steel can be reforged. This is the willingness in our passion that says yes to God, even in hell. And as the Passion Week services hint, it is to those in hell that God reveals the secrets and wisdom that are ultimate, and hidden from both ordinary everyday life and even hidden from the mystic's enlightenment. What passion's willingness

has faith in, without knowing or comprehending it, is that hell is, and can be, the mysterious place of turn around, where victory comes from true and comprehensive defeat. It is here that Christ is present, and needed, for through him, we receive the second chance precisely in the midst of where the first chance is well and truly defunct.

This is about where we draw a halt and cry, 'enough, I can take no more.' Yet even in heartbreak, the willingness in passion remains strangely 'available.' Even if it cannot get up by its own exertion, when the shout comes to get up and come forth, it can respond.

Recovery will always reside in this affirmation when there is nothing left to affirm, this affirmation of existing in fire, upheld in steel, even though we have reached the point where it does not work, and seems to have come to nothing.

This affirmation of life in the midst of death, this affirmation that is not affirmation, but affirms its willingness when there is nothing left to affirm or deny, is the 'spark' in us that cannot go out. The paradox is not that any evil spirit puts it out; we put it out when we foreclose upon the irrationality of it all. We judge it as not good enough, like Satan, and declare our negation of it all. Such is the victory of hell.

The willingness remains quiescent, even when the heart is over thrown. We are truly done, yet we await in patience the moment when the shout arrives, and commands us, get up, come out!

Lazarus stumbles out of the cave, into the bright light. Peter weeps, but his heart is strengthened. Christ goes to the Cross, but from hell, he is Resurrected.

You have in your heart, though you do not know it, something that can go through it all, and yet not close accounts, but await the shout.

When you hear it, the heart in you that you never knew will get up, and come out.

PROLOGOMENA TO AN UNRESOLVED PROBLEM= Balancing 'Good and Evil' with 'Sickness and Health'

What follows are snippets from conversations with a friend about 'sinner and saint' -- even the saint is still a sinner -- but how does 'sick' fit into the equation?

Some trans-personal psychologists have recently argued that sickness was under-estimated by ancient mystical religions, which meant both [a] that psycho-pathological states in gurus, teachers, elders, holy persons, were indulged, and not challenged, but completely missed, often confused with illuminatory states, and [b] that psycho-pathology was usually not recognised as a source of ordinary people's unhappiness, immorality, deluded condition. Are we sinners who must take responsibility for what we have done, and repent? Or are we sick, and crying out for healing? If we are both at one and the same time, how should these over-lapping factors be weighted?

It seems that the subtle line between 'evil' and 'sickness' has yet to be well thought out.. The old monastic traditions certainly ignored psychopathology, neurosis, psychosis, as a diagnostic category; they seemed not to take into account the influence of early childhood psychological damage in the portrait of the adult sinner. On the other hand, Eastern Orthodox Christianity did tend to see 'sin' itself as a kind of metaphysical 'sickness', a deranged and deluded state of being, a falling away from 'well-being' into 'ill being' [depletion of being]. You get this assessment in St Maximos and earlier Desert monastics..

To regard sin itself, or sin per se, as an illness leads to a more compassionate view of the error in sin, which marks most Orthodox commentary. In Greek, sin simply means 'failure to hit the mark.' Thus you tend not to get that Western puritanism, moralism, fundamentalism -- "moralic acid" a friend called it -- of 'man, the miserable sinner' that is the main emphasis of the West. This was already pretty extreme in Augustine of Hippo, but became even worse among the Protestant Reformers like John Calvin et al. The harsh 'authoritarian' view of sin goes to extremes in the West, and evokes the 'liberal' reaction, which tends to use psychological illness and poor social conditions to virtually 'explain away' sin. That is predominant today, though the reactionary fundamentalists want to go back to a very dualistic 'right and wrong.'

So, the whole problem splits= 'influences to be considered but no place for choice' versus 'all choice and neglect influences.'

I have never come across anyone who does justice to the reality of evil, its temptations, and inducements, and the will's freedom to withstand or give way [strength vs. weakness] and at the same time takes into consideration just how sick we are, both individually and collectively= "the sickness unto death" David calls it, and Kierkegaard uses that as the title of one of his greatest books.

People are sick, lacking well-being, or any fullness of being, from fairly early on-- some from the start [or even in the womb], some from early childhood, some from later in childhood. There is also a certain sickness inherent to family, society, culture, that no one escapes. Indeed, the sick side of things testifies to how influenceable, and open to damage, humans are.

We are a strange mix of immovable strength and terrible vulnerability, of passion and pathos.

We are innocent and responsible; broken and responsible; possessed and responsible.

The Protestant existentialist theologian Paul Tillich probably wrestled with this paradox as much as or more than anyone else, in his famous book 'The Courage To Be', but I have not come across any modern Western writers, nor ancient writers from East or West, who really engage it in detail. Even Martin Buber, whose understanding of evil avoids both conservative authoritarianism and liberal permissiveness, seems not to connect 'evil' and 'sickness' explicitly.

As a whole, the West stressed moral culpability, a failure of duty before the Real, whilst the Orient stressed a derangement and delusion of consciousness and being, a lack of experience of -- or really grounding in -- the Real.

What strikes me is a sort of terrible weight of past sins and past sicknesses that every person coming into this world inherits historically and which crush the spirit almost before it can get going, making both choice and wellness difficult to attain. No one starts with a clean sheet, in truth. We suffer for each other, we suffer because of each other, both in the Now and coming from the Past. This is the key. Given this 'suffering' that arises from fundamentally being 'with' other people in the open-ended venture of this world, with no winners and losers but we all sink or float together, some sort of connecting, at a deeper level, of sickness and evil might follow..

Given how multifaceted and paradoxical the picture of 'evil and sickness' becomes once you really examine it fairly and fully, then it is no wonder that few people have embraced both horns of this dilemma; most people 'side' in one direction or the other, but that means there is little understanding of what it means to embrace both horns equally at once.

How can anyone spend time in this world without encountering the reality of both sickness and evil? Some try to reduce the former to the latter, others try to reduce the latter to the former. Isn't it wiser to accept the reality of both?

CONSIDER THIS— Why Does St Paul ‘Glory’ in Existential Infirmities?

1,

Though I do not go to church all that often, when I do it can happen that something from the Liturgy, or the Bible, really stands out, and grabs me by the scruff, and says, consider this.

So it was that I heard St Paul the other day speaking of something which, for me, is one of the two central themes of ‘passion.’ For St Paul said, ‘search the deep things of the Spirit.’

Passion of heart searches the deep things not only of God but also of humanity. Deep things abide in the Spirit, and are searched out, not just found but lived and checked out, through passion. Get rid of all passion and you get rid of depth.

This is what most people have done.

They have evaded the summons of passion to search out the deep things of the Spirit, by cutting off passion as such.

2,

In searching out the deep things of the Spirit through passion, the heart wrestles with its own mystery. ‘The heart is deep’, David declares in the Psalms. The heart is bound up with the deep things of the Spirit; these are key to its destiny. To lose these deep things is to lose the heart.

But this means there is a huge difference between the shallow heart, which is false to passion, and the deep heart, which is true to passion. The former is taken up with emotions full of sound and fury signifying nothing, mere distractions; and it is captive to fallen passions which signify the heart ‘failing to hit the mark.’ This is the smaller heart, as opposed to the bigger heart. The Hasids call it a heart of stone, hardened and callous= indifferent, as opposed to the heart of flesh, malleable and affectable= concerned.

The former is not available to that in existence which the heart must be available to, if it is to plumb its own destiny as bound hand and foot to the fate of the world. The latter remains available, no matter the disturbing things which this brings. It is thrown in at the deep end, and must persist or perish.

In effect, human beings in their everyday life have not the faintest notion, not even the beginnings of a notion, of what the heart really is.

The Sufi poet captures this=

“From the time of Adam to the resurrection people cry--
The heart, the heart! And I wish that I might find
Someone to describe what the heart is, or how it is.
But I find none. What, then, is this heart of which I
Hear only the name?”

But the error in Sufi mysticism, as in all religions pursuing the way of oneness, is to obscure the very aspect of reality with which the heart deals. The unitive Eros of mysticism misses the Otherness of God and the human, and thus the reality of the risk God takes with the human. The Sufi metaphor of the 'Ocean of Love' [a soul, not heart, image] allows only the beautiful things in this world to be a metaphor of God, whilst the ugliness, accident, evil, of history is excluded. But it is precisely what does not add up, and deeply offends the soul's quest for unity, that the heart bears like a wound.

It is precisely what ugliness, accident, evil, says about God that is most vital for the heart.

These are the route into depth.

Closer to the true mystery of the heart is what the Sufi poet says here=

“The prayers of the sorrowful come from burning hearts.”

It is the profound trouble that the heart enters in this existence that is the gateway to unfathomable depths.

The heart bears a weight, a wound, a cost, a venturing, because it is staked to a drama, and a tragedy, where everything is at stake; of all this unitive Eros knows nothing.

3,

The next thing St Paul declares also struck me, for after inviting us to search the deep things of the Spirit, he goes on to add that he glories more in his 'infirmities' than mystical revelations. This is a powerful statement from someone who has actually had mystical revelations. Many people aspire to these, and would hardly trade them in for earthly and very human vulnerabilities. Maybe it is necessary to have had mystical revelations to understand why the earthy and all too human infirmities are more to be thanked.

The key to grasping this inversion of our usual spiritual aspiration, in which ascent is preferred to descent, beauty is preferred to ugliness, pattern and harmony is preferred to chaos and absurdity, is to realise that the infirmities to which St Paul refers are all existential. They are all to do with the existential arena of the world. This arena is 'the killing ground.'

The temple is the place where the glory of God becomes visible. The world is the place of the risk and gamble of God; the place where everything must be redeemed.

What St Paul is saying is that his existential vulnerabilities tie him to the ground, and therefore plunge him into God's existential gamble, and risk. He would rather know the angst of this 'grounding', and struggle in its fearful yet wonderful consequences, than be raised [prematurely] to heaven.

What St Paul is actually saying, perhaps even unbeknownst to himself, is that he would rather have a heart, and keep the heart, whatever its searing pain and profound trouble, than rise up the mystical ladder to heaven, where the impregnable ontology of God is disclosed; yet that glory is incomplete. For, without God embracing risk and suffering, this would be a height that left the depth unresolved. A no go area for God, no less than for the poor human heart. Despite the urge in many people to leave the depth, and get clear of the world where it is tested and lived out, St Paul is choosing to retain the heart, the fallible heart, the earthy heart, the heart which, however ruined, retains its strange love for what the depth subjects it to. The depth subjects God, no less than humanity.

There is no vision, nor is there any mysticism, that would reveal the outcome of the long journey and battle before it is over. That outcome -- victory or defeat for the whole venture of heart -- lays in a darkness of God that even Christ acknowledged he knew nothing about. Vision and mysticism are just helps along the way. When they become more than that, and are sought as ends in themselves, then they reduce the terrible and beautiful pathos in which the human heart is caught up.

Nothing penetrates the darkness in which the outcome of redemption for all creatures, things, persons, is suspended, and unknown. Only faith, existential faith born of existential infirmity, goes 'with' that adventure, and therefore leaps into that dark.

WHAT VAN GOGH PAINTED

I am in a winter of life not even cold enough to be crisp and sharp, but just dreary, damp, grey.. And yet God still persecutes/pursues me, and I still love this mysterious God, though Woody Allen's description of 'under achiever' seems an understatement.

I write what moves me in the heart. If it moves other hearts in any way whatever, the exercise is fulfilled.

I identify with Van Gogh strongly. He had a message to convey through paint, and my message is similar though through [certain] words. The message?

Fire. There is fire.

He depicted it in nature and in night cafes, vibrating within all things, though often not seen and felt by them. He was pointing to it, and saying to all these dull human witnesses, look!

I am trying to tell the story of this fire in human life, as it passes through grief and suffering, from the lack of redemption, and is raised to a different suffering, to suffer willingly and exultingly for the sake of redemption.. Van Gogh had many colours in his palette, but I have only two= the black, the unredeemed suffering, and the red, the suffering for redemption. They are connected by Christ's whole life, especially the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection. He came to plumb the black, and raise the red.

This is the message.

Fire has overcome. Fire is coming to us.

THE 'ABYSMAL' IS KEY TO PASSION'S SPIRITUAL DESTINY

"How great are your works, O God; how very deep are your designs" [Psalms, 91, 6]

1,

One of the things that has become clearer and clearer down the years is how important passion's 'deepest black' is to passion's 'truest red.'

Without the most fathomless black abyss, we do not reach the most upright pillar of red fire. Without the plunging into the abysmal, passion never becomes in the end a love 'greater than good and deeper than evil.' Or to put this in another way= without plunging into the pit, the furnace, the void, of 'a season in hell', passion when it returns to the world never becomes given over to Redemption as well as Righteousness.

This point about the necessary connection of pathos and thymos, or of grief and fire, is not at all clear to most people, whether non passionate, pretending to be passionate, genuinely passionate..

The 'normal' people who never put their head over the parapet, but treat life as a game to be played by sticking to the rules, might like to see the heroism of passion depicted in films, or in a video game, but they know it is not for them. They dismiss passion's way of living, its foolishly risk-taking and insanely generous action, as way beyond human flesh. It is romanticised, it is idealised, it is too extreme. It is best left in stories, to entertain and distract the masses. A few deluded people believe their 'thrusting' egoic ambition, 'unrestrained' lustful sex, or 'correct' self-righteous judgementalism, qualify as passion; none of these things is passionate in the least. The term 'passion' is even used in advertising to try to add gravitas to a product -- "we are passionate about X, Y, or Z" -- or to those who buy it -- "you can be passionate if you consume X, Y, Z." The vast majority of human beings are docile sheep. There are top and bottom sheep. But none of these are passionate, and they know perfectly well 'if push comes to shove' that is so. Hidden among the sheep are a few noble hearts who show some passion in their living, but they are often afraid to step up, as it would bring social disapproval, even banishment.

The people who see themselves as passionate, and announce it to others, are often just acting out narcissistic pathology. Their so-called 'passion' is a badge of identity they wear vain-gloriously, to brag to others in order to convince themselves. Heinz Kohut has given a sympathetic yet incisive account of such 'heroic grandstanding', or 'posturing as a hero.' Cultural images, symbolic and archetypal, are easily drafted in as masks or shields to make up for the absence of the heart needed to live passion for real. People nowadays talk glibly of being a shaman, a warrior, or anything grand and

powerful they fancy, but this is only to shore up their weak, and shattered, sense of underlying identity by resort to a made up mighty and invulnerable overlying identity. It is like a child buying different outfits from a shop. One day you are dressed up as this hero, another day you are dressed up as that hero. You can change identity as easily as changing clothes -- because that is all your identity is. A show, for you vis a vis others.

Yet, even among persons who are living passionately, doing what only passion can do, there may be a clinging to the red of zeal in order to avoid the black of tears. Why is it that the red must be extinguished in the black, before it can be resurrected and reborn in a new way of flaming up and out into the world? This paradox, which hits as a reversal, is often neither understood nor accepted even by the truly passionate.

These burning ones are ready, willing, and able to be heroic in the red – a person of great heart has self-control, bravery, and generosity, say the Lakota – but enduring patiently in the black, as it shatters all their hope, and destroys all their strength, throwing them into depths of radical apprehension, anguish, agony, of heart, can prove ‘a bridge too far.’ Passion is about ‘fighting the good fight’, doing what seems impossible to those who follow the usual human triumvirate of reason, emotion, sensation, as their guide to conduct. Only passion has the muscle to go the extra mile; this is why persons sincere in passion are both respected and feared by more ordinary mortals who count cost and calculate benefit before they commit to action. The passionate keep going when everyone else has given up and given in; they do not give up and they do not give in.

None the less, even the passionate, indeed especially the passionate, are stopped dead in their tracks, and turned inside out and upside down, when the Daemonic seizes them, and bites into their living quick, inflicting a savage and clean wound..

Consequently, if you push youthful and even middle aged passion far enough, you hit the Jewish ‘wailing wall’ where all passion in all persons inevitably fails, comes unstuck, crashes. This crisis is the turning point in the way of passion, or it is the end point. In the Chinese ‘Book of Changes’, it is called “The Shock of Fate.”

The Jewish David -- a lover, poet, musician, prophet, warrior, and what the Celts would call ‘high king’ -- cries from this deep place where all is lost, where it is all over, repeatedly in the Psalms= “deep cries to deep.” Such depth is never embraced consciously and willingly. It is not possible to reach depth through any moral or ascetic ‘suffering that is chosen.’ Neither voluntary self-disciplining nor voluntary abstinence can take us deeper into the heart. This depth is only reached by the ‘suffering that is unchosen’, the resisted and denied, the evaded and fled, suffering.

The suffering that befalls us like a fate we would never willingly choose and from which we can never get free..

The suffering that is the deal breaker..

The suffering that profits nothing, and makes no sense, even on the irrational level where passion takes its stand..

There comes a point -- or a punctuated series of points -- where even the faith of passion's leap into the unknown falters. The collapse of passion's irrational urge, its intention and energy that pushes outward from a mysterious inward source never questioned whilst it works, is devastating for the passionate. The passionate 'throw their bread on the water', taking the chance most conventional people would never even consider= but if what comes back to you is just soggy bread sinking under its own weight, what then? This hurts those relative few who give their heart to existence far more than it would bother the vast majority who have learned how to get rid of any heart for existence from early on.

The blow of fate that savagely injures passion is more incomprehensible to the passionate than to those who are all too ready to mouth 'I told you so' from a position of safety.

The Daemonic wound digs in and goes deep..

The passionate are those who fight for justice, those who step up chivalrously in a host of costly situations, embracing sacrifice as the price of doing what is righteous, truthful, just; and for a time they experience, as their only intrinsic reward, the powerful flickering of passion's red flame-- the warm fire of love that starts as childlike enthusiasm and journeys toward adult commitment and engagement. Yet even the warrior who is the most fierce in dedication and unwavering in strength cannot reach passion's real, and spiritual, destiny unless they meet pitiless failure and fall into abject dereliction.

This hits most people in their early to late middle years, when the complexity and difficulty of 'doing anything for the sake of the world' assaults them with disillusioning force. Many of the people living passionately up until this point bail out when the sheer human impossibility of doing what cries out to be done overwhelms them.

Some of the burning ones who do not bail out nevertheless only keep going in the red by denial of the black beneath their feet; these persons end up lying about the cowardly times when passion abandoned them and they acted badly. The red is sustained, but it becomes more and more forced, more and more desperate. The person seems dishonest, because they have to edit out of their glorious story of battles and victories the defeats, and especially the defeats coming from inside them when the floor boards gave way and they could no longer stand upright. Such persons end up with so much black chasing at the heels of their red, even they begin to wonder which side they are on, and for whom they are really working: the Truth they say they serve, or the Lie they often enact without wanting to do so. The warrior who cannot face the long shadow cast by the black creeping into his own heart -- trying always to keep running ahead of it -- risks having to 'act out' that shadow in

all his deeds; in this way, a noble intentionality is undermined by an ignobility that intrudes..

Some unwilling to pass from the red into the black sustain this position by subtly shifting passion away from a heart driven action into a love of principles in the sky to be practiced on the ground. This keeps you 'up', so you avoid the deeps, but it renders far more shallow what passion can achieve in its action.

Heart action has to shift from heaven above to the abyss below. Ideals, principles, visions, are not enough to sustain action that gets more and more difficult in the compromised and inter-laced contingencies of this world. The heart is deep; the heart is not height oriented. It is of no interest to the life of heart that St Paul, and many other mystics down the ages all over the globe, ascended into the third, sixth, seventh, heaven far above, and met God in the heights. This 'heavenly' experience of the supreme and overarching reality of the divine, as St Paul realised -- but many mystics receiving revelation do not realise -- limits and even distorts the way of heart. The 'dark inexplicable pain' drags us down into the foundations of the heart, where it becomes make or break for the 'fundamental' change in heart promised from olden times by Yahweh to the Jewish prophets. The suffering we do not want, and the depth we do not embrace without being forced down into it, is the dark gateway to a 'profound' -- not 'exalted' -- breakthrough in heart. This is what Judaism began, and Christianity should build on and push to the end of the line.

2,

Yet all the burning ones who are also fated to become the grieving ones ask the same unanswered question from the God of the heartbreak, the Daemonic God.

Why, if we serve the dragon with heroism, does he burn us to a crisp? Indeed, it is stranger than that. Why does the dragon burn those who serve him far worse than those who oppose him?

The answer will be no comfort to you.

The dragon burns those who serve him so that, by dying in the abyss, they may be raised to serve him with a whole heart.

This answer is no comfort to you.

The dragon is harder on those he has chosen to become dragons not for his sake but for the sake of the world. The Daemonic is hardest on those it has chosen, and so if you start in the red but bail out on the black when it arrives, this means you do not believe in your own heart. If the Daemonic keeps hammering you, it is because God believes your heart can go all the way.

Thus rejoice and even laugh when the Daemonic goes on blasting you, but weep and sober up when the Daemonic withdraws. God forces no one to do

anything. If the Wound of Fate is withdrawn from your life, and your season in hell is prematurely ended, it is because God has decided to respect your No.

For now, at least..

If the Daemonic Shock of Fate resumes, then it is because God is respecting the deeper Yes beyond your No.

The Daemonic believes in us, and trusts our heart, as we do not; the Daemonic knows our heart, seeing it for what it is, as we cannot.

Our heart can change, deeply. It can never be counted out. It can always come back.

There is a turnaround in existence that makes it possible to turn around in the heart. The Wound of the Daemonic is thus a far greater blessing, a far greater befriending, a far greater ultimate rejoicing, than any heavenly experience, or revelation, can bestow.

The choice to go all the way and acquire a singular heart, rather than remaining half hearted, is the choice to go with the Daemonic's perception of us rather than going with our own perception of us.

We judge on externals, superficially, but God sees the heart.

3,

Depth and Truth of heart= the two sides of passion.

The depth of the heart is called, in the Chinese Book of Changes, 'the Abysmal', and its symbol is the water that flows through a ravine. The truth of the heart is called, in the I Ching, 'the Clinging', and its symbol is the Fire that flames up from the wood on which it is kindled.

Passion is always, from start to finish, two-sided; to mix Chinese with Hebrew, the Abysmal and the Cleaving.

Once 'the day of trouble' in the life of passion arrives, the black and the red have a new dynamic.

The red crashing down into the black is crucial, because there is a change in heart that can only occur in that deep place where we are "fearfully and wonderfully made"-- and remade. Only in that abysmal mystery occurs the change that gives rebirth to a new red of passion, a passion that returns to its old calling of truth in a new way. To put it simply, whereas before Truth meant righteousness, after the change in heart in its Depth, there arises a new righteousness conjoined with redemption. This is the Sword and Cross of Christ.

This change happens in Yahweh's heart, not only in humanity's heart.

There is no suggestion here of the Gnostic, and Luciferian, doctrines of the divinity having to evolve [such as is evident in the hysteria of Jung's 'Answer To Job'] to become more humane towards humanity. Rather, once Yahweh has established for the human heart the truth of justice and righteousness, he can then bring the human heart deeper to a new land wherein the truth of justice and righteousness is 'crucified', and by being crucified, is 'reversed', and by being reversed, is able to stand upon a groundless ground, and act differently from there. The action that is Redemptive conjoins the action that is Righteous. Justice is always partnered by Mercy, Kindness, Compassion ['hesed'] from the earliest times, but is now joined by Forgiveness; the Sword that separates truth from falsity is joined by the Cross that pays for everyone, true and false no different.

In the ravine of tears, we change in that we mourn no longer just for our ruined life, but we are initiated into and mourn for the ruined life of all humanity. We experience the suffering of all humans and creatures and things as our own suffering. Thus, in the pillar of fire, suffering from the world changes into suffering for the redeeming of the world.

4,

You will never explain this to a Jew, Christian, Muslim, who aspires to ascend up to God, and sees existence as only being directed, guided, commanded, by God from on high, above to below. The God who suffers with us, in the Old Testament, and the God who suffers for us, in the New Testament, is as inexplicable to lovers of the inviolability of heaven as the black pain that inaugurates God's down coming, and 'not finding Adam on earth, descending into Hell to release the prisoner by buying, at ultimate cost, his freedom' [Easter Saturday service].

Given Yeshua is the Mashiach, then he is no mere prophet, nor any mere priest; the Messiah is a spiritual reality sui generis, and by no means simply the continuation of Jewish priesthood or yet another Jewish prophet. David at one point does describe the Messiah as an unusual kind of priest, not the traditional priesthood; and though prophetic inspiration can be ascribed to the Messiah, this spiritual figure has never appeared in the world before, he is new and unique, and utterly special, because he is commissioned by God as the Redeemer of humanity and everything. The Jewish prophets foretell and describe him, but know he is more than, and vastly different from, any of them. David says of him, "a man is coming whose heart is deep" [Psalms, 63, Septuagint]. This is arguably the single most important [short hand] description of the Redeemer in all of Jewish Tradition. The Messianic Reality is the divine heart in the human heart, and its task is to suffer the human heart to redeem it as the vessel of the divine heart. This is a theme of embodiment of the divine in the human [Incarnation of Christ], and sacrificial suffering by the divine for the human [Cross of Christ].

Thus the prophets describe the Messiah as a King who is Spirit-Bearing. Never has there been such a Kingship, nor has there been such a Spirit, at

work in the world. This is a new kind of Kingship, and a new kind of Spirit, prefigured by the old, but never actualised until the Messiah has come.

This Jewish Messiah has no calling toward the ontological height. He is far from Moses. Like David, his calling is to the existential depth.

Do not confuse the spirituality of the mountain 'above' with the spirituality of the abyss 'below.' You can argue there was a necessity in returning to the mountain to relearn basics, before plunging down into the abyss. Yes, this is how Jewish religious history went. Yet Moses is secondary, not primary. Jewish religion began Daemonically with its three founding existential heroes= Abraham [faith in God as making a leap into the abyss], Jacob [honest contention with God], and Job [innocent suffering allowed by God]. Even the Adam and Eve story of human origins is existential, for God places in humanity the two hearts, greater [flesh] and lesser [stone], by which we are conflicted and among which we must choose in order to take a stand on the one or the other. But after the lengthy captivity in Egypt, the primal existential religion was lost, or went underground. The Jews became corrupted. This was not just a matter of living in slavery, but of suffocating in the poisoned air of the city where religion served the getting of wealth, comfort, and luxury, and had therefore lost not just its existential edge, but even more elemental, any moral compass. The Jews had to leave Egypt or betray the whole meaning of their being chosen by God as the people out of whom would come the Messiah. They needed a long time in the desert to undergo purging.

None the less, from the Law conveyed by Moses, we learn that humanity has lost its heart; but we cannot learn what the heart is. The Ark of Witness contained the Law which 'testified' to God's will for humanity, revealing a pathway of action disciplined and bounded by the constraints on human heartlessness. 'Thou shalt not, Thou shalt.' This is addressed to our absence of heart. For it to carry authority with us in our rebellious waywardness, and our utter indifference, in regard to how serious our loss of heart really is, we have to be impressed by God's authority. We have to be convinced God is more ultimate than our own heartless way of living. Psalm 92 [Septuagint; 93 in the King James Bible] conveys the ultimacy of the 'God of heaven' who is 'ruler over the earth', in terms that blend the Eros and the Daemonic sides of God, yet in both establishes the primacy of 'He-Who-Is.' We had better listen to such magnificence and majesty. The monarchal and patriarchal God is a concession to human wilfulness and stupidity= without the almost Walt Disney-esque show of Divinely Omnipotent knowledge and power in the heavenly sphere, we would just carry on in our self-destruction on earth, such is the delusion and derangement into which we tend to lapse.

"God is reigning, He is robed in beauty,
God is robed and girt with power,
He has made the world firm and it cannot be shaken;
Thy throne is prepared from of old,
Thou art from all eternity."

In our foolish pride and futile vanity, in our lust for selfish devouring of all that is good [fallen soul desire] and our hatred of what is other and challenges our egoism [fallen heart passion], we need the mystical modality of heavenly revelation, or 'throne mysticism' as it is also called, or God even more Daemonically shaking the worldliness of the historical arena with thunder, lightning, hail, wind, and the storm [the psalms that describe the Daemonic threat wielded by God include 17, 28, 96], to get people to take note, and to alter their life.

But this creates a terrible bias, a real cramp on the human heart. The 'heavenly' shows the terrible gap between Creator [pure, permanent] and creature [corruptible, temporary], and it insists we cannot carry on as we would do 'naturally', without a second thought that we are living in total ignorance, and doing harm to ourselves, to others, and to the created world around us upon which we depend. When God commands us to live differently, and establishes a way to do it, a Law revealing what the Jews called 'the way of life' [Exodus, 25, 16; 31, 18], the emphasis is on not trusting the human heart's natural inclination, but resisting it, curbing it, building a corral round it that does not let it run 'free.' The human heart is imprisoned in darkness, in many senses, thus the heavenly revelation brings a superior and irresistible light that exposes the darkness for what it is, and gives it a means to change its way.

Clearly, for the mass of humanity living in primal ignorance of awareness and primal fallenness of motive, the very few mystics who could ascend to heaven, break through the veil obscuring the divine to the human, and bring back in their person or in their testimony the shining of the divine light, and its 'instructions' in regard to how the human darkness could be alleviated and opened up to it, rendered them special. Moses, Mohamed, St Paul, are all special to those people who had no light, and relied upon these particular persons who, by divine dispensation, were able to 'break out' of our low estate and 'break through' to the high estate of God. Those who convey God's light, and can show a path to walk toward it, are esteemed by those ordinary people who benefited hugely from what these religious figures brought back from exalted mystical experience.

The key issue is whether God, and humanity, stops here, in this kind of religion, in this kind of spirituality. The Jews did not. They moved on. Islam has not, as yet, moved on to what the Jews were called by God to move toward= the new Messianic Reality and its new Spirit. This brings something never before revealed by God and thus never experienced by humanity, even by the special people who ascended to the throne of heaven to communicate its rule over and direction for us.

Even the Jews split over the transition away from Height toward Depth. There are Jews who remained stuck with Moses. Other Jews understood the greater wisdom at work in the tempestuous and wave tossed David, the ancestor of the Messiah. Moses is not the root of the Messianic. David is the root of the Messiah. From the line of David will come the man whose heart is deep. Moses is not a man of deep heart. He may be called righteous, and the

revelation given to him mystically at the summit of Mount Sinai was so overwhelming he could hardly endure it, but in later being denied entry into the Promised Land by God, it was revealed that the coming hope for all of humanity could not come from Moses, or any mystic like him, it could not come from the Law and its way of living, it could not come from the divine Light.

The Davidic path is not about saving us from darkness by leading us into light, it is about God's Fire kindling the human fire, and God's Spirit indwelling the human spirit. This theme is where God is a gambler, as in the Book of Job, and risks everything; this is where God trusts us to an extent that Moses, and all the Light-Givers and Law-Bringers like him, could never anticipate. By the criteria of these 'revealers', it seems disrespectful to God's majestic control over all things, and too optimistic about the human.

Never the less, God changes from being above humanity to being with humanity, and takes a more humane view of our foibles, with time. A clear expression of this in the Jewish Bible is the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon [12, 13; 16—19]=

"For there is no God, other than you, who cares for all human beings, to whom you might have to prove that you never judged unjustly.

Your justice has its source in strength,
your sovereignty over all makes you lenient to all.
You show your strength when your sovereign power is questioned
and you expose any insolence among those who know its reality;
but, though sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness,
and with great forbearance you govern us,
for you have the power to act whenever you choose.
By acting thus you have taught a lesson to your people
how the virtuous man must be kindly to his fellow men,
and you have given your sons the good hope
that after sin you will grant repentance."

The Messianic Mystery takes this even further= God is more moved in heart by us, and does more to move our heart. Thus, the Messianic Reality is nothing like the heavenly revelation granted to Moses, Muhammad, St Paul, and countless other mystics. Its depth reverses the height, by subjecting it to a deep and radical suffering that tests its love to the limit, and beyond all limit, but by doing this, releases the chains on the human heart and brings the human heart through its vulnerability and weakness to a far shore on the other side. This is the New Land of Heart. It 'rules' from within, not externally, and rises from deeps below, not issuing orders from heights above, and it convinces by its authoritativeness, eschewing any and all claim to authority.

Not, 'I am God, obey me', but, 'I love to the maximum, follow me, and be kindled in this love yourself for the world.' For God is Love, and God is Spirit.

These are the ultimate mysteries of God, not majesty, not radiance, not dominion over all—but the highest serving all, from the deepest. God is Love and God is Spirit are the mysteries God will plant in our earth, our humble, torn, grieving, tear watered earth. It is for these mysteries that ‘God requires the heart’ of each and all.

Hence the mysteries of depth are far more wise and strange and marvellous, even in their heartbreak, than the awesome glories of the height. The heart breaks, but this becomes breakthrough.

The heart has to be lost and is refound only in the depth.

Heaven has to be risked to, and lost in, Hell before it can redeem Hell.

This is why, for the passionate who cannot stop loving Yahweh despite everything they suffer, the deeps of Hell hide the most secret and profound wisdom of God.

5,

The deeper truth that passion struggles for in the abyss is made clear by David [Psalms, 9, 35] as he cries to Yahweh=

“You see the heart, for you behold pain and passion, trouble and anger, that you may take them into your hands.”

The psalms of David give voice to the living out of passion, and to this extent, the black abysmal pain is always spark for the red fiery truth. Yet, more than this, in the throes of passion’s inward wrestling, or its outward stand and deed, it is only Yahweh who is our advocate and help. God’s passion seizes hold of human passion= this is what is happening.

However terrible the day of trouble, in its inward suffering from check mate and outward striving against all odds, at stake is the hidden process by which God grafts our passion to his passion; a wound is opened in God’s passion, and a wound is opened in human passion, as the two are bound together, unbreakably. This can take a life time to accomplish, or one life time might just begin it; for humanity as a whole, it will take until time runs out, at the End of Days. It does not matter how far this goes in our own existence. We will not see the point. We will not live to see the resolution. Despite this absence of guarantee, certainty, mastery, the reassurance is not in how far we get; rather, the encouragement is going through the way in which God sees our pain and passion, our trouble and anger, and seizes hold of our intermittently flickering flame, binding it to his great and deep Fire. The Fire is Love and the Fire is Spirit.

St Paul [Romans, 8, 14—23] alludes to this ongoing and protracted ‘grafting’ of the human passion to the divine passion when he says= “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship.

When we cry, 'Abba! Father!', it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him.. For the creation awaits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.. because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

Passion's crucifixion leads to passion's glorification= this is the Cross and Resurrection, after the Descent into Hell. We redeemed humans are the flame that will ignite all of creation with God's Fire, the Fire of Love and the Fire of Spirit.

Is it any wonder that St Paul remarks, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" [Romans, 8, 18].

Wound to wound, Fire to fire.

In the abyss, God is not inviolate, but takes into himself humanity's vulnerable and wavering passion as the price of humanity taking into ourself God's constant and unwavering passion.

The abyss threatens and proves the mystery of the heart, human and divine.

Yet in the thick of it, in the throes of it, in undergoing our 'undoing', we will despair and our only prayer to God will be filled with anger. All this is necessary. All this is grist to the mill. God fears nothing in the human heart, and if we go through the Davidic path to the end, we will cease fearing what is in our heart, and cease worrying God's heart cannot abide it. Passion bears all things.

Thus, though in the Psalms the black is deep, inexplicable, pained beyond all bearing, it always promises in subtle hints a reborn red of flaming love, of fiery spirit, that is not lost, but awaits our resurrection with Christ, even as we embrace to be crucified with Christ. This mystery of passion, in its 'sufferings and raptures of the spirit', is the secret of the Psalms.

In the Psalms that are depth oriented, the heart is stretched to breaking, yet the heart cannot be counted out, the heart can come back. This paradox blends despair and hope in some peculiar way whose overall result is to affirm to our heart, it is not over yet.

We cry to God, and even though our crying is bitter and reproachful, as well as mournful, something in the crying crosses a gap not otherwise crossable. A broken heart and contrite spirit God will never repudiate. In reality it is more than that. In crying to God, we know in some unknowing which belongs to the

abyss, that God will never forsake the human heart. Even in its forsakenness, the depth of our heart cries to another depth of heart, and 'knows' it is heard.

You do not rage against a God who does not exist. You rage against a different heart from yours, you accuse the heart you know always hears.

6,

The particular psalms that plumb and seek to fathom the depth are various.

On the one hand, there are the 6 psalms called 'penitential' by the [Greek] Septuagint. The first is Psalm 6; the second is Psalm 31; the third is Psalm 37; the fourth is Psalm 50; the fifth is Psalm 101; the sixth is Psalm 129. [Usually, the number in the King James Bible = Septuagint + 1.]

These six repenting psalms address 'owning one's shadow' [in the modern parlance], admitting the lesser heart that undermines the greater heart. This is a whole existential profundity in itself.

For those trying to be obedient to God, in the Mosaic manner, restraining the heart to curtail its evil, and urging it to do good instead of indulging evil, the revolutionary step into a more existential depth only comes, as it did for St Paul, when you realise you cannot do the good you want to do. In part because of the complications of the world, and in part because of the complications of our divided but still beating heart, just inhibiting evil and doing good breaks down. To put it straightforwardly, it is when you try to be good and this fails that you acquire a heart. If you really try to 'diligently' follow the law, it is then you discover life is more complex. It is not possible to do the right thing; or, the choice is not between right and wrong, but often is between better and worse wrongs; or, if you love the world and want to repair it, then sticking to the rules proves inadequate. You make vast errors when you try to love, often precisely because you do love. This is why Christ said of the woman who was a prostitute and a lover, to those who love much, much is forgiven.

The path of law may prevent us falling into the worst, it 'keeps us out of trouble', but it is often sterile in not being able to love with freedom and creativity, and make a real self-investment in things that matter supremely.

By reaching the point where your obedience is no answer to what existence asks of your heart, you begin to face up to the fact that the heart is more implicated in the world and only by change of heart is there any way forward, personally and communally.

What the good Jew, the good Christian, the good Muslim, cannot grasp is that the yoking of law does not work as a solution in the long term, for it does not change the heart, and what must change in humanity is the heart, or humanity is ultimately ruined.

St Paul [Romans, 7, 15; 18—19; 21—23] expresses this moment of crisis when 'behaving in the right way' breaks down= "I cannot understand what I do. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate." He laments= "...the will to do what is good is in me, the performance is not, with the result that instead of doing the good things I want to do, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing." He sums up the human dilemma living under the law= "In fact, this seems to be the rule, that every single time I want to do good, it is something evil that comes to hand."

Whilst he was still zealot, St Paul could not come to this uncovering of the division of heart that makes conflict between good and evil inevitable, and means until the heart is deepened and changes at depth, evil is all too often far more powerful than good. St Paul's 'wretchedness' is actually a huge step forward. The law abiding are inevitably simple people, and simplistic about existence. 'Just do good and avoid evil', they declare, because they seek perfection through the law. This is not possible.

It is necessary for good to fail, and evil to predominate, for the conflict between our two hearts to hot up; and this hotting up of inner conflict is necessary to any deepening of heart and its deepest change. In reality, St Paul's wretchedness would not have replaced his prior zealotry had he not embraced the Messiah; in a famous incident, St Paul asks Christ to take away his weakness, so he can be strong without any lapsing, and Christ refuses, answering instead, 'my strength is revealed in weakness.'

St Paul says two further things that are vital to comprehending this situation of heart conflict. First, he argues that for people so corrupted they think their slavery is freedom and their poisoning is fulfilment, the law is necessary= "For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'do not covet' [Romans, 7, 6]. Second, he says that in his innermost being, he delights in God's law, but he sees within his nature a "different law that battles against the law which my reason dictates" [Romans, 7, 22—23].

In other words, the law that is only a 'written code' is needed to tell us where we are not= we are not living from the heart. Doubtless the 'inner being' within us that 'delights' in the law is the soul, for the soul cannot spread her wings in the context of the pervasive state of human corruption, and reacts to God's challenge towards it as a welcome liberation. It is often women who first support the Light Giver and Law Bringer, before men get on board, because the restricting of men's heartlessness that the revealer makes possible gives the feminine soul space to breath and room to move.. Still, as St Paul acknowledges, we can only do good and avoid evil in action by virtue of an alliance of mind and will; and this strategy only works whilst we do not venture our heart. When existence calls out our heart, as it will if we have any love for people, human events, and the world in its historical caravan crossing a dangerous and trackless waste, then the conflict of our divided heart will come to the fore.

So it must. The truth is, without being tossed on the waves of the conflict tearing apart the heart, we do not recover the heart as such. Recovering the

heart comes with neither being liberal about the corruption into which humanity can sink, nor believing the law is, in itself, enough to really shift humanity where humanity needs shifting. To shift the heart we must return to the heart, despite its conflict, and risk the greater to the lesser-- as the price of risking the lesser to the greater. This is the point of Christ's parable about not separating wheat and tares in the growing season, but waiting much longer for the final harvest. Let us see which heart in us wins out, over the longer haul. Let us see, even more radically, if the heart can turn over a new leaf, and can voyage to a far shore.

The law is not enough because 'God requires the heart.' This is why St Paul points to what is in fact the final resolution to our wretchedness= "We have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" [Romans, 7, 6]. If the heart has no more inclination to covet, but is bursting with generosity, there is no need for any law that announces, 'do not covet.' For those who are recovered and deepened and changed in heart, there is no law because the Spirit which is Fire, the Spirit which is Love, indwells their passion. However, this new spiritual condition comes only at the end of heart aching wrestlings, vicissitudes, ups and downs, ins and outs, advances and retreats, that can last a life time, or many life times.

It would be inaccurate to say the law's strictures are simply thrown away, for then we might just slide back into corruption of all heart. It is more accurate to say the struggle takes us beyond the law's strictures, to the place of the heart where goodness and evil, truth and the lie, are uncovered in their real meaning, their real life, their real implication. Only when you understand in the heart do you acquire the wisdom to act from the heart. This is why David could be both inwardly pondering yet a leader without peer in the arena of the world. The silence leads to action, and the action, once completed, returns to silence.

In fact, all the mansions of the heart, and all the many depths, from the moral through the psychological to the spiritual, are articulated in the Psalms. Not surprisingly, they have figured both in public liturgy and in private prayer for Jews and Christians down thousands of years. The Psalms affirm you cannot contain the heart, you have to live the heart to change it.

We repent not just of misdeeds we have done, nor of how we have passed on our damage to others, but in actuality we are repenting of not putting our faith in God to sort wheat from chaff, preferring to 'go it alone'..

On the other hand, there are a group of Psalms more expressly engaged in 'heart cry' as the only strangled prayer that can be uttered from the depth of our profounder breaking down into the common human fate, the common human tragedy. The pit, furnace, void, are three kinds of 'hell' in the Psalms wherein David suffers and tries to understand the abyss as the place of ultimate human dereliction. "Oh God hear my cry when I pray to you."

These 'depth psalms' of terrible suffering, often inherited from the human condition, or inherent to existing, include at least the following ten=

[1] Psalm 63= "A man is coming whose heart is deep." This refers to the Messiah.

[2] Psalm 21= "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is the 'deal breaker', the experience of being abandoned by God deep in the heart; these agonised words of David were quoted by Christ on the Cross. "Of my God, I cry by day and you answer not, and by night; ..Leave me not when trouble is near, for there is no one to help. ..I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed; my heart is like molten wax within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; ..Thou hast brought me down to the dust of death. But you, O Yahweh, delay not my help; ..For God has not scorned or spurned the prayer of the poor.."

[3] Psalm 41= "I thirst, deep cries to deep." This is the anguished heart of humanity crying to the heart of God, and it is our soul asking for the water of life when it is parched. "As yearns the deer over springs of water, so yearns my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the strong living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?" The presence of God in the Jewish Temple was also known as God's face, or countenance. This is Eros, the light of love and life. "My tears are my bread day and night.. Why are you downcast, O my soul? ..Deep calls to deep at the roar of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows sweep over me. ..I will say to God: You are my protector, why have you forgotten me? And why must I go mourning?"

[4] Psalm 129= "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Yahweh." This mentions God's redeeming; for Redemption, as more than Righteousness, works through depth. "If you, O Yahweh, should mark our sins, O Yahweh, who would survive? But with you is forgiveness. ..For with Yahweh there is mercy, and with him there is full redemption. And he will redeem Israel.." And all the world.

[5] Psalm 101 = "Turn not your face from me in the day when I am in trouble." This is about Accidie -- despondency; listlessness; deserting one's post and indifference to duty; boredom and alienation -- the depression of burn out of all fire. The day of trouble is when even passion fails. "O Yahweh, hear my prayer and let my cry come to you. ..For my days vanish like smoke, and my bones burn like brushwood. My heart is sick and dry as grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones stick to my flesh. ..For I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping. ..for you have lifted me up and cast me down. My days decline like a shadow, and I am withered like grass. ..Yahweh will regard the prayer of the humble, and will not ignore their need."

[6] Psalm 68= "Save me, O Yahweh, for the waters have entered even my soul; I am stuck in deep mire, and there is no foothold." This is the depression of Melancholia, or dejection, being 'pressed down'; drowning in the water, and being sucked down and held fast in mud, unable to move. "...I have come into

the depths of the sea, and a storm has overwhelmed me. ..Save me from the mud, lest I stick there; deliver me.. out of deep waters. May storm waves never drown me, nor the deep swallow me, nor the pit close its mouth over me. ..I am in trouble, hear me speedily. Attend to my soul and redeem it. ..For you know my reproach, my shame, and my confusion; I looked.. for a comforter but I found none. And they gave me gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” The soldiers who nailed Christ to the Cross drank the spiced wine prepared for the sufferers of crucifixion to deaden the pain, and substituted vinegar instead. David’s sufferings are a prefigurement of Christ’s Passion. “I am poor and in pain; ..let the poor see and rejoice; seek God and your soul shall live. For Yahweh hears the poor and does not despise his prisoners. ..For God will save Zion.”

[7] Psalm 76= “My spirit desponded.” This is another manifestation of Accidie; both heart and spirit are affected. “In the day of my trouble I sought God.. my soul refused to be comforted. ..I was troubled and did not speak. I meditated at night and communed with my heart, and stirred up my spirit. Will Yahweh reject us forever? Or will he cut off his mercy for ever? Has his promise ended for all generations? Will God forget to have compassion? Will he withhold his pity in his wrath? And I said: ‘Now I begin to understand; this change is due to.. the Most High.’ ..You have.. redeemed your people.” And all people. The Daemonic is operative in the depth, though we think everything is finished. “The waters saw you, O God: the waters saw you and were afraid, the depths were troubled. Great was the roar of the waters; the clouds gave a clap, for your bolts pass through them. The clap of your thunder was in the whirlwind, your lightnings lit up the world, the earth shook and trembled. Your ways are in the sea, and your paths in many waters; and your footsteps are not known..”

[8] Psalm 142= “And my spirit desponds within me, and my heart within is troubled.” This is Accidie in relation to the evil spirit who attacks the heart and seeks to make it ‘faint hearted’, so it will not bear the unbearable and endure the unendurable to keep faith with the long road it must walk to the end. On this hard road, the heart needs the soul as companion, for the nourishment and renewal brought by the soul eases the heart’s effort. “Yahweh, hear my prayer; give ear to my petition in your truth, hear me in your justice. ..For the enemy has persecuted [me], he has humbled my life to the earth; he has made me dwell in darkness, like the dead of long ago. ..my soul like parched earth thirsts for you. ..Hear me speedily, O Yahweh; my spirit grows faint. Hide not your face from me lest I be like those who go down into the pit. ..Make known to me the way I should go, O Yahweh. ..Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; your good Spirit will guide me to the right land..”

[9] Psalm 27= “To you, O Yahweh, I cry. O my God, be not silent to me, lest.. I become like those who go down to the pit.” God withdraws—and returns. “On Yahweh my heart relies and I am helped. Even my flesh has revived, and with all my heart I give thanks to him. Yahweh is the strength of his people. ..Carry them forever.”

[10] Psalm 87= “A prayer in the depths of distress, ..tormented in the deeps.” This is a descent into the hades and hell at the bottom of existence which we all feel, and fear, yet never speak of ‘in polite company.’ “For my soul is full of trouble; and my life has drawn near to hell. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I have become as a man without help, free among the dead; like those who are wounded and lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, and they are cut off from your hand. They laid me in the lowest pit, in dark places and in the shadow of death. Your wrath presses upon me, and all your waves you have brought upon me. You have put my acquaintance far from me, and made me an abomination to them. I am imprisoned and cannot escape. My eyes fail from poverty. Yahweh, I cry all day to you, I stretch out my hands to you. Can you work wonders among the dead? ..Will anyone in the grave testify to your mercy, or to your truth in the place of destruction? Can your wonders be known in the dark, and your justice in the land of oblivion? ..Yahweh, why do you reject my soul, and turn your face from me? I am poor and in trouble from my youth; ..after being exalted, I am humbled and perplexed. Your wrath has swept over me.. You have put far from me friend and neighbour, and my acquaintances, because of my misery.” This is check mate. Or so it seems when we reach this place of soul, and of heart and spirit.

Elsewhere in the Psalter, David says to God, ‘you require truth in the inward parts.’ The depth psalms conceal and reveal just how hard won that truth of heart really is. The ‘lawful person’ would never come to these places, nor realise that their hell is necessary to the heaven planted in the earth and the heaven raised from hell to redeem the world. Even David is clearly ‘in over his head’, and wrestles with the innerness and profound deeps into which he is thrown. He has no answer. His gift to us is going through it, and conveying its terror and beauty, its peril and possibility, honestly.

The pious and the impious mock David for being so under the hammer on an anvil. This has strong echoes of the account in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah of how the Messiah is treated by the crowds. He too is mocked, in different ways, by the ‘great and good’, and the ‘gutter trash’, witnessing his ordeal. There is no doubt that David, shop soiled as he was, is the human prototype of the Messiah.

There is no such animal as a perfect human being; moreover, it is the very vulnerability and flawed state of the poor human clay that is the ‘hole’ through which the ultimate mysteries of God, and the ultimate destiny for humanity, enter us. The hole of the various depressions, and the hells that fill it, is at the same time ‘the hole in the heart so deep, nothing can fill it.’ Only God dwells in this nothing, and by working with its worst case scenario, brings out of that the victory in the heart we and all the creation have always been in travail waiting for.

God toils in the abysmal, and so do we, though it is a strange kind of ‘effort’ where all that we usually experience as effort is impossible. Our job, our side of the compact with Yahweh, is hinted at in such modern phrases as ‘facing the shadow’ or ‘inner work’, or as the ‘I Ching’ portrays it, ‘working on what

has been spoiled'; at a deeper level, it is what is really behind the all too familiar lines that refer to 'waiting in patience' or 'waiting under adversity.' The same point is implicit in St Paul's statement that we 'inwardly groan as we wait for adoption as Christs.' There is no instant switch, or direct leap, from living under the law to living in the Spirit; on the contrary, David's protracted groaning inwardly is the road out of the law and into the Spirit-- provided we do not drown in the waters where we are drowning or burn up in the fires where we are burning or fall without ceasing into the void where we are falling.

'Waiting' is not passive, it is active. It is a combination of accepting what is, and resisting its pull towards permanence. I am lost but I am not giving in and giving up, for I am still going to find God. I am shamed, guilty, hollow at the core. But I still ask for life, I still seek truth, I still surrender the heart.

7,

But this Messianic Mystery is in formation in David, rather than being neatly worked out.

Thus there are also psalms about the old Jewish theme of the battle for justice against worldly powers that are unjust [Psalm 82= "a cry for help against a world in arms"], and being attacked for righteousness by the unrighteous [Psalm 3= "the virtuous man under persecution"]. These situations, however, can also create deep inexplicable pain, especially when God does not favour the upright and allows the fallen to prosper. Not surprisingly, there are times when David cannot bear the way the world functions; at such moments, we too can plead with God to smash our enemies, and support us. Sometimes Yahweh does this! Sometimes he does not.

Ultimately, there is a sense in which he leaves the world's fate in our hands, and thus if no hearts stand up to it, evil wins out more and more. W. B. Yeats spoke about our time where the stupid and venal are making all the noise, whilst those potentially with the heart to make a difference stand on the sidelines wringing their lily palms, mere bystanders, fearful to get involved and have a go.

There is no formula, no explanation. As there are times Yahweh will do nothing for the world, there are times Yahweh is absent from our depths.

The deeps are never voluntarily sought, but are always forced upon us against our desire and contrary to our will. We do not want these deeps. Yet in a subtle sense we do want them.. We know in our bones that life is deep, and a life lived in shallows is a life already 'dead' before it dies. Thus, in a peculiar sense, we pray for the deeps, but 'in fear and trembling', and even in the midst of 'the sickness unto death.'

The deep heart is crucial to the destiny of humanity, because through its mysteries of sacrificial crucifixion, suffering descent, reversal in the deep place, the 'power of the enemy is broken.'

8,

This means that the depth takes on a double meaning – paradoxical and ambivalent – for the persons on the Davidic path leading to the Messiah.

The Chinese Book Of Changes captures it=

The Abysmal

K'an is the Abysmal, the middle son.

The Abysmal is water, and particularly the rapid water flowing through a gorge. The second son thus also in a sense resembles his mother more than his father, having absorbed one of her oldest attributes. Because of this ambiguity, the trigram signifies danger.

From water K'an derives its penetrating or piercing characteristics; but it also means the ditch in which one hides oneself, and indeed, even means a thief in hiding. It is blood.

Among men, it is the melancholic, the sick in spirit.

Among horses, sickly ones are related to K'an, those that stumble; but on the other hand, those with beautiful backs and a wild courage also belong to K'an.

It is a defective wagon, but also the wheel of the wagon.

It is everything bent, the grass, the bow, the moon.

K'an is due north, midwinter, midnight, the time of toil.

This contains the real meaning of the trigram. It is said:

"God toils in the sign of the Abysmal."

'God toils in the abysmal' is the only reply to David's heart cries. Far from aiming to be perfect, we humans should embrace what the abysmal means in our existence: 'among men it is the melancholic, the sick in spirit.' Because of it, we will stumble. But on the other hand, it is also the attribute of 'beautiful backs and a wild courage.'

When you are where David went, remember this. Remember that in your sickness of spirit, your back remains beautiful and you have a wild courage. Like a horse, you need the touch to calm you and release you to run.

This is the Messiah.

Await him. Let him toil for you, and then with you, in the abysmal. Become wounded and glorified with him, and by this, you will become like him.

This is what is really happening in the deep place.

Your heart is everything bent, the grass, the bow, the moon, you are in the deep place, and it is midwinter, midnight, the time of acute spiritual toil.

You are the defective wagon, but you are the wheel of the wagon.

The heart is still turning, especially in hell; it will turn over, it will come through, it will journey to a different place.

The Messiah reached the Dawn for you. Your dawn is coming, because his has come.

9,

The place where hell puts us, inescapably, is actually a fruitful place to work for our final reconciliation with God, our final breaking through all illusion, temptation, diversion into unreality, though this is a secret we can only uncover from going through it in experience.

So, the advice is not, 'do not despair but remain in hope.' That is facile, glib, shallow-- and untrue to where you are. The advice is, fathom despair to the bottom and do not resist it. Let it do its worst. Let it reveal its truth. Only one thing is needful to your patience, your labour, in the depth= wait for your re-ignition in that love which respects what you have been through. Take no substitutes, in the world or in you.

Either we will pass through, move through, and be transformed, resurrected, redeemed-- or we will end in tears that are frozen on the cheek. The absence and failure of God will seem permanent and irredeemable, as well as one's own failure, and humanity's failure, seeming equally beyond recall. That is despair, abject and unremitting.

If you do not let yourself reach hell, the Daemonic power to bring heaven out of hell will not come lumbering out of its hiding toward you. 'Staying in hell', not escaping, yet not throwing in the towel, is work of a peculiar kind, unlike any other labour of the heart.

The 'I Ching' comments on "God toils in the abysmal" with the words= "that is, endurance in danger and trouble will be crowned with victory."

10,

The saddest thing is therefore not being in hell, but getting stuck there, or rather, since 'stuckness' is a part of hell, not responding to the Daemonic at work in hell, making it possible for us to pass through the pit, the furnace, the void. The most awful thing is becoming static= afflicted by the Daemonic, and at the same time unable to move with the Daemonic's dynamic. Even before Christ plumbed hell – and his movement inward and downward is forceful, even violent, in Greek ikons – David encounters the waves, the wrath, the storm, the lightning, of the Daemonic God present and in movement in the depths. The Daemonic works against us to be able to work for us. The billows

and terrors over turn us to lift us back up to our feet, and for the first time we stand on groundless ground, upheld by the abyss.

Yet it can happen for some people that break down does not become break through, and instead turns into a kind of permanent stasis in the deeps. Currently this is called depression -- whether Accidic or Melancholic, or as in Psalm 87, both – but that term hardly does justice to the life long stalemate at depth some people endure.

Only the active hunt for the God hidden in such profound hurt and sorrow, outrage and incomprehension, will alter the experience of its unremitting heartlessness. The heartlessness of God, of the world, of people, deprives us of all heart for existence. If we do not fight for the heart, we just go under, falling into the abyss unendingly. That is certainly permanent depression.

David was held fast in terrible suffering, trouble, torment, where the heat burning us up or the water drowning us, or the void pulling the floor boards out from under us, goes on and on.. Through Isaiah, Yahweh promises us, 'I will bring you through water and you won't drown, I will bring you through fire and you won't be consumed', and Yahweh will not let our heart fall into emptiness forever. None the less, the Daemonic God is indeed hidden. We need to cry to him, but that is not enough, we need to fight with him, demand he be found, and go through all the transformative learning and fundamental change necessary for us as we chase the elusive and exotic beast through dark forests, through gloomy seas, through savage fires, across pitiless deserts.

We must move through the Daemonic, by the power of the Daemonic. This is what is happening in the Psalms 'for those with eyes to see and ears to hear' - and a heart to respond.

A friend wrote poems over years that were lamentations for their life's losses, errors, hurts. For years the laments were caught in a kind of monotone. Recently, these poems have altered in tone as well as in content; the person is on the move. A log jam is being dismantled in a subtle but tangible way.

Stasis is 'deadness' rather than death, and its only cure is dying. In an early poem dating from 1963—1964, there was an odd line that asked, "Was it Death I saw, or only the dead?" And another line speaks of "moving back through deadness into death." What did my heart know at 19 years that was subsequently lost for so many decades? [The Daemonic was emerging in my 20s, it was lost or went into hiding in my 30s and 40s, then re-erupted in my 50s and 60s. A strange history..] Like the abyss itself, moving through deadness is a paradox= it needs death, so we can pass through dying, and by this, arrive in the transformation of rebirth. The guilt and regret and bitterness of hellishness is the same paradox= 'The worm that dieth not and the fire that cannot be quenched' is not resolved by throwing water over it, to cool it off; it has to burn fiercely and reduce us entirely to ashes, for it is in these burnt up 'remains' that the true fire rises like a phoenix.

Do not try to fix depression. It is killing something in you, and it is depriving you of something. Let it die, let it go.

It is separating you from 'what is not what' and rekindling you, replanting you, in 'what is what.' Your reality sense, raised from the deeps where you were held down and engulfed and tortured and gutted, will henceforth be sharp. You know what matters. Most of it does not matter: you see the hidden, and easily overlooked, pearls in the rubbish, and you have the heart now needed to do what cries out to be done.

You know what is at stake in the world, and your heart is staked to it. You know what defeats the heartlessness of God, of the world process, of all the people around you. What you know is, this change from heartlessness to having a heart, and suffering what has been denied and carrying what has been put down, starts with you.

You have broken through the wailing wall, because you know if there is only one person of heart in all the world, only one righteous heart, only one redemptive heart, it would be sufficient, because that heart is yours and God is in it.

You have hunted down the Daemonic God; and, willing to be found, he has joined you, remade you, and now is the tyger burning bright in the night when you cry out in agony, and hunt in anger.

Your anger now is different. It must join your sorrow and grieving, for with it you demand of God, show me the heart.

And he will. The heart is you.

THE ABYSS AT THE 'BASE' OF THE HUMAN HEART

There is no origin of the heart, nothing more basic or elemental, from which it can be derived. This is because nothing stands between the heart and God. There is no intermediary. Therefore the origin of the heart is literally in nothing because the heart comes directly from God. There is no-thing outside of, or other to, God upon which the heart leans.

At depth, the heart confronts God, nakedly, directly, inescapably.

As there is a limitless Pleroma above the heart, in the height, there is a fathomless Abyss beneath the heart, in the depth. The heart cannot look down into itself to find its 'ground' of being; when it looks down, it gazes into an Abyss.

The heart rests in the Abyss.

The Abyss is indescribable except as the 'groundless ground' that upholds the heart, or the emptiness into which the heart will fall, unendingly.

The Abyss is fathomless, it goes down into endless emptiness. Standing at its edge in the heart, the visceral sensation is that if you fell into it, you would fall forever. This would not be death; you would be alive, and feel the vertigo of falling through the floorboards, of all ground giving way, forever. You would pray for death as release..

Yet the emptiness of the Abyss can be filled by God, and this has the converse feeling that the groundlessness will uphold you; you can leap from the edge, and not fall, for at the end of this descent you will arrive on holy ground, 'getting to the bottom' of the mystery.

This emptiness declares there is nothing the heart can rest on, nothing the heart can take its impetus from, other than God. However, it also signifies the freedom in which God moves toward the human, and the freedom in which the human moves toward God. God is committed, and thus moves freely, and dynamically, to become the presence in the Abyss, but the human prevaricates, undecided, ambivalent, not persuaded, and this waxing and waning of trust renders the Abyss void of all presence.

Spiritually, emptiness is a blessing to the heart, for it means there is a hole in us that can be 'filled' only by God. But existentially this same blessing is also a predicament, because the heart can lose its inexplicable grounding by losing trust in the mystery beneath its feet. We try to lay hands on things that seem more secure. We try to preserve ourselves, we try to guarantee our 'basis', through things that have no foundation in the heart open to and moved by God. These things are ephemeral, without substance, without solidity, in what upholds the heart.

We choose sex instead of erotic love.

We choose drugs instead of mystical ecstasy.

We choose money, position, and success, instead of integrity of action.

We choose images of identity instead of self-giving, self-emptying, self-sacrifice, for love.

With nothing to undergird our fire of passion, it becomes troubling to us, and we can no longer trust the heart's native urge to action. The energy falls back.

When we lose the 'insecurity of God' as the only basis for the leap of passion, this is when passion 'falls', fragments, and degenerates into what ascetics call 'the [evil] passions.' The most giving energy in us becomes, in that context of losing the Spirit, spiritless, mean, nasty, and all the other 'fallen themes' documented in the Desert Tradition. These themes [of fallen passion] are usually given as eight in number, but are grouped round three master themes, which St Maximus identifies as 'Ignorance', 'Self Love', and 'Self Will' [also 'Self Pleasing']. Such motives make the flames within us, that go out actively into the world, destructive.

SALVATION AND REDEMPTION= An Overview of the Difference, Based on Linguistic and Scriptural Sources

PRELUDE

Among the ancient Jews, God has three avenues of relating to humanity= Creator, Saviour, Redeemer.

Had humanity not left Paradise, neither Salvation nor Redemption would have been necessary. Yet it was inevitable that humanity would not sustain the primal beatitude. Thus even as God created, he did so in readiness to save and to redeem..

Salvation and Redemption are of special interest to the Jews because their history is always troubled, difficult, tormented.

The root meanings of the terms 'Salvation' and 'Redemption' are much the same in Hebrew as they are in Greek, Latin, and [Irish] Gaelic. Salvation is particularly similar across all these old languages. Redemption is the same in core, but arguably more nuanced, more varied, over the span from one language to the others. That is because Salvation is more straightforward. Redemption is the mystery.

Herein lies a tale..

1,

In the Jewish Bible, Salvation and Redemption are sometimes referred to in the same line, in the same breath of Yahweh, as in Psalms, 106,10= "So he saved [Hebrew: yasha; Greek: sozo] them from the hand of the one who hated them, and redeemed [Hebrew: ga'al; Greek: lutroo] them from the hand of the enemy." Or, Isaiah, 49, 26= "all flesh will know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour and your Redeemer." And, Isaiah, 60, 16= "..you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." This might lead Jews and Christians to suppose 'they are the same concept', merely different ways of referring to one and the same reality. Such a conclusion is a huge mistake.

None the less, Salvation and Redemption have things in common, because both are activities of God which providentially 'interfere' in the wayward affairs of humanity, offering fallen human beings, living in ignorance and dereliction, 'a different way to go.'

Consequently, both Salvation and Redemption divinely provide something that is able to 'deliver' the human condition from its loss of its real being and suppression of its true action. As a Hasidic leader recently put it, we are not 'hitting the mark' [the root meaning of the Greek term for sin] in our being and in our action because we have wandered off the road, and are in an alien

land where we should not dwell, imprisoned, and unable to 'return home.' We are in Exile.

Salvation can only originate in God; Redemption can only originate in God. On this important point, Salvation and Redemption converge. God is common to both their out-reachings to help the human in ways that the human cannot help itself. Thus, neither can we save ourselves, nor can we redeem ourselves. Without God actively involved in human life, we are not saved and we are not redeemed.

However, both out-reachings ask for our human response [Salvation] or our human involvement [Redemption]. In this sense, neither Salvation nor Redemption is the child's dream of [parental] 'rescue', mummy or daddy doing it all for me, while I am passive, doing absolutely nothing, but remain merely a by-stander to who and what is aiding me. The accounts of saving that are embarrassingly 'childish' all originate from the child's wish fulfilment phantasy of forever retaining a parental rescuer; this is a regressive wishful phantasy, for growing up means facing the reality of all manner of difficult challenges from which there is no rescue, because these things must be faced and battled with by the 'adult.' But even an adult needs help in conditions of privation and threat; adults help, and are helped by, other adults. This saving activity is a sign of friendship, and not wanting anyone to go to the wall. One person demonstrating charity toward another person, or receiving charity from them, is perfectly adult, for it acknowledges how tough things are for everyone putting up with 'the real world.'

Salvation comes closest, in its primitive meaning, to deliverance taking the form of 'physical rescue.' Redemption, though it is sometimes mis-construed as rescue, is really more a 'restoration' of an original, and truer, state of things, as a result of deliverance from bondage.

The possibility of 'deliverance' from a sick and tragic state of living is what Salvation and Redemption have in common. Both come from the gift and deed of God, and are ways that the human condition is changed. Moreover, both are only embraced by faith. Neither is embraced through the curbing of the Law.

Thus, in certain places in the Jewish Bible where the intention is to convey the reality of that possibility of deliverance from evil, and liberation to re-connect to God, and through God, to re-connect to all persons, creatures, and things, then Salvation and Redemption can be used more or less interchangeably.

It is not necessary to be Wittgenstein to realise that the 'context' of use is all important to the meaning of any linguistic terminology. If the context is to talk about deliverance in general terms, not only can Salvation and Redemption be 'confused', but sometimes using the one term, and other times using the other term, sets up an intuitive sense of a vast range of differing kinds of deliverance. This reinforces 'deliverance' per se, creating a sense of its breadth and profundity, a sense of 'in my father's house are many mansions.'

At certain moments, in certain places, 'this is just what the doctor ordered.' At these moments and in these places, burdening the Jews, or anyone else reading their Sacred Text, with more subtle differentiations between different kinds of deliverance would be counter-productive. After all, both Salvation and Redemption have one source= God, and signify the same motive in God= God's love; both are, without doubt, God's love as the only real 'help' for humanity. Both express a love of God toward humanity that is without ulterior motive, a love not asking any recompense from us. It is therefore 'pure' love, nothing but love, animating Salvation and driving Redemption.

That is a lot to unite Salvation and Redemption. That is so important it might make some people frightened of discerning them as contrary, God's Right Arm and God's Left Arm. But why should God be limited to only one way of helping us? Is there not a reason why we have two arms, and why God is described as having two arms?

The Jewish Bible repeatedly calls Salvation God's 'right arm.' Interestingly, Redemption is not called God's 'left arm.' This is like the Jewish prayer, 'God do not notice me today!' The Left Hand of God upsets us all. As in the primordial story of Job, it makes you go through deep hells, and the 'reward' is you come out a totally different person-- or not, if you give way in hell to self-pity and bitterness. The point is, people do not like to mention the Left Side of things, superstitiously hoping if they do not talk about it, it will not happen.. No such luck. The Left Arm, rarely if ever to be mentioned, is just as providential, indeed more so, in its bad luck, or dark fate, as the Right Arm.

Still, the Left Arm is named in other, less frightening ways, such as God's Terrible Arm, and many similar metaphors indicating that the Left Arm is from the Daemonic. The Right Arm is Eros, so who would not prefer it? We human beings yearn for the Right Arm, as it says in 2 Samuel, 23, 5= "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." We try to evade the Left Arm, though it grabs hold of us as and when it intends. Hence= "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" [Hebrews, 10, 31]. The Right Arm of Salvation brings a Light which banishes fear, as it says in Psalms, 27, 1= "Yahweh, my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" Yet with the Daemonic, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" [Proverbs, 9, 10]. The Left Arm of Redemption is Fire.

It is in Isaiah that it is declared, God is Light, God is Fire. Light is Salvation, Fire is Redemption.

2,

It can be asked, who assesses the assessors? Similarly, who checks the scholars? The only thing to do is to wade through a lot of them, to see how they agree or disagree with one another when exposed to the same textual and extra textual 'data.' Common sense nous needs to be exercised, as well as an ultimate respect for, and opening toward, the inspiration of the Spirit.

[1] If we do not have the guidance of the Spirit in reading the Jewish and Christian Bibles, then the words on the page become a snare for the unwary, a trap for the foolish, and tradition tells us it is God who has laid down such a snare, and set up such a trap. Sacred Writings are not to be read casually, nor appropriated to human ambitions and hidden sinful agendas. Mere encyclopaedic knowledge cuts no ice, because the Biblical texts are not anything resembling a compendium of facts and figures, a fully explicit computer print-out, an instruction manual, a list of rules and regulations. The devil knows the 'Holy Book' better than any scholar, and can quote from it readily and exhaustively, but the people who read it in his ethos turn it into a weapon for wishing perdition on anyone who does not march to their tune. They cling to Scripture like a safety blanket, selfishly concerned only with their own salvation, and extending salvation merely to others who kow tow to the 'authority' of their 'private interpretation' [2 Peter, 1, 20]. This interpretation, which is never acknowledged as a distinct 'reading', misses what lies beneath, within, beyond, the literal. Literalism is an interpretation that comes from a fearful, and closed, human mind which is childishly trying to propitiate a hostile patriarchal 'god' who is really Satan the Accuser.

By contrast, though modern scholars may think their method is 'non biased, objective, and scientific', these ludicrous claims mask the extent to which the unchallenged assumptions of 'rationalist', secular-humanist, dogma is projected onto, and used as the ultimate criterion of discernment for, ancient materials that are poetic, strange, and mysterious. These materials are certainly not dictation from God, recorded by human scribes, but neither are they simply invented by arbitrary whim of human creativity. They are a human participation in the illuminatory energy of God.

[2] It is the mixture of human flaws and divinely inspired human insight that needs to be discerned in all Scriptures. A tradition is needed to interpret sacred writings.

In ancient Judaism, the task of reading the Scriptures, 'not for judgement and condemnation, but unto healing of soul and body', was in the hands of the priest. God appointed the priest to convey the true message, the meaning from God designed for the transforming of humanity.

Hence for the Jews, the priestly calling is granted special divine help to get beyond the pitfalls hidden in the Scriptures by God, like dragons on the walls of the Temple keeping out all those with insincere hearts and closed minds; this is why Hasidism says that the priest has a 'duty' to "open and reveal the road of life to others. If not doing his job, he ..hides the revelation of life to others." God's 'minister' to the people preserves the knowledge of God and His Ways.

The Jewish Dabar, the Word or Speaking of God, whether orally transmitted or written down, is never abstract, but is always concrete, addressed to humanity in their predicament, and intended as vital help in that 'perilous situation.' The 'Word of God' is medicine for sickness.

[3] There is a danger of turning the wrong kind of pre-occupation with the written words of the Jewish and Christian Bibles into idolatry. This issue is addressed in the Fourth Gospel of John the Theologian where it is made clear that neither all that Yeshua the Mashiach did, nor all that he said, is mentioned in the Christian Scriptures. John, 21, 25= "And there were also many things which Jesus did, which if every one of them were to be written down, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." No Bible, Christian or Jewish, can contain everything. But the point is, God is neither 'captured' in, nor 'confined' to, any Scriptures, like a wild beast put in a cage. God relates to people outside the Scriptures; indeed, God's relating to us is a 'speaking' that cannot be written down on the page or indeed even put into words. It is beyond mere words. It is a music behind the words. In the earliest times, the Jewish Bible was not spoken, it was sung! The Eastern Orthodox Christians still follow this practice, chanting the words of Scripture when reading from the Old Testament and the New Testament during the liturgy. The meaning implicit in such a practice has been lost.

Moreover, spending all one's limited time studying Scriptures runs the risk of never 'tasting' for oneself in lived experience and personal action the very mysteries the Scriptures are actually evoking.

This leads to a further point. At the Last Supper, Jesus tells the disciples that it is 'expedient' for them that he should go away, for if he does not go, then the Spirit will not come to them; when Jesus departs, he will send the Spirit to the disciples. The Spirit will 'reproof' the world, exposing the worldliness that is sinful, unjust, and judged as under the grip of 'the prince of this world.' Jesus adds that he has 'yet many things to say' to his disciples, but 'you cannot bear them now.' Hence, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will remind the disciples of things Jesus said and did which were never put into the Christian Bible, and more radically, he will also reveal to them further things Jesus did not say and did not do, for the Spirit will guide the subsequent followers of the Messiah into 'all truth' and show them 'things to come' [John, 16, 7-13].

It is clear that neither the Jewish Bible, nor the Christian Bible, have exhausted, or could ever exhaust, divine revelation to humanity. There are mysteries 'to come' which will be disclosed to people outside any Scriptures. People go on having direct encounter with God, in the Spirit, searching out the depths of God and the depths of humanity. That revelatory searching is not finished. People in every era carry it forward. Sometimes, treasures hidden in Scriptures are clarified after long obscurity. However, things not in the Scriptures can also be newly communicated by God because in earlier ages, no one could bear them at that moment in time.. In some ways, humanity is in stasis, just repeating the same old nonsense and vainglory as ever.. In other ways, God's energies have touched us, and we have grown wiser. A Hasidic teacher once said, 'we stand on the shoulders of giants-- but that is why we can see farther than they did.' Bible-idolatry holds us, wrongly, in an earlier step in our 'bearing' of the Truth. What they could not bear back

then we can bear now. Those in the future will bear more than we can today. The baton is passed on, down the generations.

St Paul did not receive any testimony from the disciples about Christ, nor was he present at Christ's crucifixion; no Scripture, Jewish or Christian, instructed him about the mysteries of Christ's Cross.

It was through meeting Christ 'in the Spirit' on the road to Damascus, and accepting to be entirely reversed, that he was led to a profound understanding of the 'hidden wisdom' of the Cross. Yet St Paul did not speak 'the last word' in regard to the Cross. The Cross continues to kindle fire in those who will accept reversal, those who accept to be dead with Christ and alive with Christ.

To be 'instructed and guided' by the Cross that burns the heart with the Fire of the Spirit, outside of any and all oral handed on Tradition, outside of any and all Scripture, outside of any and all Liturgy, remains a way to the Messiah that is beyond human interference. It may happen later that confrontation with all these things confirms, and challenges, the direct revelation, even as it confirms and challenges them.

[4] It is what the Spirit breathes 'into' the words, originally, and moves us to read 'out' from them, subsequently, that matters more than any literalist religious, or rationalist secular, approaches to Biblical Scriptures.

[5] Later illuminations by the Spirit need to be understood to get the meaning of earlier illuminations by the Spirit, since the former prefigure, or foreshadow, the latter.

Augustine of Hippo comments on the dialectic between the Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible=

The New Testament in the Old is latent,
The Old Testament in the New is manifest.

[6] There are different layers of meaning in Biblical texts= historical, moral, symbolic, mystical.

[7] A person must have lived it to interpret it. This rules out both literalist and rationalist readings of Scripture. Neither are living what the Scripture is evoking, because both are, in different ways, shallow about the human, and therefore unable to penetrate the veil that conceals the divine. Superficiality toward the human and superficiality toward the divine is no lamp with which to search out high and broad, deep and terrible, things. Ironically, both literalist and rationalist are, in opposite yet similar ways, confined to 'the letter which kills.'

3,

Scholars claim that the name Yeshua is most likely Aramaic, the language he spoke, not Hebrew. The word in Hebrew for 'salvation' is Yahshu'ah, which is feminine. The masculine version is Yashu'a, the name of Jesus. Both words come from the root term 'yasha', which means 'to save.'

As the etymological root meaning of Salvation, 'yasha' has a host of key features. There is much to be unravelled, none the less these aspects of the saving activity are coherently and closely related, very much all of a piece.

[A] To Be Saved in Summation

According to one commentator, the three primitive Hebrew letters forming Yeshua are the consonants [i] yod, [ii] shin, [iii] ayin. [i] The *yod* primitively looked like a hand, and meant a deed, an action; [ii] the *shin* was teeth, and meant to consume, to destroy; [iii] the *ayin* was an eye, and meant to cast your eye upon, or look at. This word implies, at metaphorical root, that to be saved began with a hand performing a deed= a common Biblical image of God's active energy moving toward the human. The saving power continued its impetus by delivering the human from what threatened it, and it did this by destroying the threat, biting down on it and chewing it up. Finally, after the defeat of the threat, the human cast its gaze upon what had delivered it from death and saved it for life. This gaze was not only devotional, giving thanks to the deliverer, but also mystical, beholding the deliverer's wondrous presence.

God's Salvational activity is not confined to what is going on within the Temple, but the Temple is where diverse persons come together as one people -- 'the people of God' -- to acknowledge Salvation as God's generosity to them, take joy in it, glorify God for it, receive it ever more fully, and enter communion with its transformational energy. Since the Temple gathering is led by the priest, so this implies an unbreakable link between the priest, the sacred ceremonies ritually enacted in the Temple, and Salvation, as in Psalm 132, 16= "I will clothe [Zion's] priests with salvation."

Salvation vis a vis the historical world often has the connotation of deliverance from worldly evils that 'crush, oppress, threaten'; these worldly conditions put the Jews "far from safety" [Job, 5, 4]. Moses is the Jewish leader who, more than any other, exemplifies the workings of Salvation in the world process full of danger and doom.

Moses says to the Jews, as they are running from the pursuing Egyptian army= "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh, which he will show to you today, for the Egyptians you have seen today, you will see them again no more forever. Yahweh will fight for you, and you will hold your peace.. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; ..and Yahweh overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.. Thus Yahweh saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians.. And Israel saw that momentous work which Yahweh did upon the Egyptians; and the people revered Yahweh, and believed him and his servant Moses" [Exodus, 14, 13-14; 27; 30--31].

Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt, through God's active help, is a paradigm of Salvation; this signifies, as it says in Psalms, 20, 7= "the mighty deeds of the victory of his right hand." This crucial event in Salvational history is sometimes confused as redeeming, but it actually lacks all the features of the Hebrew terms for Redemption -- there are 5 of them -- even at the most primitive stage of meaning. The Jewish people are liberated from Egypt in order to serve God in the Promised Land= this is the dynamic of Salvation for the Jews. Salvation is not other worldly, because serving God means serving God's world. John, 3, 17, echoes this point= "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but that through him the world might be saved" [in Greek, 'condemn' means, 'to separate, to distinguish, to pick out']. Saving does not separate, does not distinguish, does not pick out, the world, but includes the world.

God also asks Moses to establish a proto Temple, in the form of a tent, where the Ark of the Covenant is kept. The Ark is a chest reputedly containing the stone upon which the 10 Commandments are inscribed and pieces of manna. It should not be over looked that the role of Moses as Law-Giver is set within the context of the nascent Temple. The Temple puts its own, different interpretation on the Law.

In the Temple, the Law becomes ascetic, not formalistic, not legalistic, not behaviouristic. The 'spirit' in which we practice the Law is crucial. Until you are changed, from within, by being fully re-united with God, following the Law is all you can do. It shows willing. I won't steal this person's car, but I still would like to have it, and am tempted to take it. Since the Law tells me this is not compatible with living in God, so I will not do it. But I will go on thinking about it inwardly, if I don't act on it outwardly..

It is the Temple which highlights and honours the highest mystical encounter with Yahweh in the burning bush, the revealing of his name as 'I am that I am', and 'I will be what I will be.' This supreme illuminatory moment renders Moses virtually an apophatic mystic, according to Maimonides [1138-1204 AD]; and St Gregory of Nysa, hundreds of years earlier, argues much the same.

[B] Saving Activity In Its Multiple Aspects

To save has a large number of cognate meanings.

[1] To save is to help, or offer aid, in the specific sense of to 'preserve' from harm; 'keep' alive, keep safe and well; to 'spare' from punishment or from other horrendously negative states, such as poverty, illness, or death; 'bring to safety and security', 'ensure prosperity', 'look after the welfare of.' In Ezekiel, to be 'saved alive' is the state of the repentant sinner who, spared the outcome of sin which is death, continues 'safe and sound' in life, indeed, they are regenerated in aliveness, because sin itself is a deadening state. [It is not that sin is marvellous, but its reward is death; its very condition is a deadness whilst still nominally alive.]

[2] To save is to 'rescue from danger, trouble, lack, destruction'; over time, this was understood not simply as physical, but as spiritual, a coming out of ill-being and a going into well-being; thus, to save is to 'cause healing.' Salvation is equated with the healing of the whole person through their opening up to God.

[3] To 'save from sin' is constantly repeated in the Jewish and Christian Bibles. For example, in Mathew, 1, 20-21= "a spirit from Yahweh appeared to Joseph, and said to him, 'you son of David, fear not to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son, and you will call his name Yeshua, for he will save his people from their sins'." By contrast, only once in the Jewish Bible does it say, 'redeemed from sin' [Psalms, 130, 8]. What redeeming overcomes in us, and what we are redeemed to do, is deeper than any Salvation. Salvation addresses sin as the darkness which blinds us, and as the waters that drown us. Hence we are purified, to see the true Light of What Is; cleansed, to partake of the real Water of the Fullness of Life.

[4] Salvation is of the entire 'people of God', as in 1 Chronicles, 16, 35= "O God of our salvation, gather us together", though each individual is 'sanctified.' We are saved 'out of' sin for entry 'into' the Sacred. The body is sacred, the soul is sacred. This is a Temple theme= the sanctifying of each and all. From this comes the Eastern Christian meaning of humanity as the high priest of the whole creation, blessing and sanctifying all things which humanity 'handles', offering everything created 'back' to God, hence not using matter as an end in itself, but discovering that matter is a route to knowing God, as the Hasids point out. When we have the vision of God's Energies, or Glory, streaming through all created persons, creatures, things, rendering the material transparent rather than opaque, this is a high peak of Salvation. The vision of God -- and the creation in God -- is mystically salvational; it affirms the whole created universe as God's exuberance, and the earth as God's resting place, God's abode, God's Zion, God's Temple.

[5] To save is most urgent in times of need, duress, jeopardy, especially when it is necessary to obtain God's protection from evil; hence, David [Psalms, 64, 1] prays to God, asking him to "preserve my life from fear of the enemy." This is a major Leitmotif of salvational activity in the Jewish Bible. Another primitive meaning of 'yasha' as 'save' is 'to be or made wide', to be or made 'open', or something spacious. Evil, and the pressure it exerts, are always regarded as narrowing, constricting, cramped= the very opposite of that spaciousness in which things have room to breathe, to develop, to be and become what they are and what they will be; and this inhibiting force of evil is also opposed to that spaciousness in which everyone and everything is welcomed -- all things have their time and place under the sun. It is from the restrictive space squeezing us so tightly we can hardly take breath that the person cries out for Salvation. When help has come from God, there is a sense of a 'wide' space [Psalms, 118, 5]. Things open out, things widen.

This same deliverance of saving is felt keenly in physical battle with human enemies, though later the similar sense of being assaulted, surrounded, hemmed in, beset, will transfer to spiritual enemies, the demonic powers attacking mind, soul, heart, in the inner 'spiritual warfare' so prominent in the monastic tradition of the Christian East.

For the Jews, so encompassed on all sides by rivals for their land, saving took on a very concrete meaning of God helping their relative few win the victory in battle against the vastly superior invading armies, like David the small boy against Goliath the giant man. Success in combat removes the pressure, restores the sense of the divine spaciousness holding all of life's fruitful possibilities. Thus 'yasha' as salvation implies 'victory.' The saviour is therefore 'he who leads to victory in battle.' According to the original understanding, it is God himself who is leading the good fight against the enemies of the people of God [Isaiah, 25, 9; 14, 20; Zephaniah, 3, 15-17]. The Jewish Bible will use 'God of our Salvation' as inter-changeable with 'our victorious God' [1 Chronicles, 16, 35; Psalms, 79, 9; Isaiah, 17, 10].

The saving God is the God who helps the Jews to be victorious in their battles for continued corporate survival against overwhelming odds. This counsels not to give up when the deck seems stacked against us. The victory can still come, not expected, at a moment of supreme crisis.

The Jews in ancient times believed that, in the last analysis, evils are caused by demonic spirits, and escape from evil influence is a help for which humanity feels gratitude to God. Thus, humanity is saved 'from' all manner of damaging evils= [a] from trouble [Psalm 34]; [b] from enemies in war [1 Samuel, 4, 3; and 7, 8] and from annihilation by rival nations [Esther, 7]; [c] from violence, or "men of blood" [Psalms, 22, 22]; [d] from reproach -- moral accusation, shame, guilt [Psalms, 57, 4]; [e] from uncleanness [Ezekiel, 36, 29]; [f] from huge calamity [Jeremiah, 30, 7]; [g] and ultimately, from sin and death [Ezekiel, 36, 22-32; Psalms, 68, 19].

[6] To be saved involves the re-joining of things that are not meant by God to be divided but have become so through the primordial separation of the human from the divine. This is not merging or fusion, but re-connecting; the re-uniting of what has been sundered, the making whole of what has been fragmented, the repair of the torn net of inter-dependent persons, creatures, things. St Maximos says that humanity, in the process of being saved, is called to undertake a saving activity toward all things; humanity becomes the integrative and reconciling factor, bringing back together all the falsely split 'binaries' of the creation, of which there are 6= Male [masculinity/manly] and Female [femininity/womanly]; Paradise [nature] and World [humanity]; Body [gross-sensory] and Mind [subtle-intelligible]; Inner [subjective] and Outer [objective]; Earth [terrestrial-visible] and Sky [celestial-invisible]; Created [the cosmos] and Uncreated [God]. This is also the re-finding of the I-Thou, as Martin Buber describes it, after the long domination of the I-It. Dialogue and two-way reciprocity replaces monologue and one-way unilateralism. Not only belittling tyranny but also flattering seduction are unilateral. Relationship is revived in all its saving graces.

[7] To be saved is something we wait for, as in Psalms, 25,5= "For you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait", or= "on thee do I wait." We hope in salvation, and have faith it will come, none the less we must show patience. In the Christian Bible, Salvation is likened to a thief appearing in the night, you don't know when he will come, so you have to be watchful, and remain alert and sharply aware [2 Peter, 3-10; Revelations, 16, 1].

[8] To be saved is what we really desire, as in Psalms, 12, 5= "I will set him in the safety for which he longs", and as in 2 Samuel, 23, 5= "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

[9] To be saved is awaited, and longed for, yet it is always 'nearer' than we are aware, as in Psalms, 85, 9= "Surely his salvation is near."

[10] To be saved brings joy, as in Psalms, 51, 12= "the joy of thy salvation"; or= "sustain unto me the joy of thy salvation."

[11] To be saved is equated with, and rooted in, the 'loving-kindness' of Yahweh, as in Psalms, 85, 7= "O Yahweh, grant us your loving-kindness, your salvation." The loving-kindness of Yahweh seems close to the Pauline 'agape' in the Christian Bible, and the 'compassion' of Buddhist enlightenment [though resolving such potential parallels awaits further study].

[12] To be saved is to be exalted, to be lifted up, as in Job, 5, 11= "they are lifted to safety", or= "they are exalted to safety." As a result of this, humanity exalts God, as in Psalms, 18, 46= "Let the God of my salvation be exalted."

These are some of the aspects of saving activity..

[C] Biblical Images of Saving Activity

The saving activity of God is portrayed through a host of key images, full of symbolic meaning, in the Jewish Bible.

[1] God is Light, and this Light is Salvation [Psalms, 27, 1]. This is the Light of Salvation in Yeshua, "the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world" [John, 1, 9]. In the Jewish Bible, God says to his Messiah that "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" [Isaiah, 49, 6]. The equation of the Light of God with Salvation is fundamental to everything else which can be regarded 'salvational.' If the Light of God, which is not the deceiving darkness of Satan, and not the limited intellectual light of humanity, is absent, then Salvation cannot be operative.

[2] Salvation is the Water of Life; the Cup of the wine of Gladness; the Wellspring of Generosity which overflows. We need to be immersed in a new life, cleansed, regenerated. This Life is the manifestation of Light. Light and Life are one thing, spiritually. When we are re-enlightened, we are also re-animated.

[3] Salvation is release from constriction into Spaciousness. Do not reject the foreigner, the stranger, the outsider. Make efforts to care for the widow and orphan, the dispossessed, the poor, the powerless. Stretch to be all inclusive, do not be narrow, pinched, mean, and rigid. Be more open, be more accommodating, to what is other, unfamiliar, not 'fitting in.' Be more fluid= do not fear the breadth that holds a vast complexity. Let everything and everyone be what they are, and do not stop them from becoming what they will become. Get out of the way, allow life to flow. Stop putting life into plans, structures, sign posts and hand rails, that impede its currents. Our paranoia freezes it all in ice= the Pronoa of God melts, un-tightens, and weaves together for good.. The spaciousness of God permits the Dance of Life.

Martin Buber= "This is one of the primary Hasidic words: to love more. ..Once before a journey Rabbi Rafael called to a disciple that he should sit beside him in the carriage. 'I fear I shall make it too crowded for you' the latter responded. But the rabbi now spoke in an exalted voice, 'So, we shall love each other more, then there will be room enough for you'.." [pp 47-49, 'The Legend of the Baal-Shem', 1968].

[4] Salvation is the Rock. It is grounded, immoveable, a foundation stone on which we can rely. Hence, God is pleaded with= "be God, the rock of my salvation" [2 Samuel, 22, 47].

[5] Salvation is also for each and all of us "my strong-hold and my refuge" [2 Samuel, 22, 3].

[6] Salvation is the Victory in dire combats; and consequently for each and all of us God acts as "the shield of your salvation" [2 Samuel, 22, 36].

[7] Salvation is Goodness given away gratuitously, freely, graciously. "You crown the year with your goodness" [Psalms, 65, 11]. Indeed, Salvation bestows all manner of physical and spiritual Riches, Benefits, and Abundance [Psalms, 65, 9-13] on what is below from Above.

[8] Salvation is the vision of the Glory of God. God is Beauty, and his Salvation is Awesome, Amazing, Wonderful, to behold, to feel, to be baptised into, to walk as a path.

[9] Salvation is Peace. The experiential qualities that Paul attributes to the human being who is in the Holy Spirit are without doubt Salvational. They do not apply to Redemption, which brings what the Jews called 'The Day of Trouble'; Christ on the Cross had to plumb the depth of that trouble. He assumed the deepest human experience of forsakenness by God in order to over-turn and over-come it.

[10] Salvation is likened to Marriage between God and humanity. This is evident both in the Jewish Song of Songs, part of the ancient tradition of Israel as wife and Yahweh as husband [Hosea, 2, 19; Jeremiah, 31, 32; Isaiah, 54, 8], and in the Christian tradition of Christ as the bride-groom and

the Temple as the bride. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins [Mathew, 25, 1-13] depicts the coming of the kingdom of heaven as the 'bridegroom' but focuses on keeping vigil at night [the time when people are physically, psychologically, and spiritually asleep]. If we are not aware, but sluggish and distracted, then we might foolishly 'miss' the arrival of the supreme gift..

The Christmas card in our mail box naively wishing for us that the coming year may be 'peaceful, happy, healthful' is actually hoping the next year will bring Salvation!

[D] The 'Mosaic' Core Theme of Saving Activity

Despite the complexity of the saving activities, and the saving symbols, a certain core theme emerges. This can be accessed through the other root etymological term for Salvation, the name for Moses in Hebrew, which is 'Moise', Moseh, Moshe, and many variants. Though some commentators limit 'saving' to 'yasha', other scholars add 'moshia' for 'saviour.' This is undoubtedly because Moses is arguably the first, and exemplary, instance of God saving Israel.

If the name of Moses was adopted by Jewish tradition to indicate 'saviour', then its etymological root meaning is much more telling about what the salvational process really is accomplishing.

Though it can be disputed, it seems likely the name 'Moses' is in root Coptic, and was adapted into Hebrew. Its basic meaning is 'drawn out of the water.' People regard this meaning as very literal, because Moses was 'saved' by the Pharaoh's daughter, when she plucked him as a baby from a raft of reeds being swept away on the currents of the Nile River. She took this unknown infant in because she was childless. In this way, Moses joined the Egyptian royal family [Exodus, 2, 10].

But, 'drawn out of the water' has a far more spiritual meaning. It has the same meaning when Yeshua says to the disciples he summons out of their ordinary life as fishermen, 'I will make you fishers of men.'

Moses is drawn out of the waters in which all humanity is blinded and drowning, the illusion of life that is really death. Yeshua draws the disciples out of these same waters of death, and he tells them, once he has saved them from the deception of life that is really death, they will also save many other people from this delusion. The waters are sleep, the waters are consuming. The deadness we eat is eating us. Yeshua takes the disciples out of their state of sleeping, out of their state of being consumed. He opens their eyes to the 'true light' and gives them the 'bread of life.' As a consequence of his gift to them, they will give to many people this same awakening to light, this same ceasing to eat deadness and starting to eat life.

'Fishers of men' and 'drawn out of the waters of the Nile' are the same Salvation. Thus in Coptic, 'mish' means 'to draw', and when people are drawn out of death, into life, they are saved. This is what 'saving' really means= the

drawing out of people ontologically in deadness into a new ontological aliveness.

Thus, there is a passive, 'the one who is drawn out of darkness into the light by another', and there is an active, 'the one who draws another out of the darkness into the light.' God initiates drawing out those in need of saving. If they are not drawn out, they will be more and more harmed, and eventually they will be entirely destroyed. Thus, drawing out is a necessity, not a life style extra; a basic and urgent need.

Another variant of the Coptic has 'mo' as 'waters' and 'uses' as 'to save, to deliver.' Hence, 'to draw out from the water' also means 'saved from the water.' The true water is life, the false water is deadening. If we remain in it, it will eventually kill us, poisoning our lingering life, until it is forfeit, and lost.

Salvation, then, is heavenly. Heaven comes to earth, to save the earthly from falling into darkness and deadening. We are saved from darkness and deadness for a life that is full of light, and has all manner of other heavenly properties.

Some forms of Salvation are more 'other worldly' in spirituality= we come out of the world to go to heaven. For the Jews, that escape from obligation to the world was not permitted by Yahweh. Rather, in Jewish Salvation it is more that the heavenly comes down towards the earthly, and the world is raised out of the 'bad things' into which it had lapsed and raised into the 'good things' for which it had been created.

[E] Conclusion

The core theme of Salvation can be summarised in a few key aspects.

[1] The dynamic in saving activity is that we are [a] drawn out of X, and [b] drawn into Y.

X= darkness and death, calamity and impoverishment, unhappiness and fear, and similar ontologically deprived and imperilled states; Y= light and life, safety and fecundity, joyousness and hope, and similar ontologically secure and fulfilled states.

[2] The dynamic in saving activity of passing from an ontologically decreasing and contracting, almost extinguished, state of being into an ontologically increasing and expanding, reconstituted, state of being is a transformational process of raising up a 'lower' to a higher condition.

[3] This raising of a lower to a higher condition is done by the Highest; it is not earned, or merited, by doing moral works or adopting spiritual disciplines, for it is a free gift. It manifests a pure mercy, a pure kindness, a pure compassion, of God. The gift is received by faith; yet the gift needs time to draw us nearer and nearer to it, and draw us more and more into its light and life, the transfer of state is not instant, and so moral works and ascetic

disciplines may be required to 'work with' the gift, making it ever more one's own. Chewing and digesting takes effort; there is no swallowing whole and instant alteration. When the nourishment accumulates in us, and pushes out the toxins, we are gradually reborn, brought back to the life of the light.

[4] As the gift becomes our own, it both heightens us, and broadens or widens us, making us not only draw near to God but also draw ever nearer to our fellow humans, creatures, and things. The love of God, and the love of Neighbour as the very Self, are heads and tails of one coin for the Jews. It is impossible to attain one without attaining the other. We cannot love the Neighbour without loving God; we cannot love God without loving the Neighbour. Similarly, heightening and broadening go together. The saved do not just look upward, they also look outward. They have high or excellent values and broad or wide sympathies..

[5] Since the gift is genuinely made our own, how we freely, creatively, and lovingly, 'use' it is our responsibility to 'work out.' There is no stereotypical pattern of what you are and what you do when you are caught up in the process of Salvation. None the less, it has marks and the person is always recognisable as more enlightened and more alive, more at peace in their centre and more happy, than the general run of quietly demoralised humanity. You acquire 'bliss bestowing hands', as Buddhism puts it.

[6] Salvation is two-fold, invariably= we are saved from the undesirable state of affairs and saved for the desirable state of affairs. Salvation is never just getting out of an ultimate negative, it is that only for the sake of getting into an ultimate positive. It focuses on the negative only to get beyond its clutches and reach the positive. Simply disapproving of the negative we are to be saved from is not Salvational, unless there is an equal, indeed more pronounced, stress on the positive. Once transferred from negative to positive, God forgets our former estate, never harps on it, never reminds us of it, but moves ahead and moves on into the newness we have entered. The former things pass away..

[7] Salvation is not a transcendence of the world, an escape from the world process.. What happens, rather, is that one, destructive and inhibiting condition of the entire world is transformed into a different, creative and facilitating condition of the entire world. In this sense, a veil is ripped back, and the reality previously obscured is at last manifest. It was always there, but we 'looked through a glass darkly', and could not see and touch it.

[8] Salvation is clearly the Way of Eros, for it is the Eros of God that draws us away from sin, and draws us into God's light, life, goodness, beauty, knowledge. This 'drawing' is the pull, the attraction, exerted by Eros. The soul, and body as planted in the soul, never lose the God-implanted desire, yearning, longing, for the Real Goodness. This capacity to be drawn out of the loss of God, and drawn toward the regaining of God, is the secret treasure buried in the soul, the pearl beyond price, for it means something in the soul created to 'know' God and 'share' God with the whole creation never can be, and never will be, blotted out by sin.

William Blake puts a fist of Salvation in the devil's face in the poem titled=
'To The Accuser Who Is The God Of This World.'

"Truly, my Satan, thou art but a Dunce,
And dost not know the Garment from the Man,
For every harlot was a virgin once,
Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan."

The Eros that draws us out of the loss of Goodness and draws us into the re-entry into Goodness finds something bright, alive, ravishing, untouched, sacredly set aside for God, in the soul's inner recesses. The soul is inherently virginal and will become for many the giving mother, dispensing Salvation, because the soul was made to be the wife of God.

There is something basically 'gentle' about Salvation.

1 Timothy, 2, 2-3=

"..that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful.. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." This 'undisturbed life' is not the facile bourgeois existence; it makes possible a material and spiritual 'flowering.' Salvation aims at a final fruition. Things blossom. This is already mysteriously and latently seeded in the root meaning of the Jewish term Dabar, the Word or Speaking of God. Somewhat akin to the Greek Logos, one commentator claims that the Jewish Dabar implies something like the 'inner sanctuary' of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, or more figuratively, the 'bringing forth of things', or 'the bringing about of things.' God speaks things into being, and this speaking carries the seeds of things and brings them to 'fruitfulness.' Logos, or Dabar= the sower of seeds, and their fructifier; soul, nature, universe= the field in which the seeds are planted, and brought forth to flower fully. Salvation makes each and every one of us the sacred space, the sanctified location, in which sower, seeds, field, converge to produce a garden, a vineyard, from which many are nourished and in which God rejoices.

[9] For the Jews, Salvation transforms the very nature of life in the here and now; it is neither associated with Eternity, nor is it regarded the obligatory pre-requisite for entering Eternity after dying, so that if we are not saved in this life, then we are obliterated forever after our demise. This kind of thinking seems to have entered early Christianity, very much to its detriment, but it is not really Jewish. The belief in the afterlife as the Eternity of those who are saved is essentially Platonic; if it crept into Judaism just before the time of Yeshua, then that was doubtless under increasing Greek Hellenic influence on the Jews [due to Alexander's Empire, and the Roman Empire that replaced it].

[F] The Right Hand of Salvation

Salvation and Redemption differ, despite both coming from the same source in God, because God has two arms holding the creation and everything in it, and therefore Two Different Ways of helping the distress of humanity. The Salvational Way is explicitly named, in the Jewish Bible, as the Right Hand, or Right Arm, of God. Thus Psalms, 20, 6= "the saving of his right hand." Moreover, we are 'help up' by God's Right Hand, making it possible for us to rise up on it as our 'support', as in Psalms, 18, 35= "...the shield of your salvation and your right hand upholds me." Salvation brings the 'heavenly' to us, and its 'strength' in upholding us, not 'letting us down', is also from God's Right Hand, as in Psalms, 20, 6-7= "heaven with saving holy strength, the saving of his right hand", and "the mighty deeds of the victory of his right hand."

This delimits what Salvation does, and what it cannot do. Salvation works on the Right side of things.

Salvation is never called 'the Left Hand, or Left Arm, of God.'

Never is it said that 'Salvation works in two different ways, not just the one.'

Salvation works in only one manner, 'the Right Handed Way.'

The Left Hand, or Left Arm, of God is not named as such, because we fear the Daemonic God, and desire the Eros of God. The Jews hope for Salvation, as an alternative to being forced into the Way of Redemption.

This is because Salvation is easier, and Redemption is harder.

It can be said that in Saving, God is an adult, not childish, Rescuer; a friend in need is a friend indeed. Salvation is enabling. But in Redeeming, God is Not A Rescuer, childish or adult.. The Redeemer undergoes something suffering, and deep, and empowers us to accept and undergo it as he does, as a Daemonic Fate that cannot be escaped.

Saving takes us out of, and puts us above; redeeming throws us in, and brings us through.

Redemption goes deeper into the human dilemma, to do something with humanity's tragedy that Salvation cannot do. The tragedy in humanity is a fathomless depth, a fathomless abyss, where the Light cannot go. There is an evil stronghold, and evil refuge, an evil 'rooting' in this depth, in this abyss, which Light can neither reach, nor undo. Only Fire can reach it, only Fire can undo it.

But to go this deep into us, the Fire must suffer in a new and radical way. The Light does not have to suffer in this way to raise, to lift, to exalt, to heighten us, out of sin. But the human tragedy is deeper than sin, because it is the cause of sin, and sin is only its effect. To get to the real root, to get to the underlying cause, heaven cannot just bring the earthly and the worldly up to its felicity. It has to plunge down into, to suffer and bear and undergo, the

infelicity, lodged in the root of us, at the basis of us. This plunge down and down is undertaken not by the Light of God, but by the Fire of God.

It is what the heavenly must bear and endure, what it must suffer, the cost it must pay, to go into hell and undercut evil at root, which is the Cross of Jesus the Christ, the new power of the Messianic Mystery which is a Reversal of everything humanity believes in as powerful, religiously or secularly. This is the Messianic Mystery in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah.

Salvation= Logos, Light. [The light that enlightens every man who comes into the world, though when it entered the world in Yeshua, 'his own knew him not.']

Redemption= Spirit, Fire. [The fire that Yeshua, speaking as the Mashiach, said he came to ignite in humanity, yet knowing it was not yet sparked, sadly wished it could already be burning.]

Salvation= humans are given the Light innately, before they are born.
Redemption= humans will only acquire the Fire in time.

Salvation= Logos primary, Spirit secondary.
Redemption= Spirit primary, Logos secondary.

Hence, Jesus is sufficient for Salvation.

But, Christ Jesus is necessary to Redemption.

Salvation= heaven come to earth; the earth is heightened.
Redemption= the heaven only revealed in hell; heaven is deepened.

There is a final reason, the most significant of all, why Redemption is necessary where Salvation stops.

Salvation, though inherently all inclusive, never the less always, by its very nature and very function, must include and exclude. It succeeds in some people, but in many more people, it fails. Only Redemption succeeds with each and every human being. Redemption was foreseen as needed by God, because Yahweh is the God of the living, and will not allow the devil's ways to kill any one of his creatures, even the most broken-- especially the most broken. Salvation balks at real evil in its real depth. Only Redemption takes evil on, and defeats it, where it takes root, in the abysses of the human heart meant to carry the divine heart.

Salvation is the second of God's Ways, and Redemption is the first of God's Ways, because Yahweh the merciful, the gambler, Yahweh the humble and the bold, will not leave a single creature of his in hell.

Salvation saves some and abandons to profound hell many more.

This either/or is what Redemption overcomes and ends.

God will not leave a single creature of his in hell.

This is the Messianic Mystery operative in Redemption.

4,

[A] The Limitation of Salvation and the Limitlessness of Redemption

Salvation aims to reach and encompass the whole human being, and to reach and encompass the whole people not only of Israel but also of the entire world 'to the ends of the earth' [Isaiah, 49, 6]. There is no doubt that Salvation is at source open to each and every person, and thus meant to be non-exclusionary.

But Salvation inevitably fails in its intention to be all inclusive. Redemption is a stronger remedy for the deeper and more fundamental level of the human problem, the cause rather than the effect. Salvation takes us out of sin, the effect of the deeply lodged problem, but it does not, and cannot, even tackle, much less overcome, the problem's cause. Only Redemption overcomes the problem at its root, where it takes root, in a way and with a power that can uproot the problem once and for all. It uncouples the depth of the human condition from evil, from the power and influence, the intimidation and seduction, the trickery and deception, of evil.

Thus, only Redemption, and not Salvation, is all-inclusive, and non-exclusionary.

Salvation aims to be but is not universal. Redemption is truly universal, because in redeeming, it is God himself who goes far down into the deeps of the human condition, in its fundamental tragedy. To do anything about the human tragedy, God must join it in a radical way, letting it affect, curtail, afflict, the divine as it does the human. In the old theological language, 'what is not assumed' cannot be redeemed. God has to assume the human tragedy, to redeem it. Thus there is a profound sense in which, in redeeming, God shares our grief and failure, and 'takes' our disappointment in and anger toward the God who allowed this to befall us. In one sense, the human tragedy is our choice and our making. In another, equal sense, the human tragedy is inescapable, inevitable, given the way things are primally set up by God. It is set up not just to 'go wrong', as the moralist diminishes the tragic dimension to his puny scale, but to 'fall down', to not hold its ground, to give way at the foundation in the abyss.

Consequently it is not enough that God be the Mosaic kind of Good Shepherd who saves the sheep from peril, by putting them safe and secure in a pen, and closing it against 'thieves and robbers.' Rather, God must be the Davidic Good Shepherd who is prepared to die for his sheep [John, 10], and even be 'shorn' like one of the sheep, as it says in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah, for the Messianic king must identify with their brokenness, and embrace their tragic condition, to really change this hellish state from within. Dostoyevsky points

out that if the helping one stands above and outside what torments the helped one, they cannot help them redemptively, for all the redeemer evokes in those needing redeeming is hurt pride, envy, resentment. The Redeemer must really share the terrible condition of those needing redeeming. The Saviour always stands outside and above the condition of those in need of saving, and just offers them a ladder to haul them 'up' and 'out' of what imperils them. This does not work for redeeming. The Redeemer has to plunge down, and in, accepting voluntarily to become affected by what those crying out for redeeming are inescapably affected by.

The Redeemer enters the afflicted deep condition freely, and therefore as an act of supreme love. But once in it, the Redeemer must be afflicted by it for real. When Yeshua cries "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", he experiences and undergoes the 'divine abandonment' common to all human beings at the deepest, and he does this as a Redeemer, not as a Saviour.

Christ on the Cross= this is Redemption.

Though the Jews had never confronted the Roman punishment of crucifixion, and therefore it does not figure in the prophets as a symbol of the price the Redeemer must pay, in his own blood, to redeem humanity in their entirety, never the less, the Cross is the embodiment of what the Messiah who is the 'Suffering Servant' must pass through in his coming as a king who is treated like a servant. Yeshua the Mashiach echoes the portrait of the kingship of the Messiah in Isaiah, when he says he has come to serve, and not to be served. Indeed, the Messianic Calling in Isaiah, and the Messianic Calling that Jesus is blessed by God at the Jordan River to bear, enact, and fulfil, are exactly the same. The Messiah is the 'slave' of God, and because he remains true to this, he is also the 'slave' of humanity. This is a different leadership, a different kingship, from that exemplified by Moses; it is a leadership, a kingship, that starts in David and climaxes in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. This king not only dies for the people, but also is reversed for the people, losing his superiority and assuming their inferiority, losing his validity and assuming their invalidity, numbered among the criminals, the no good and the hopeless.

Let it be put starkly.

No Cross is needed by any Saviour, whether God, or a human representative of God. If Salvation sufficed for humanity, no Cross would ever have been required. There is not even a hint of a Cross in Salvation oriented Judaism. There is no Cross in any other religion that is primarily concerned with saving. The Cross only occurs, foreshadowed and prefigured, in the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, and in the Psalms of David [21, 17-19; 68, 22]. Then it happens for real in the life of Jesus the Christ. This is why Yeshua is the Mashiach.

All that saving asks from the Saviour is to give generously, to share freely, and thus to open up the Divine Goodness to all who thirst for it, graciously, gratuitously, 'gratis' [without reason, without ulterior motive]. 'If he asks for your shirt, give him your coat as well.' Luke, 3, 10-11= "He who has two

cloaks, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Mathew, 5, 40-42= "If he compels you to walk a mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who asks you."

In short, the saving activity 'offers' its riches to the poverty, the lack, which registers its deprivation of abundance in yearning for 'the better life.' The Saviour only has to engage in 'beneficence', giving from the Well of Goodness. But since this wellspring dries up when it is meanly limited, or meanly measured out in small portions, and goes on over-flowing when it is poured out without limit, without measure, then the Giving that saves never runs out. You may have to give the last money in your pocket to the beggar on the street who needs it more, yet in the ultimate, 'great will be the heavenly recompense' for earthly losses incurred in salvational activities. In Salvation, those who give unstintingly on the earthly plane are, over the longer run, unstintingly given to by the heavenly plane. So, 'seek God first, and all the other things will be added to you'..

Neither God, nor any human, engaged in saving has to assume the problem their salvational activity will alleviate.

It is Christ on the Cross that reveals Redemption as so different to Salvation. Different in the predicament it addresses, different in the depth of that predicament it reaches, different in the cost it must pay and the wound it must suffer to plunge down that deep, different in the power it exercises through that cost and through that suffering to affect the dire condition it has entered, and change it from within its direst abyss.

Redemption= The Cross, Descent Into Hell, and Resurrection, of Yeshua the Mashiach.

Salvation by its very nature cannot, and does not, 'save' us from the human tragedy; the human tragedy can only be redeemed.

Salvation raises the soul out of the deadness of sin, and it lifts up the mind beyond the blindness of sin; the soul lives again, the mind sees again. But the drum beat of the heart remains stilled.

God requires the heart.

This is why Redemption, as the more costly but more powerful remedy for the regaining of the heart from evil, and the heart's enflaming with the Spirit of Fire, was pre-established by Yahweh for humanity even before the world began. Redemption is the 'Blood of the Lamb.' This atones for sin, in its damage to the heart ground upon which we all stand, affecting and affected by each other, damaging and being damaged by one another; but it does more than atoning. More importantly, it uncovers the way through everything in the world 'designed' to stop heart passion, and to cause it to 'fall down', such that the heroic in humanity is reborn in the very midst of its failure in the world's narrow straits; the heroic is reforged in the hell of its futility in the face of the evil running the world.

Salvation is bloodless. It is a Gift, but not a Sacrifice. It is an 'offering' from the self, but not a 'giving away' of the very self. Salvation offers the riches of the self, Redemption gives away the blood of the self.

Redemption reveals the heart of God, Salvation reveals the mind and soul of God.

Salvation is the phallic light impregnating and fructifying the fertile watery soul of creation, bringing it to fruition.

Redemption is a deeper and darker drama. The Blood of the Lamb is spilled, to re-ignite the blood of the heart, its passion, and to make the blood of the heart, its passion, Fire Bearing.

Redemption was in God's heart before he made the creation. Redemption anticipates what humanity will do in the world, and provides the way through it, to a far side. To redeem the world means the world comes good in the end; the investment God puts in it pays off. At the Last Supper, Yeshua prays to Yahweh, about the disciples, in John, 17, 15= "I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from [falling to the] evil." Let them come through. In redeeming, we have to go through and come through the hell overpowering the deeps to the heaven only operative in its kingship tested and proved in that hell. Such is the Descent into Hell that the Cross makes possible, and such is the Resurrection only won from the Descending into Hell.

Redemption's undergoing and passing through to the other side, in the depth, is anticipated in David's toils and tumults of heart. Thus, Psalms, 66, 10-12= "For you, O God, have proved us: you have tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid affliction upon our loins; you have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but you brought us out into a fruitful place."

When Yeshua, in the Last Supper, identifies himself with Isaiah's Suffering Servant, the reality that only Redemption reveals the depth of God's heart is clearly declared. Yeshua reveals the mystery of Redemption to his befuddled and resistant followers who cannot really yet bear these things. God is often merciful toward what we can take, bringing the easier things to us prior to bringing the harder things. Thus do we slowly but surely grow into 'all truth.' None the less, on this occasion Yeshua is speaking to all the generations of humanity, for all time. What he says is urgent, for his Cross is looming. Soon he will be in The Room of No Exit, and from there he will either buckle and fall, as humanity did primordially, or he will go on from that place where all the options run out, to take on what humanity put down primordially, lifting the weight we cannot carry, suffering the wound we cannot endure.

The saving person, like an advanced monastic, has peace in their core, and however life rages round them, the raging stays at their periphery. The Redeemer instigating redeeming is not like this at all. He is in The Room Of

No Exit, and in this moment and in this place, humanity's deepest raging down in the heart comes up into his core, and has to be taken on, or fled from. The storm is not moving round him, at his periphery, but is in his core, because in this moment and in this place, the storm cannot be evaded; it is right in your face, and so your heart has to face up to its tragedy, or be utterly defeated by it.

This is why Yeshua has to speak of the coming storm, what it will do to him as Redeemer, and how this will begin redeeming as a process for all of humanity. In depicting himself as the Good Shepherd, Yeshua reveals many mysteries previously latent, or simply never conveyed. He is the Good Shepherd, the leader, the king, in the tradition of David, not the Good Shepherd in the tradition of Moses. Moses is the Good Shepherd of Salvation. Yeshua is the Good Shepherd of Redemption. He describes himself unambiguously as in the line of the Davidic Good Shepherd which culminates in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. Thus Yeshua says he is the Good Shepherd who will 'lay down his life', dying a voluntary death, for the sheep whom he loves [John, 10, 11-18]. Paradoxically, it is his dying that brings 'life to the full' [John, 10, 10; 11, 15; 17-18]. This dying 'for' those imprisoned in the death and hell of the heart is what reveals the heart of God in action towards humanity. Therefore, this death is what will draw all human beings towards Yeshua the Messiah [John, 12, 32], for it is an admirable, heroic death, a death that manifests the supreme love. There is no love greater than laying down your life for your friends and enemies no different. This demonstrates the 'great heartedness' of God. As one commentator puts it, Yeshua's 'obedience unto death' is more than any martyr's death; it is because Yeshua was in the 'form' of God's Messiah that he poured himself out and laid down his life [Philippians, 2, 6-8]. In Yeshua's dying we behold the terror and beauty, the glory and grief, the fathomless deeps, of God's heart, freely sacrificed for the sake of humanity.

Thus, the death of Yeshua the Messiah is what decisively, and finally, tests and proves that God 'is' love [1 John, 3, 16]. For, love is the laying down of life, by he who loves, that others can live. In Yeshua we look upon the divine heart, and what we look upon moves us. In reality, as Kierkegaard points out, it offends us. The Cross reminds people of their own vulnerability, which has undermined, and brought to ruin, their passion of heart. They do not want to be reminded of this calamity by a God who is vulnerable for their sake. This divine vulnerability, which is mysteriously free of and subject to our human vulnerability, is exactly what people are shaken by and brought to tears over in the Cross of the Messiah, yet it is also, at the same time, what they most rebuke God for, and demand of God, why couldn't you have set it up differently?

To this anger, to this sorrow, in the human heart, God makes no reply. God is silent to our agony. He will not make it different. It is what it is. Redemption is the 'way through', and that is the only answer, the only end to God's silence. Even when Yeshua entered The Room Of No Exit in the garden of Gethsemane, he asked God to excuse him from taking on the burden of the Redeemer. 'If this Cup of blood can pass, let it pass; but if not, then I will drink

it to its bitter dregs.' After he accepts 'not mine, but thy will be done' to Yahweh, and the crisis had past, Yeshua goes forth unreservedly to his Destiny, having accepted the Daemonic Fate that must befall the Slave of God in order for him to redeem all humanity from the slavery that holds them fast, unremittingly.

It becomes more clear, then, why Salvation, so generously giving at origin, becomes 'either/or', so dualistic, in its impact on humanity. Grace comes freely and over-flowing to those who receive it, and respond to it; but to those who reject it, the 'wicked', it 'threatens destruction' [Isaiah, 1]. David -- whose Psalms sometimes focus upon Salvation and other times focus upon Redemption -- equates Salvation with God's 'face', and he too is subject to the divine wrath in which God turns away his face, as in Psalms, 27, 9= "Hide not your face far from me; put not your servant away in anger: you have been my help, leave me not, don't forsake me, O God of my salvation." God's anger threatens to remove Salvation, as in Psalms, 85, 4-6= "..O God of our salvation, cause your anger toward us to cease. Will you be angry with us for ever? ..Will you not make us live again, so that your people may rejoice in you?" God's opposition toward sin which is not repented of remains fiercely implacable [John, 3, 36].

Two things, in inter-action, mean that Salvation always ends up exclusionary, dividing sheep and goats. In Redemption, everyone is a goat, and redeeming turns goats not into docile sheep, but into Lambs and Lions of God.

[a] On the one hand, not everyone can be saved.

Such is the heaviness of the tragedy pulling us down, and such is the pain of the tragedy taking away our ground, it is not possible for many people to turn toward the light and life that saves in trust and faith; they may even feel resentment at something 'authentically better' than what they are caught up in, and so they may positively turn away from anything pointing toward 'good things.' From genes, through cultural background, to the traumas of growing up, with all the social and psychological damage that gets woven into us as part and parcel of our very sense of identity, there are countless reasons why people cannot be saved. Saving drops down a rope to a drowning man, yet he may feel unable to grasp it, much less haul himself up it. 'God helps those who help themselves' is the favourite facile remark of those who think they are fine and well, but whose hearts are not far short of Satanic; what of those who cannot help themselves? What of those in death, in hell, falling endlessly into the abyss, who cannot respond one jot to the helping 'hand up' of Salvation? What of those who are really defunct, in unremitting failure of spirit and brokenness of heart?

This is all of us, if you go deep. Some of us, a relative few, can come up out of the waters for air. These are the children of Light. Even if traditions call these people saints, or enlightened, they are not reborn in heart. They are benign, charitable, calmed and collected people, yet they are not redeemed. They are not fiery in love. The saved hark back to Paradise, but the redeemed belong to the Age to Come, the End Time, the Inauguration of the

Messianic Kingdom. We know from our past what saved people are like. We do not really know yet what redeemed people are like. We get indications.. The redeeming in the ground of the heart, which will drive the redeeming of the ground of the world, is coming. This will be the children of Fire.

[b] On the other hand, God cannot 'compromise' over the fullness of Salvation, or let it be 'diluted' by sin.

God cannot allow a diminishing of Salvation's Gift, by 'tolerating' sin. Liberals think this a lack of kindness by God, a harshness toward human weakness, or even a retaliation against human refusal to bow down. It is nothing like that. It is ontological. God is Light, God is Life; if we cling to darkening, if we cling to deadening, we cannot be 'in' the Light and Life. We put ourselves 'out' of it. Thus, even if you were in heaven, you would not enjoy it, because your world would remain dark and dead in the midst of all the heavenly wonders.

[B] The Primitive Roots of Redeeming

During the long sojourn in Egypt, the Jews had lapsed from the faith of Abraham and therefore God must revive what had been submerged under so much exotic but debilitating cultural, political, religious, over-lay.. God renews the First Covenant, and its promise to the Jews, in Exodus, 6, 2-6= "And God spoke to Moses, and said, I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of Elohim, God of Armies, but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, where they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel.. Wherefore, say.., I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm.."

Not only Salvation but also Redemption are involved in the renewing of the promise by God, no doubt because both are inherent to the covenantal relationship, though for once it is Salvation that is implicitly hinted at, and Redemption that is explicitly mentioned. This anticipates things to come. Salvation is 'bringing you out from under the burdens of', whilst Redemption is 'riding you of your bondage.'

Only Redemption can overcome the heart's deep love of evil, and make this hard stone the flint for kindling the fire of deep love for God. But that is not yet.. It is sufficient that, through Moses, the Jews get out from under the suffocation of an alien way of living that blocks their access to the Salvation of the Promised Land, the Good Land of Milk and Honey. In Egypt they are in a spiritual desert, a 'famished land.'

There is no link between the name of Moses, and Mashiach, the Messiah, who is the Redeemer and King of Israel, and the entire world, from beginning to end. Chronologically, Salvation is the prelude to Redemption, and Redemption is the crown of Salvation. The real victory of the long journey and arduous battle is Redemption. The whole creation, not only humanity but also

the animals, 'groan inwardly' for the completion of Redemption [Romans, 8, 23].

When it says Jesus the Christ came by 'water and blood', water is Salvation, blood is Redemption. "This is the one who came by water and blood. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood" [1 John, 5, 6]. 1 Peter, 1, 18-20, puts it simply and starkly= "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty life [abysmally empty, vacuous, groundless] handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these.. times for your sake." John the Baptist, at their first meeting, recognises Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God 'who was before me' [John, 1, 29-30].

By being 'perfect' in the manner of Salvation, the Messiah has no sin, for he is not himself fallen down in the human tragedy. None the less, his humanity, his heart, is such that he will accept his innocence to be convicted by that of which we are guilty, the mud and blood from our human despair will be thrown at him, and he will be besmirched. The Messiah is made dirty, losing the cleanliness of Salvation, in order to redeem those lying in the dust, unable to get up, morally and existentially. This part of humanity, in each and every one of us, is 'beyond saving'; that is why its tragedy must be redeemed, and redeeming asks so much from the agent of redeeming. The Redeemer gives himself. He holds nothing back, and possesses nothing more.

To touch the human tragedy with divine power, we must allow the human tragedy to touch us with human power. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted" [Isaiah, 63, 9].

The Davidic leadership leads on to and climaxes in the leadership of the Messiah in the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, the king who dies for his people, is repudiated by them, is disbelieved by them, is humiliated by them, to join their forsakenness, their invalidation, their humiliation, so as to redeem them from its prison.

Yeshua is a Saviour, though his Salvation exceeds that granted through Moses, since he taps directly into God's Grace in his very being. 'God saves' names his being as the Son of God. But Yeshua is secondarily a Saviour, and primarily the Redeemer and King, the Messiah. Paradoxically, this more radical and profounder title of Christ is what makes him the 'Son of Man.' For much of his ministry, he enlightens, heals, does miracles, as a Saviour. Once he enters Jerusalem on a donkey, 'the game is up', the alternatives fast run out, and he is soon in The Room of No Exit. The Last Supper points to it, and symbolically anticipates it. The Cross embraces it. In The Room of No Exit there is only one door, and it opens on Golgotha.

Redemption, not Salvation, is "God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our honouring before time began. None of the rulers [leaders, kings] of this age understood it.. But God has revealed it

to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" [1 Corinthians, 2, 7-10]. Redemption, not Salvation, is the deep things of God and the deep things of humanity.

But all such hidden matters have a primitive beginning..

There seem to be in Hebrew five root terms that refer, in different aspects, to the action of redeeming, how the redeemed are dynamically changed, the role of the redeemer, and what the redeemer must give= ga'al, goel, geullah; padah; kapar.

"For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and he gave his life as a ransom for many" [Mark, 10, 45; Mathew, 20, 28]; this description of Yeshua the Redeemer of humanity brings into play all of these metaphors, though it also expands upon their archaic foundation.

[1] Ga'al= the Hebrew word [verb] for 'redeeming', as an action.

Originally, to redeem was 'to restore someone to their prior, good, state' -- by virtue of paying a price to release them from their enslavement.

Therefore, redeeming referred to two closely related things.

[a] Redeeming is the bringing of someone in bondage -- not just outer captivity and oppression, but more hindering, inner slavery and imprisonment - out of that bereft, forsaken, abandoned, state of affairs, by virtue of the redeemer paying a 'ransom' for them, which was usually money, but could be an animal, or something else of serious value. Sometimes money could be paid to deliver a person from death [Exodus, 21, 30; Numbers, 3, 46-51; 18, 16; Psalms, 49, 7-9].

[b] This is, for the redeemed, a release, not just the outer freedom to do anything or everything, the freedom 'from', but the freedom 'for' living in a new way, the inward freedom to act, again, from the truest personhood that had been paralysed through enslavement. The action of the redeemer frees the enslaved, so they can 'return to an original and truer state.'

It is clear that [b] is dependent upon [a].

None the less, in discussions of redeeming, [a] is often considered without reference to [b]. One commentator thought that redeeming 'is just salvation with a cost attached to it.' This is a basic mistake. Redeeming is an outer action, but it penetrates deeper inside the redeemed. Their release is not just outer, but is inner. Redeeming is more than paying for the deliverance, it is also a release for the delivered. What is released? This is key. Redeeming is coming out of prison to become the royal personhood of the heart you were created as, but had given up on, a long time ago.

Saving does not go that deep, to what is released via redemption, whether it pays a costly price or, as is usual, pays no costly price. Our own 'hidden man

of heart', our own Messianic inclination, is released in our being redeemed. The saved are charitable in love, the redeemed are passionate in love.

The first redemptive action I am aware of ever receiving from someone close, that made a difference, happened early in my life. At a moment of crisis, and despair, early on in my 20s, I confessed my trouble to a close friend. We were both experimenting as artists. We encouraged each other's work. On this occasion, he had brought a new black and white visionary drawing to show me. I had liked it and praised him, encouraging him to continue. The drawing was on a table where we were both seated. Suddenly -- after I had finished telling him my despair, and he had sat with me in silence for a time, knowing there was nothing he could say that would not be trite -- he leaned over, took hold of his drawing, and lit it on fire with his cigarette lighter. I tried to stop him, but he would not let me. Again we stared at each other in silence, no words adequate to this communication. And in the midst of my horror watching his beautiful drawing turn to black ashes on the table, his deed got to my heart. I understood the meaning. I took courage, as his action intended. All I could mumble was a curtailed 'thanks.' His sacrifice told me I could go on..

The Hebrew letters for *ga'al*, *gimmel*, *aleph*, and *lamed*, tell the story of the way in which redeeming changes the person redeemed, in their core. Thus, 'gimmel' means 'to restore to pride', or 'raise to self-respect'; 'aleph' means 'the first, the primal'; 'lamed' means 'the guide.' Or to put it less literally, to restore to the primal 'image of God', to restore to our primal strength and true ground for respect.

Before redeeming occurs, the human heart is defunct. After redeeming is accomplished, the heart is free at last to do its action, to take on its job, to fulfil its mission, in and for the world. The restoration is more fundamental and far-reaching than 'sin no more', being made whole, being healed, being sanctified, being enlightened and enlivened.. Yes, all that is good, very good; yet, it is not the fire of love that only the heart can become the furnace for forging.

[2] Goel= The Hebrew word [noun] for 'redeemer', as the agent of the action.

Originally, the redeemer was 'the person who takes on the duty of releasing one's blood relation from bondage by the payment of a price.'

Therefore, without the redeemer's active and cost-paying role, those in need of redeeming would remain unendingly stuck in calamitous distress.

The redeemer, or goel, 'buys back' the freedom of his kin, a freedom lost through debt. In olden times, this deed would fall to the near kin, hence the 'redeemer-kinsman' [the story of Ruth is a telling example of such a role]. This speaks of the redeemer feeling a closeness, a brotherly or sisterly love, for the redeemed ones. All part of a clan, a tribe, a common blood family. The kin relation is closer than saving-saved, more intimate, more friendly, more 'bound together unbreakably.' It might be argued that saving needs no

covenantal relationship to work. After all, God saved Noah and all the animals without there being any agreed covenant between Yahweh, or Elohim, and this man of 'faithfulness' [Genesis, 45, 7-9]. Job, who was not a Jew and hence not part of the First Covenant, begins his story as a good man, living the good life. He is saved, naturally. He does not seem to have any intimate relation with Yahweh before his ordeal begins; his faith in God's Goodness, and exemplary way of life, is sufficient to reap the harvest of the good things of Salvation. It is only when the Daemonic God allows Satan to lay his garden to waste that Job breaks through to the mystery of redeeming.

The promise of God to humanity in the covenantal binding seems, then, more in the foreknowing of the need for Redemption.

Another primitive meaning of the role of redeemer was that, in certain circumstances, he was the 'blood avenger' who defended his kin so fiercely, if one of them were to be killed, then this evil deed would be repaid by the redeemer-kinsman killing its perpetrator [Deuteronomy, 19, 6]. Though certain of the laws that crept into Deuteronomy long after the time of Moses, and do not come from the hand of Moses, are said by Yahweh to have been given to the Jews 'because of the hardness of your heart', the responsibility of avenging 'blood for blood' is different.

This is really the calling of the redeemer to be a warrior, and to take the fight to the evil one. Yahweh will not stand idly by as evil ravages the human venture. The Messiah brings a Sword of truth, and without it, the Cross of sacrifice loses its power and wisdom. The truth and sacrifice of love has a formidable enemy. We are in a real fight to the finish.

Stressing the Cross as a non-retaliation to evil, so as to avoid the Sword, is false to the paradox. Stressing the Sword as a crusading zealotry against evil, so as to avoid the Cross, is false to the paradox. We must fight evil's Lie to the last breath, yet sacrifice is what defeats evil's Power.

The paradox is, the ultimate Fighter is the one who makes the ultimate Sacrifice.

To redeem also means 'to tear loose.' This is a violent action. It is not for the faint hearted, nor for the temperamentally pacific. The kingdom of heaven is 'taken by men of violence.' A Bob Dylan song articulates its spirit= "Don't scare easy when I'm under the gun." The redeemer is 'under the gun' of evil, and does not back off. He meets it head on, in heart to heart combat.

[3] Geullah= the 'right of redemption', and 'the price of redemption.'

Though fallen into tragedy, God's primordial promise to redeem us remains operative, it has not been forfeited [Leviticus, 25, 48]. However, this redeeming of us is going to be costly for the one doing it. The ransom, though initially money, will finally become one's own blood, one's own life. The sacrifice of the redeemer becomes the ransom, the key, that unlocks those needing redeeming from their jail. Over time, the ransom's price is understood

to increase in moral and existential cost, meaning the redeemer gives of themselves to redeem the forsaken.

[4] *Padah*= a 'ransom', or 'to ransom.'

Such a ransom 'substitutes' for the person in dire trouble; in this way, they get out of a bind, a legally fixed obligation which is severely onerous, by someone giving something for them 'instead.' The redeemer makes a voluntary substitution for the person in difficulty [Jeremiah, 31, 11; Hosea, 13, 14].

[5] *Kapar*= to 'cover', as in covering over sins.

From this comes atoning for sins, seeking to make things better after they have gone wrong. This covering of, or atoning for, sin also involves the payment of a ransom; the variant '*koper*' signifies a price paid for a life that has become forfeit [Exodus, 21, 30; 30, 11-16].

That sin should be 'covered' in atoning has a deeper significance.

[a] On the one hand, it has the meaning of 'I have that covered.' The problem is being taken care of, not left to linger and fester. The injury in the fabric of human inter-relations is being addressed, and something is being done about it, to repair the rent. If this 'making better' of a wrong state of affairs between people is not done -- and obviously it needs the honest confession that wrong has been committed -- then the persons involved cannot come together again, but fall apart more and more, doing fresh damage to one and all, with the damage rippling out from its source to harm wider and wider circles of existence. This is the rationale of the old truth, if one is wronged, then everyone is wronged. We are not discrete moral units. What we do that is destructive, and fail to do that is creative, has a wide effect, because we are bound together in a complex network of relationships..

Making reparation, on an individual scale, might work perfectly well, since perhaps, by a sacrificial action, I can give you something of mine that makes up for what I took away from you by my unrighteous action. In this way, sacrifice tries to make amends for departures from and failures of righteousness. But, to atone gets harder and harder, over time, as more and more people are affected, as human affairs get ever more complexly inter-connected. In the end, everyone ends up a debtor to others, for which of us has not done wrong and harmed other people, thereby harming the life we all share in a community? Indeed, everyone ends up in debt, and unable to pay, unable by any sacrifice of their own to repair things. When the Messiah atones for everyone, as it says in Isaiah's 4 Slave Songs, he takes on this debt of everyone toward everyone, and because God's love is in this sacrificial deed, he removes the collective debt by accepting its consequences to him alone, and forgiving all of them; forgiving both those we owe but cannot repay, and those who owe us but cannot repay. Because of this deed of atoning redemption, we become indebted to the Messiah for ending the power of the mutual debt we are all in to one another to poison all human inter-action. As we are forgiven, so we are asked to forgive. If you

owe 50 coins to someone, and they make it so you do not have to repay, which redeems you from the prison of debt, allowing you a new life beyond its cold calculation of who did what to whom, then you can hardly go to a person who owes you 5 coins and demand 'accounts be settled' immediately, or else you will get them thrown into jail..

If God does not keep score, and can forgive, as the gateway into a redeemed situation for all parties to it, then neither should we be keeping score. Much inner work is required to forgive and be forgiven: honest acknowledgement of 'iniquities', done by us and done to us, as well as grieving over hurts received and sorrowing over hurts done, and willingness to accept change, not just the reform of outer action, but change in the heart's inner inclination..

[b] On the other hand, to atone as 'covering' sins has the meaning of not wanting to hold people to their wrongs, rubbing their faces in their moral and spiritual failures. In the Near Eastern Desert tradition of Eastern Christianity [400 AD], there is the aim of 'covering the sin of the brother', so as not to humiliate him, expose him, or provoke the hurt pride that would make him want to defend himself as not in error, but entirely right. In extremis, to atone means to 'cover over' people's sins by giving away your merit to them and taking on their sins as if you had done them. This atoning is not understood by many people, because we are so judgemental, so moralistic, so quick to excuse ourself and blame someone else.. To cover the brother's sin, to throw a cloak over it, is the opposite of wanting it publically declared, so he can be publically pilloried..

This does not mean that the evil which loves darkness, because it fears exposure in and rebuke by the light, can be allowed to go on hiding in darkness [John, 3, 17-21]. Truth must break in on spiritual evil, especially when it uses a mask of respectability, or even uprightness, to conceal its works.

[C] The 'Obligation' of Redeeming

The situation in need of redeeming in the Jewish Bible is= one person is in the power of another person, and are unable to win their own release. A third person, outside the oppressive conjunction of the two wherein one is jailer and the other is jailed, appears, and this person is able to effect the release of the latter from the former.

There is, then, [a] those needing redeeming; [b] the action that redeems them; [c] the agent who performs the action; [d] the ransom the agent must pay. Any careful examination of these elements will show that redeeming is, as an activity, very different from the activity of saving.

[a] Those needing redeeming are in a worse 'captivity'; [b] the action that frees them from that captivity and returns them to their real innate calling is costlier, starting with something we value and ending as our own blood, our own life, given in sacrifice; [c] the agent who does the action is more giving, indeed at the extreme of making sacrifice, he is laying down his life for the

other, and no love is more radical; [d] the ransom paid, or given, by the redeemer is therefore the most valuable thing he has to give, his very heart's blood.

The redeemed are, as in Psalms, 35, 10= "...the ransomed of Yahweh", for only God can truly and lovingly pay such a price, and when we pay it, we can only do so in the name and power of God.

This has a further meaning, which seems to support the claim that the covenant between God and the Jews is mainly, if not exclusively, established in respect of Redemption. For, God vows himself, or promises to the Jews, that he will redeem them, when they come to desperately need it. This First Covenant 'ties' God to the Jews and the Jews to God, unbreakably. God has an obligation toward Israel [Psalms, 25, 22] and hence a claim upon Israel [Deuteronomy, 15, 15]. The Redeemer 'pays for', and therefore now 'owns', those he ransomed with his blood; they are 'his', not belonging to themselves any more.

Isaiah, 43, 1= "But now thus says Yahweh who created you, O Jacob, and he that formed you, O Israel. Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are mine."

The redeeming is undertaken by the redeemer because the redeemed are his blood kin, or he regards them as like near relatives. They are dear to him, so he will pay dearly to get them released from what is vitiating them.

'You are dear to me', the redeemer says to those crying out for redeeming, 'and when I have redeemed you, I will have demonstrated just how dear you are; for you will be my people, I will call you by name, we will be close, as if we shared the same blood like relatives.'

The redeemer is saying, 'I will not forsake you, abandon you, leave you bereft, in hell.' The redeemer purchases their deliverance by giving himself as payment for their redeeming [Ephesians, 1, 7; 1 Peter, 1, 18; 1 Timothy, 2, 5-6].

Redeeming is paradoxical. It is given for the sake of those who cannot help themselves one jot, nor even respond to the Gift of Salvation when offered to them. Redeeming seizes hold of us fearfully, aggressively, it overwhelms us, but in dragging the human heart not 'out' of hell, but 'through' hell, to the other side, it reforges and reignites our defunct flame in that process of journey and battle, and so we come alive in its grip, and react to its summons.

In this way, it can be said the covenantal obligation works both ways, and does not remove freedom, and choice, on the part of humanity. In fact, Redemption does not just recover the primal Image of God in us, rather, it creates newly the beginning of the Likeness to God that, only as the redeemed, we will become.

We walk toward Holiness. We become Christ-like.

Isaiah, 62, 12= "And they will be called, the holy people. The redeemed of Yahweh; and you will be called, 'sought out.' A city not forsaken."

[D] The 'Adversary' of Redeeming

If we are saved from sin for Sacredness, then we are redeemed for Holiness by passing through the deeps of the heart where evil's hold on us is so firmly fixed. The very appeal of evil to the heart is revealed, at source, in its 'basic error' -- its error as a basis for the heart. Thus does the heart 'convert' from evil's way to the Way of God, embracing truth and love from its deep ground 'whole heartedly.' The redeemed heart is singular, no longer conflicted.

The paradox is, Redemption takes on a deeper adversary of humanity, yet by coming through this to the far shore, Redemption brings humanity into the fiery Holiness of God.

Redeeming locks horns with the implacable adversary of the human heart, the very spirit of evil, the devil who is Prince of This World. This is not some vague negativity floating in the atmosphere. The devil is intensely personal, a pure spiritual hatred directed at each and every human being, and remorselessly intent upon the annihilation of the 'human gamble' taken by God. For, God created the human heart as the throne-chariot of his own heart, deep to deep, abyss to abyss, fire to fire. The 'enemy' opposed to the human heart, offended by it, in permanent accusation of it for never acting 'up to standard', is challenged in Redemption. This final battle for the human heart does not happen in saving, but it is the key, the core theme, in redeeming. It is the mystery withheld until the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah.

Not surprisingly, the 'hinderer' opposes the Messianic power more than any other kind of spirituality, or ethics, not redemptive in impetus and outcome, because he knows that whereas Salvation cannot dislodge his tyranny from the depths of the human heart, Redemption brings the fight to his citadel there, and can break its walls, and expel its false 'god', its lying king. Anyone who has the chutzpah to walk the road of the Messiah in this wicked world, in order to take it back from its phoney leader, will come under special attack by the Evil One.

The Daemonic power of God is necessary to counter the demonic power that wants to block it.

The perilous journey, and savage fight, crucial to redeeming puts God, the devil, the human heart, in an extreme situation. The pressure is immense, the forces energised electric. The devil's time will come to an end. He knows that, and makes horrendous last efforts.

The mystery of Redemption works by Reversal. This surprises and disappoints humanity, yet the devil knows how dangerously powerful in the deeps it really is. He has not played his last card. It is all still hanging by a thread.

Hasidic tradition says that regardless of the situation, time or place, it is incumbent on the Jew to see himself and the entire world in the balance, and that he can tip the scales through one single action, word, or thought. It is not as the Evil Inclination might wish to persuade him, 'what power could one person's deed possibly have?' Every person has serious imperfections. None the less, it remains true that one person can tip the scales of worth for himself and the entire world.

The urgency to act now, on the edge of debacle, arises from following God in the way of redeeming.

What Reverses us humanly brings God's ultimate power to bear upon the devil's insatiable wrath demanding the failure of the human venture.

[E] Mysteries of the Redemptive Power

The redemptive power of God is terrible, holy, angry, for the sake of humanity, and set against the evil that seeks to hold in chains the human heart forever, until it gives way and gives in, and ceases. This is not a game. The devil is playing for high stakes, and so is God.

This throws into relief many facets of the redemptive power in its work to free the heart of humanity from the 'dominion' of evil. Once this happens, the Spirit of God will indwell the human heart as the only 'dynamic' moving it to action. Such will be the Messianic Age. Until that is accomplished, and during the endless time when it is underway, 'the fight is on.'

[1] The 'contending' of Jacob with the Daemonic God.

Although the long drawn out, combative yet profound, process of redeeming begins with Abraham, because it undergirds the First Covenant, it is significant that the very first usage of any Hebrew term for 'Redemption' occurs in the story of Jacob, in the context of his fight with God by the fast flowing river for all of one night. This fight which gave the Jews their name 'Israel' is paradoxical. Jacob both prevailed over God, and was wounded by God, in obtaining God's blessing for the way of passion that he had pursued through all his 'variable' ups and downs, ins and outs. God contends with that passion, not only to 'chastise' it for its 'iniquities', but to reforge its burning in the Fire of Spirit.

Thus, the God who redeems is a Fighter; he fights the human heart, to set it on its feet and to deepen it, and he breaks and remakes this heart as his king in the world and fighter for the world, against the devil. He who fights God becomes worthy in heart to fight the heartless way of evil in the world.

Hence the 'God of Jacob', the 'God of Israel', is also the 'God of Armies', the God whose 'Arm' is 'Strength', and the 'God of Holiness.' Such is the God who redeems. He is a fierce God, implacable in regard to the truth of what the heart does or fails to do, yet his very fierceness is the source of his mercy, his

pity, the pathos he feels, for the human struggle in 'the two hearts.' We are tempted by the lesser heart, yet wrestle toward the greater heart, which we only revive and reclaim by entrusting its existence, its ardour, its inspiration, to God. Abraham lived that trust existentially.

It would seem that, if Moses is the primary exemplary instrument of Salvation, then Jacob is the primary exemplary instrument of Redemption.

This does not mean God's saving activity is missing from the Jews until the time of Moses! Nor does it rule out an element of the redemptive in the story of Moses. However, it does suggest a very early beginning for God's redemptive activity, though in foreshadowing and hints more than anything articulated explicitly.

Thus, the first mention of 'redeeming' occurs when Jacob is near death and recalls the most inexplicable and affecting event ever to befall him, in Genesis, 48, 16= "The spirit from God [with whom I fought] redeemed me from all evil."

No unpacking of why fighting God is the key to redeeming the human heart of 'all evil' is provided so early on. The mystery remains to be uncovered by the strivings and tumults of Israel down the ages.

A host of Scriptural verses, stemming from Jacob's strange battle with, and wounding by, God testify to that heart to heart encounter as the arena, and furnace, for Redemption. Abraham is faith as the leap of passion; but Jacob is where passion stakes itself to the ground.

Psalms, 77, 15= "You have with your arm redeemed your people, the sons of Jacob."

Isaiah, 49, 26= "I, Yahweh, am your Saviour, and your Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob."

Isaiah, 48, 20= "..Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob."

Isaiah, 41, 14= "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and you people of Israel, I will help you, says Yahweh your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

Isaiah, 43, 1= "..thus says Yahweh who created you, O Jacob, and he that formed you, O Israel. Fear not, for I have redeemed you.."

Isaiah, 60, 16= "..you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour, and your Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob."

Isaiah, 49, 7= "Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel and the Holy One."

[2] The 'suffering' of Job in the gamble of the Daemonic God.

Though the story of Jacob is the earliest mention of Redemption, the story of Job is older, at least as a written document. Job has to struggle with the exactions of an unfair existence, and delve the unmerited and hence 'non explainable' suffering that fate inflicts.

The usual euphemism about the Left Hand of God is evident in Psalms 77, 15= "You have with your arm redeemed.." Job, however, is more forthright about the trouble, agony, striving, in depths intended by the Daemonic God= "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends; for the hand of God has touched me" [Job, 19, 21].

The Left Hander, as sports people know, for example in tennis or in boxing, is harder to beat, catches you out, and also is more surprising, harder to anticipate..

The whole point of this story is that the Left-Handed God has built the suffering of the Daemonic into existence, because only the wrestlings it throws the heart into will, at the end, allow God to redeem it. The paradox is, only the God of the storm and lightning and the torrents of wind and hail is going to turn up, for humanity, on The Day of Trouble.

Isaiah, 44, 6= "Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel, and Israel's Redeemer the God of Armies. I am the first and the last, and beside me, there is no God."

Jeremiah, 50, 34= "Their redeemer is strong, the God of Armies is his name.."

Isaiah, 54, 5= "For your Maker is your husband: the God of Armies is his name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

Isaiah, 47, 4= "As for our redeemer, the God of Armies is his name, the Holy One of Israel."

Exodus, 15, 13= "You have led forth the people you have redeemed: you have guided them in your strength towards your holy habitation."

Psalms, 78, 35= "And they remembered that God was their strength and the high God their redeemer."

Proverbs, 23, 11= "For their Redeemer is strong.."

Psalms, 19, 14= "Let the words of my mouth and the pondering of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Yahweh, my strength and my Redeemer."

Psalms, 78, 35= "And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer."

[3] David is the redeemer king 'appointed' by the Daemonic God.

Redemption is forgotten in Egypt, and resurfaces in the story of David. 2 Samuel 7, 12= "I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him. But my mercy will not depart away from him." And in 2 Samuel, 7, 16, Yahweh promises to David= "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever [olam]; your throne shall be established forever [olam]."

Isaiah, 54, 8= "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says Yahweh the Redeemer."

David is the ancestor of the coming Messiah, thus all the waves and flames that buffeted his life are the 'material' on which the Fire of Redemption will burn. The same cannot be said of Moses. The bigger Judaism, the way of risking the greater heart= Abraham, Jacob, Job, and David. The smaller Judaism, the way of curbing the lesser heart in following the endless statutes of Deuteronomy and Leviticus= the Law.

The former must consciously and actively bear the clashing of the lesser heart with the greater heart; this is its yoke. God will guide such a heart, directly, in experience and through action. To follow the greater, you will be tempted by the lesser.

The latter does not have to endure the clashing of the two hearts, for it puts the lesser under strict policing, yet by this manoeuvre it also loses the greater. It eliminates the risk of error, yet the trade-off is not to take any risk with love. No Law can, by saying on the written page 'you shall love', spark you to actual love in your living and doing. The heart has to be trusted to give love to existence. Nothing redemptive will ever emerge by holding back the heart, out of the fear of it going wrong. The parable of the talents says the same.

[4] The Daemonic God teaches us the 'way to walk.'

"To live outside the law, you must be honest", Bob Dylan proclaimed in his Jewish redemptive voice. If we are truthful in the inner delving provoked by the difficulties we meet in outer deeds, then we will get God's help to proceed. A pure heart can see God; long before that is attained, a heart curbed by honesty can hear the guidance of God.

Isaiah, 48, 17= "Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am Yahweh your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you the way you should go."

[5] Egypt is not as bad as Babylon.

If Egypt is the Exile linked with Salvation, then Babylon is the Exile linked with Redemption. Babylon is far worse than Egypt. King Cyrus of the Persians, around 500 BC, defeated the Babylonian Empire, and freed the Jews to return home. In Isaiah, Cyrus is spoken of as a 'redeemer.' But Cyrus could only free the Jews from Babylon externally; he could not remove their inner slavery to Babylon. He got them out of the City of Corruption, but he could do nothing to get the City of Corruption out of them. His external deliverance lacked the internal restoration, and radical change, that only the Redemption from God brings. Thus, the Jews took Babylon home, and in some respects, Jerusalem became the Whore of Babylon-- then Rome, then England, then America. As the Rastas know, today we all live under Babylonian Captivity.

It is therefore very vital that, whereas Salvation addresses the religious and political tyranny of Egypt, Redemption opposes the outer and inner corruption of Babylon the Great, Babylon the Whore, Babylon the False Mystery.

Babylon enters Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic literature, and is seen in end-time prophetic visions as part and parcel of the manner in which the devil 'possesses' this world. Babylon is serious evil-- not just human weakness, human folly, human wrong-doing. In Isaiah and Ezekiel, Babylon is linked to Lucifer= he is her lord, she is his mistress. The false Eros and the false Soul infected by it= everyone worships Babylon these days.

Babylon is the worldly city of wealth and power [literally and symbolically built on trading by sea], with vast dichotomies of rich and poor, powerful and powerless, masters and slaves; the advantaged, safe and well, are in the minority, while the disadvantaged, imperilled and ill, are in the majority. Yet a Luciferian sheen of glamour, of sparkle, of vain and empty charisma, covers over it all, like an expensive diamond studded dress. Babylon sucks you in, and once in, it becomes hard to get out. It infiltrates your innerds, by offering you a false garden of poisoned fruits to gorge on.

Babylon is capitalism, and it began in the Middle East with the settled crop growers, building barns to store grain, the prototype for the banks. Capitalism creates the bourgeois spirit, and spreads it like an infection, until everyone is sickened on its virus. The bourgeois motive is self-preservation= making yourself safe. You hoard to ensure your future protection, against loss and harm. You scheme and calculate, trying to get on top, and so you must save yourself even from extremes of passion that are too unsettling for the well-oiled machine of 'business.'

This is bogus Salvation. This is the false earthly paradise. We do not trust God, so we save ourselves, by 'securing' our life. But monstrous and subtle evils lay eggs on this bogus saving, sucking out our juices like a vampire, dampening the fire of love in the heart, and by recourse to shallow, cold Luciferian beauty, corrupting the soul such that its real treasures are neglected, and false riches acquire an ugly glory making them desirable..

Christ urged us [Mathew, 6, 25-33] not to be careful over what we wear, eat, and similar things; seek God first, and then these other things will be added. Christ inveighs against people who 'save up' for the future..

The hymn 'Amazing Grace' declares 'God made me safe and led me home'; another hymn refers to 'seeing, riches, healing' as bestowed by the graciousness of God [Psalms, 103, 4= "Yahweh ..heals all our diseases"]; all this goodness of living is Salvation, and is nothing like the counterfeit version peddled by the 'lure' of Babylon. She promises further delights, the more you buy into her attraction, like a naked woman strung over a fancy tomb, and if you are lured in, you will drink the poisoned chalice more and more.. This 'brew' she is the saleswoman for kills all sense of justice, brotherhood, uprightness. We trample each other, pushing each other out of the way, to get the most from her cup.

Babylon is a whole system of unconscious fantasies which rule over people in capitalism, sickening and manipulating their desire. The real desire is for the fullness of the aliveness of being. The fantasies which run people,

unconsciously, seeking riches where there is really only impoverishment, are a kind of unacknowledged ideology that dominates the 'liberal' capitalist ethos. People are puppets on a string they cannot see, nor feel, or even sense. They become like the bird in a cage who has arrived at the point of thinking 'this is as good as it gets', and even if the door is flung open, the poor creature has lost the gumption to fly out to freedom.. In capitalism, people become self-imprisoning, beneath a vain rhetoric of their 'unlimited' freedom; they are free to be slaves to certain forces within [unconscious] that make them addicts to certain forces without [the market place].

Isaiah, 53, 3= "For thus says Yahweh, you have sold yourselves for nothing, and you will be redeemed without money." We hold ourselves cheap, in reality. Our redeeming will cost what is most precious to God, and to us.

Isaiah, 48, 20= "Go forth from Babylon.. and declare, Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob."

Isaiah, 43, 14= "Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: for your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles.."

Jeremiah, 50, 34= "Their redeemer is strong.. he will vigorously plead their case so that he may bring rest to the earth, but turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon."

[6] The different 'opponents' of redeeming.

In the ultimate, there is only one enemy, one adversary, one hinderer, one accuser, the Evil One. We are redeemed, in extremis, from the evil force trying to build its fortress in the human heart, and in that process, causing the supple, pliable, 'passible', affectable, vulnerable, heart to become 'hard' as stone, callous, impregnable, immoveable, a throne of cruelty, a whited sepulchre.

The hells that we create in the abyss of the heart are different aspects of passion under the influence of evil. There is the Pit where passion becomes 'decayed, defunct, ruined', its life force and forward thrust fatally weakened, until it becomes like a ghost, still in existence but not with any throbbing heartbeat, not with any vital push. This is Hades, in Greek, or Sheol, in Hebrew. The place of existential Shame.. There is the apocryphal Hell where passion becomes 'hot and bothered', yet at core 'cold as ice', its fire for truth 'snared' by evil, and thus 'converted' to the lie. This is Gehenna, in Greek. The place of existential Guilt.. And there is the Vacuity that drags everything downward, like a Black Hole, the Empty Void, or Groundless Abyss that we fall into, forever. The place of existential Despair..

The Pit is the loss of Life.

Hell is the betrayal of Truth.

The Empty Void is the extinguishing of Faith.

Both Job, without any failing, and David, with plenty of failing, wrestled 'deeply' in all these deep places, in trying to get to God, not face to face in the Light, rather, heart to heart, in the Fire.

From 'all evil' are we redeemed. All the three hellish conditions of the heart will be undercut, at root.

St Paul asserts that we face 'wickedness in high places.' Christ's Sword of Anger for Truth is mostly focused on the 'false leaders', religious and political, who are like a lying 'Good Shepherd.' This leadership cares nothing for those it leads, it can be bought and sold for money, and it trades on spreading false teachings so it can deceive the people, and keep its dire motives under wraps.. This lack of individual righteousness and absence of collective justice will be overcome by redeeming.

Redeeming will overcome our persecution by large groupings of people who despise and abhor us. The heroes who stand up for truth in this wicked world are often threatened by the vested interests they challenge, or even by 'normal' people who just do not want to be disturbed.. In the historical world process, redeeming has servants who facilitate it and enemies who block it. Thus in Jewish Biblical texts where it says Yahweh had to pay a 'ransom' for the Jews to leave Egypt, the ransom was the Egyptians who were on the receiving end of Yahweh's deeds as the blood avenger. It is as in war: both sides pray to God, yet one side's prayers are heard, and the other side's have to be disregarded, if redemptive historical changes are to be achieved. God has no favourites. He does have friends whom he calls to onerous action, and at times, he backs their deeds and they win through; at other times, he asks for their sacrifice, and they lose. In our childishness, we want God to back us against the world, and ensure we prevail in the world.. God is not partisan for me against you, nor you against me. The truth cuts all of us..

Redeeming will bring the tears of the heart to an end. We will cry no more.

Psalms, 107, 2= "Let the redeemed of Yahweh say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the adversary."

Jeremiah, 31, 11= "For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of the one who was stronger than he."

Psalms, 107, 2= "Let the redeemed of Yahweh say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy."

Psalms, 103, 1= "Bless Yahweh.. in redeeming your life from the Pit."

Hosea, 13, 14= "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem from death? O Death, where are thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting?" [1 Corinthians, 15, 15, is quoting Hosea.]

Psalms, 69, 17= "I am in trouble."

Psalms, 74, 2= "Remember your people who you have purchased of old."

Psalms, 69, 18= "Draw nigh.. and redeem me because of my enemies."

Job, 6, 23= "Redeem me from the hand of the tyrants."

Psalms, 103, 6= "Yahweh.. is always on the side of the oppressed."

Job, 19, 29= "There is an anger stirred to flame by evil deeds; you will learn that there is indeed a judgement."

Isaiah, 1, 27= "Zion will be redeemed with justice."

Isaiah, 49, 7= "Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, to him whom men despise and to him whom the nation abhors, ..the Holy One of Israel .. will choose you."

Psalms, 103, 4= "Bless Yahweh.. and forget not all his benefits: he forgives all our iniquities, he redeems our existence from destruction."

Isaiah, 35, 10= "..the ransomed of Yahweh will return, and sorrow will flee away."

Isaiah, 25, 7-8= "And he will destroy.. the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces: and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Yahweh has spoken it."

[7] God 'justifies' us against the accuser.

The accusation from Satan the Accuser that we are 'no damn good', and should be damned in the end, is not suppressed, shouted down, or banished through sheer force, by God. The devil has his day, and the devil gets his due; the accusation is seriously looked at, and God has to go deeper, in himself and in us, to vindicate the venture God is embarked on with humanity.

Jeremiah, 50, 34= "Their redeemer.. will vigorously plead their case.."

Proverbs, 23, 11= "For their redeemer.. will plead their case against you."

Lamentations, 3, 58= "O Yahweh, you have pleaded the cause of my soul, you have redeemed my life."

Psalms, 34, 22= "Yahweh redeems.. and none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned."

[8] Redemption changes what 'rules the roost.'

It is through the victory of Redemption that 'the lion will lie down with the lamb' [Isaiah, 11, 6-8]; the Redeemer judges the wretched with integrity, the poor of the earth are vindicated, and the ruthless and wicked are brought low, their haughty reign at an end [Isaiah, 11, 4-5; Isaiah, 24, 21], for God has been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy [Isaiah, 25, 4].

God will end the pre-eminence and predominance of the ambitious wheelers and dealers who, in trying to come top of the heap, show cold indifference to the plight of their fellow sufferers of the human condition, and are driven by the heat of selfish desire and murderous hatred to destroy all potential rivals to their crown.

The conviction which advantages the self at the disadvantage of the other is rationalised by insisting it is 'just the way things work.' This is the paradigm 'example' of the devil's sway over the heart.

Isaiah, 25, 11-12= "..and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands; and the fortress of the high fort and its walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even the dust."

The fall of the citadel of evil in the world mirrors the fall of the citadel of evil in the heart. Redeeming will purge the heart of evil.

The truth hurts, yet this very hurting is what purges the heart of its 'adhesion' to evil. We are ashamed, we are regretful, we sorrow, over the evil we have embraced and enacted, and we experience and undergo its injuries to others as if they were daggers driven into us. My cold indifference makes me freeze, my heat of destructiveness makes me boil, in the grip of hellishness.

This is a cathartic medicine, for it returns the heart to its truest impetus; a purifying that finally frees it to be unreservedly given, for God, to the world.

Purging is feared as punishment, retribution, pay back, by those still secretly clinging to the evil inclination in their heart. It is nothing like that. The day when the hells we have created in our heart are flushed out of hiding, and become conscious to us, is the day when redeeming has come.

[9] The process of 'passing through' the deep.

Isaiah and David are the only prophets to awake to the significance of the deep floods and deeper conflagrations we pass through in the process of being redeemed. We will not be swept away, we will not be burnt up, Isaiah says, hinting at Christ's passing through deep torments and coming through, so we can do the same. If we die Christ's death, then we will live Christ's life. If we go through hell as Christ did, then we are resurrected with him. We enter the Messianic Age to come, right now.

Isaiah, 51, 10= "Yahweh has made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over."

Isaiah, 43, 1-2= "Thus now says Yahweh, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you." Psalms, 66, 10-12= "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid affliction upon our loins; you have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but you brought us out into an abundant place."

[10] The redeemed 'end up' in Holiness.

The redeemed enter the Holiness of God's Fire, and God forgets all past iniquities= 'the slate is wiped clean.'

Exodus, 15, 13= "..you have guided [the redeemed] towards your holy habitation."

Isaiah, 44, 22-24= "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins: return to me, for I have redeemed you."

[11] Redemption makes possible an 'eschatological' Salvation.

Only when Redemption is complete will Salvation lose its conditionality, and become unconditionally giving to all, shared among all; Salvation is 'redeemed' from a smaller version, and brought to a bigger version. Thus Salvation loses any narrow focus only on any group of the elect, the good, the saved, and extends to one and all. Salvation ceases to be confined to heaven, but comes to earth, and becomes the Wedding of heaven and earth all creaturehood is travelling toward, the new heavenly earth. This transformation is ontological, it is the final shift in being, and is therefore not limited to the ethical. The ethical is not jettisoned, but the ethical is overcome, in its narrowing of the gate, and the gate is thrown open.

The redeemed whores and redeemed tramps and redeemed criminals will enter the kingdom of heaven first, and despite their existence having never been saved, they will be the first to taste the future fruits of heaven married with earth, the ultimate in Salvation. Through Redemption, 'the last will be first' in Salvation.

Thus, the Salvation offered by Yeshua the Mashiach is more open, more broad, more universal, than that which the earlier Jews believed in. As is clear in the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua's Salvation has qualities of extreme generosity not in evidence in Judaism before his arrival. The 'love of enemies', not just 'loving neighbours and hating enemies', is a new, third commandment, specific to Yeshua, and not in Deuteronomy. A people so beleaguered by enemies as [northern] Israel and [southern] Judea were had to fight to go on existing, and begging God to preserve them from enemies is an early yet long-standing exemplar of pleading with God to save them. Loving even enemies would have seemed odd, even impossible, in Yeshua's day, just as it does today!

The Salvation that becomes possible after Redemption has accomplished its 'impossible work' can afford, at last, to make the benevolence of God as unmeasured and immeasurable as the suffering of God. God suffers for all so that, in the end, God can bestow the future flowering upon all.

Isaiah, 35, 1-2; 5-10= "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for [the redeemed]; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall bear fruit abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a stag, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, ..a way, and it will be called the way of Holiness.. ..the redeemed will walk there. And the ransomed of Yahweh will return, and will come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Isaiah, 25, 9= "And it shall be said in that day, this is our God, ..this is Yahweh: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Christ's Salvation anticipates this eschatological end, which is ontological, and asks people to act as if it were already here and now! In a sense it is, in another sense, it is not -- yet. It will be, if Redemption does not falter in its awesome task.

[12] Summation

The Daemonic God is the Redeemer.

Isaiah, 63, 4= "For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

Isaiah, 35, 4= "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance.."

The vengeance is directed at the Evil One, not at humanity.

He Reverses us, yet for our sake, he is Reversed by us..

Isaiah, 63, 9= "In all their affliction he was afflicted. ..in his love and pity he redeemed them. It was Yahweh who was bearing them, and carried them, in the days of old."

This God is the ultimate lover of what he has made.

AMBIVALENCE

Passion is the spark that we most want and most resist. This is why we both look up to yet kill off the heroes of passion= they show us we too could be sparked into fire like them, and that is both an encouraging and terrifying message.

Human society is organised to try to render passion unnecessary.

Without passion, our death will be a mere formality.

THE TEMPTATION OF MONASTICISM IS TO BETRAY 'THE ETHICAL'

1,

"The rigorous [monastic] ascent to God toward impassibility has been replaced by the very passionate and personal approach to truth whereby the person of faith, by virtue of the absurd, finds himself before Christ."

Thus does Kierkegaard sum up the way of passion that is necessary for witnessing to Christ with one's heart in this 'vale of tears'..

In his first book, 'Either/Or', Kierkegaard has two characters debating three ways of life, the Aesthetic, [or First Love], the Ethical, and the Religious.

[1] "He who chooses himself ethically has himself as his task" [p 262].

[2] "The ethical always consists in the consciousness of wanting to do the good" [p 269].

No law can command us to love. Love cannot be compelled in any manner. It is free. But this means that 'doing the good' comes from, is motivated by, is driven and inspired from, love.

Thus the Ethical means assuming responsibility for the world and all things, beings, persons, who sail in its frail ship over stormy seas. This is not love as strong liking, or potent attraction, to something that benefits, or enhances, the person, as in the yearning of Eros.. It is more 'sober' and adult, like a heavy load you shoulder and thus a challenge you work through. In the Ethical, we 'face up' to the existential situation in which love must operate, and commit to its journey and fight through time to change the world. There is a generous and brave 'stand' taken in the Ethical, out of love for the world, to use love to do good despite the pervasiveness of evil, to do good despite severe existential difficulty.

In just this way, Kierkegaard portrays Marriage as more Daemonically wounded and hence more passionate than First Love. "Love is devotion, but devotion is only possible when I go out of myself" [p 111]. This is the real ex-stasis of passion, a self-transcending action, not the bliss of Eros, a self-transcending feeling.

Kierkegaard's 'Ethical' resembles ancient Jewish Righteousness. A Righteous man, or woman, cannot just obey the Mosaic Law. Such a person is called to love this fraught world, this passing life, this imperiled existence, so much that they *want* to do good for it, *want* to resist the evil that wills its destruction, and thus, Righteousness is not about 'righting wrong' but tends toward wanting 'tikkun olam'= repair of the world. This is the [often misunderstood] ultimate spiritual impetus behind the Ethical. It is serious minded. It is earnest in heart.

'It aint easy.' It is very hard -- but assuming this hardship willingly -- and using both passion and will to carry the task through to the end, not bailing out prematurely when things get too rough and too complicated -- is ennobling.

Though persons of the Aesthetic -- especially once it is in decline -- delight to see themselves as special, and extraordinary -- because the Eternal Moment that infuses them is so different to the 'normal' and the 'humdrum' -- Kierkegaard says it is only those carrying the burden of the Ethical who are really extraordinary. Much of the time the Ethical can seem humdrum -- but the person is different because of the weight they carry, and in dramatic times, they show their strength born of love for the world.

For, in wanting to do good, and resist evil, so as to add their substance to the repair of the world, the Ethical person is really acting as God's agent, their deed makes them God's co-worker=

[3] "The enviable thing in human life is that one can come to the aid of the Deity, can understand him..." [p 255]. Abraham Heschel would say what we can come to understand is God's dispositions toward the world, God's heart for existence.

Hence the human love which takes a mature responsibility for what happens in the world, and what happens to the world, for where the world is going and how it turns out, is not an optional 'extra' added on to loving God. The love of God that refuses responsibility for the destiny of the world betrays the Ethical.

2,

Kierkegaard finds much to extol in the monks and their mysticism, yet he also finds a central flaw -- that in too many, they choose to love God and escape, reject, ethically abandon, the world. Kierkegaard says -- this love for God that is at the same time a refusal to love the world is "forbidden by God." It is the very paradigm of 'forbidden love.' Only a monasticism that is Ethical in the full sense is saved from radical error; the ascetic disciplines for subduing the delusive thoughts and unruly impulses that 'disturb' a person's climbing of the ladder of ascent to the divine are by no means Ethical. They make us benign toward people in a manner not truly involved with them, neither wronging them nor really loving them. Only passion binds our fate to their fate, for better or worse..

"In the Middle Ages, ..one abruptly broke off life's regular development and went into a monastery. The faultiness of this step did not, of course, consist in the fact of entering the monastery but in the erroneous conceptions associated with it. ..In the Middle Ages they thought that in choosing the cloister a man chose the extraordinary and himself became an extraordinary man; from the elevation of the monastery one looked down proudly, almost compassionately, upon the ordinary men. So it was no wonder that people entered the monasteries in droves when at so cheap a price one could become an extraordinary man! But the gods do not sell the extraordinary at a bargain price. If the men who retreated from active life had been honest and

sincere with themselves and with others, above all if they had loved the thing of being a man, if they had felt with enthusiasm all the beauty implied in this, if their heart had not been unacquainted with a genuine and profound feeling for humanity, they too would perhaps have retired to the solitude of the cloister, but they would not have prided themselves ..upon being extraordinary men, except in the sense that they were less perfect than others; they would not have looked down condescendingly upon the ordinary men but would have contemplated them sympathetically, feeling a [sad] joy in the fact that these men had succeeded in performing the beautiful and the great things of which they were not capable" [pp 332--333].

Kierkegaard is saying it is not the monastery per se, but the falsely superior spiritual status it claims in the esteem of ordinary people, that is the problem.

The Ethical is therefore greater than the Mystical, and subjects it to a pulverizing test. The Mystic has Ethical 'duty' toward the world; and if he evades fulfilling it, he is as much a destroyer of the world as any criminal. The duty of the Mystic cannot be jettisoned in the [false] name of 'loving God' whilst not loving the world.

Ethically, we show our love for God in our love for the world. Yet, conversely, the relative validity of Mysticism is that it discloses the reality that there is a God to love, and this God loves us. This God is accessible to experience. Such mystical encounter is part of the [manifold] Gift of Eros.

Still, danger lurks!

Eros, in its linking of nous and soul, light and life, should not instigate 'the flight of the alone to the Alone'; rather, Eros is the Grace of communion that overflows from the above to the below, and spreads outward through all persons, creatures, things. Love opens our eyes to the energies and qualities of divinity at work in cosmos, nature, history, city. The distortion of Mysticism is that it becomes a false transcendence, a seeking of the higher that jettisons all concern for the lower.

Some Mystics -- and a few monks in the monasteries -- are Ethical in the Jewish sense, yet far too many are not. This is why there is a parallel between the Aesthetic people who linger too long in its 'diminishing returns' and Mystics -- neither want to take an Ethical responsibility for the world, for this existence in and of the world, in its historical journey and battle toward some End we intuit but only dimly see= Repair of the World.

The Aesthete wants to enjoy life, and the Mystic wants to enjoy God. This is why Romantics, Beats, Hippies, Bohemians of every ilk, so often end up as Mystics. The inevitable wreck of Romanticism turns the disillusioned toward Mysticism.

As the soul sinks into an ever more twisted sadness, Mysticism seems the only way out. But Mysticism is no true cure for the sorrow that haunts the Aesthetic life, due to its flimsiness in this world.

[4] "...duty is not an imposition but something which is incumbent" [p 259].

The Calling to the Ethical man, or woman, is to journey and fight, struggle, to plant Eternity in time. He/she goes through time -- 'patiently' -- to redeem time. By contrast, both the Romantic and the Mystic are 'timeless.' The timelessness of First Love renders it hard for this miraculous grace to enter time. The Mystic's timelessness is regarded by him/her as superior to time, because it belongs to 'God alone.'

The foolish monk shut in the monastery is alone ['mono'= alone] because he/she hopes to be alone with God.

God will not play ball with that forbidden love..

The key revelation of the Ethical is that if you "love God with all your heart" [Deuteronomy; quoted by Yeshua], so you then will 'want' to 'love the world with all your heart.'

The first informs and dynamizes the second, but the second fulfils and enacts the first. Without the second, the first is distorted.

If you cannot love the world, even to the point of self-sacrifice for its sake, then you do not really love God -- the real God; but you love a 'god' who did not create the world, give good to it, and out of love for it, redeem it. You love a 'false god' who eschews the world as you do, and somehow promises to take you to a 'better place.'

"Stick with me kid, and I'll take you out of this bad place to the place of your dreams." The siren song of the Devil.

There is something of great value and beauty in First Love, and the Mystic/Monastic Path, but there is also a horrendous danger.

The danger= to abandon the world.

The danger= to flee from the Ethical.

--When you willingly embrace the Ethical, you *want* to do good, and resist evil, for the sake of redeeming the world. This is 'free love.'

--When you run away from the Ethical, you are *forced* to do what you should want to do, but cannot yet choose freely. This is Duty felt as Law, as Compulsion. For the Jews, even if you *do* it grudgingly, that is still valid. It still gets done. The key here is the 'action.' This is not blindly compliant 'behaviour.' It is a deed hard won against one's own resistance. The greater heart overcomes the lesser heart in a moment of temptation when the latter seems potent and the former seems vulnerable..

The Ethical man, or woman, "chooses himself/herself in this world", and instead of seeking Eternity 'instead of time', seeks to incarnate Eternity in time by the way they stand in, and stand through, time.

Thus Kierkegaard adds=

[5] "...the ethical individual.. is like quiet waters which run deep, whereas he who lives aesthetically is only superficially moved" [p 261].

In the Ethical modality we are 'moved by the world' -- and thus our life in the world becomes a movement that is constituted of loving the world more than our own freedom, more than our own perfecting and talents, more than our life..

[6] "So personality has not the ethical outside it but in it, and out of the depth it breaks forth" [p 261].

It is inside us, in our depth of heart. This is why it is not really imposed from without, but arises from within as a 'compunction of heart.' The profound heart stabs the shallow heart, reminding us what the heart was really created for= to contest the world for love.

For Kierkegaard, "know thyself" [Socrates] is transmuted into "choose yourself", because the truest core of the person is the heart, will, and passion, summoned to take on the Calling, the Vocation, the Burden, the Cost, of the Ethical Task of taking responsibility for the future of the world, and thus loving the world.

We are not 'here' to follow some rules that, if kept to, will admit us to somewhere else at the end of our short span of time.

We are here to redeem the time-- all of time, by the stand, effort, struggle, we take in time for Eternity= by this do we plant, cultivate, and harvest Eternity in time. This is the Biblical 'fruit' God wants from us.

William Blake= "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

This is where passion really enters. There is no Ethical without passion, energy, intensity, Kierkegaard insists.

So=

[7] "Give a man energy, passion, and with that he is everything" [p 272].

And=

[8] "...the matter of ethics is not a question of the multifariousness of duty but of its intensity. When with all his energy a person has felt the intensity of duty he is then ethically mature, and in him duty will emerge of itself" [p 270].

Thus=

[9] "...[when] a man has.. felt the intensity of duty, [then] the consciousness of it is for him the assurance of the eternal validity of his being" [p 271].

Really= the eternal validity of what he is doing with his life in this world.

Kierkegaard has the older character, a judge, say that the Mystic offends the father and husband in him. The Mystic offends the king, warrior, prophet, sacred clown, holy fool, broken bum, in all of us who 'have a heart.'

For= "The ethical always consists in *the consciousness* of wanting *to do* the good" [p 269].

This consciousness cannot come from the Mind. Nor from the Soul. It comes from the heart, and its mysterious and powerful depths.

St Macarios of Egypt= "The human heart is an unfathomable abyss."

But consciousness of the Ethical has to be affirmed by choosing it in Action -- or it fades away.

[10] This is why Kierkegaard insists it needs intensity, passion, energy, to take hold of the Ethical. He respects a passionate child who wants to learn, by saying this child "takes hold of a thing so passionately" that Kierkegaard wishes "at every time of my life I may take hold of my work with the same energy" [p 272]. This is "ethical earnestness" [ibid].

In effect, I cannot become ethically conscious without energy -- the energy of passion needed to Act on the Ethical.

[11] Kierkegaard concludes that "the man before whom duty -- obligation, calling, task -- has never revealed itself in its whole significance is.. poor" [p 271].

Kierkegaard is well aware of how the Romantics mock the Ethical as a killjoy=

"Life loses its beauty, [it is said], so soon as the ethical prevails. Instead of the happiness, beauty, and freedom from care which life has when we regard it aesthetically, we get [the dullness of] conscientious activity, praiseworthy industry, indefatigable and unremitting zeal" [p 277].

The Judo that upends this attack is to admit it is true of false morality, but false to true morality. Though there are stiff necked, self-righteous, proudly judgmental, or simply conventional and respectable, types of pseudo ethics,

the real Ethical has its own pathos, beauty, mystery -- because it comes from so much depth in the heart, and risks so much depth in the world.

This is why God 'requires the heart.' We give it to God in giving it to the world.

Hence=

[12] For the ethical person, "his talent is precisely his calling" [p 302]. In Plains Indian terms, you only get the help of your spirit animal to perform your calling.

Kierkegaard quotes an old Danish poem=

"Instead of childhood's golden promise,
He makes a living scant but honest."

Kierkegaard has an interesting interpretation of the myth of Adam and Eve, and hints at a different contribution to the Ethical made by man and by woman. He indignantly refutes the 19th Century cliché that men are strong and women are weak. Women are equally strong as men, perhaps stronger.. He thinks generally men are too proud, and women too humble. A man needs 'humbling down' in his inherent pride, a woman needs 'prouding up' in her inherent humility. Another story for another day..

A penultimate, and decisive point, about the Ethical is the claim that it rests in friendship. Justice -- and all else established only by the Ethical -- is rooted in the spiritual potentiality for all humans to become friends.

We are here to help and be helped. We help and are helped in a hard existence common to us all. Only in this way can we redeem it. If we live selfishly, "every man for himself", or according to what an American I once met on a narrow walk-way said, "have a nice day, get out of my way", then existence cannot be redeemed. In that eventuality, existence goes down the plug hole, and everyone goes down with it. There is no heaven into which to escape the wreck of existence.

--All the Romantics find there is no 'earthly paradise' to escape into as existence fails.

--All the Mystics find there is no 'other world' to go to, or find that God will not 'gather them to his bosom', as existence goes to hell.

If, in the end, existence becomes hell, then all 'in' existence, past and future, end in hell.

This is the knife edge on which the Ethical battles. It is like what Lorca says about Flamenco. You must ascend and battle 'on the rim of the well', to rouse

the spirit of Duende. And Duende does not come "unless death is a real possibility."

The Ethical is for love of "the life of [human beings] in this word" [p 334].

Kierkegaard's final thrust is to say that the struggle inherent to the Ethical is a process of 'revealing' everything.

[13] "Ethics says that it is the significance of life and of reality that every [human being] become revealed" [p 327].

The Romantic wants to, and does remain, concealed, because he does not give himself up, totally, to the world. The same applies to the Mystic. Neither Aesthetic nor Transcendentalist is willing to "recognize the claim of reality upon every [person] that [they] become revealed.." [pp 327-328]. If we resist the struggle to love the world that reveals who and what we 'really' are, then "one becomes an enigma to oneself" [p 327]. We struggle with murky threats and remain a ghost unknown to all, and even to ourself. "He who will not contend with realities gets phantoms to fight with" [p 328].

Moreover, it is when we repudiate the hard truth that every human being is revealed by the way in which they face up to and stand in, and act toward, existence, that "the revelation will appear as a punishment" [p 327]. The Last Judgement is not a punishment. It is final clarification of who and what we became, by virtue of our deeds for or against, or in indifference to or flight from, the existence that 'called us out.' We will exult in whatever Action the heart could give; we will weep, and wail, for all the Action the heart did not give, but farked..

As Kierkegaard puts it, the real choice forced upon us by existing in this world is not 'either' this 'or' that. It is not picking one thing and casting off another thing. It is much more basic.

The choice is whether we accept there is an Either/Or hitting the heart square on, or deny it.

Yahweh says to us=

I put before you, Life and the Deadening, choose!

I put before you Truth and the Lie, choose!

I put before you Love, and the Callous Heart, the Indifferent Heart, choose!

I put before you Water and Fire, you can have whichever you want.

Even if you prefer Eros, there is the Illusory Counterfeit versus the Reality.

If the Daemonic chooses you, and you assent, then you face the severest choice.

The Sword of Truth will become the Cross of Truth's Suffering and Reversal For Love.

The ultimate Either/Or= what will you lose for love?

WHAT THE DESERT TRADITION HAD THAT LATER MONASTICISM LOST

1,

The Desert Tradition had something that the later, established monasticism lost.

The Desert plunged a person into the black abyss, and used asceticism to keep them grounded in that suffering of God's absence, until they broke through to the red of burning fire-- but subsequent monasticism evaded that 'desertedness' of the Desert by subtly using asceticism in a different way, as a yoga to help the 'ascent' to the Eros of God.

We are alone in the black, unrelievably, but together in the red, unbreakably.

Only if we can say at the end of our season in hell, 'my life is my brother', have we come through.

2,

Because only the Fire of Spirit can take us down into, and bring us through hell, the false emphasis on the ladder of ascent – the Way Upward [Greek Hellenic] – blots out the whole purpose of descent, which is to make possible a fundamental change in the Way Forward [Jewish Messianic].

3,

When the Greek Hellenic Way Upward is preferred over the Jewish Messianic Way Forward, then Light is preferred to Fire.

Even if Fire, not just Light, is recognised as God's Love, as in Greek Orthodox Christianity, the inevitable result is that the Fire of Spirit is restricted to one limited function in its burning= purifying the fallen passions that 'drag us down', so we can be 'raised up' to the Light of heaven.

Thus St Symeon the New Theologian [seventh century AD] extols the Fire of Love, initially echoing St Dionysus centuries earlier, but he cannot allow it to do anything more than help human beings switch on to the Light=

"God is fire and when he became man, he sent fire on the earth; this fire turns about searching to find material.. to fall into and kindle; and for those in whom this fire will ignite, it becomes a great flame, which reaches heaven.. This flame at first purifies us from the pollution of passions and then it becomes in us food and drink and light and joy, and renders us light ourselves because we participate in his Light" [p 319, quoted in 'Surprised By Christ', James Bernstein, 2008].

In preparation for Communion, the Greek Orthodox Christian prayer to God=

“Thou who art a fire consuming the unworthy, consume me not O my Creator, but rather pass through all my body parts, into all my joints, my reins, my heart. Burn Thou the thorns of all my transgressions. Cleanse my soul and hallow.. my thoughts.. that from me.. every evil deed and every passion may flee as from fire.”

Bernstein [p 328] quotes from Sahdona=

“Let us embrace the burning fire of God’s love within our hearts; for heaven’s purity is born from our closeness to him. It is only by unfailing and focused gazing that the spirit gravitates to God, but when the luminous ray of the simple eye of the soul is flooded with these intense rays of light that flash down from on high, then it is that the fire of God flares up in a great blaze within our hearts.”

Bernstein [p 330] quotes from the monk Sophrony=

“Unless we go through this fire that consumes the decaying passions of our nature, we shall not see the fire transformed into light.. ..in our fallen state burning precedes enlightenment. Let us, therefore, bless God for this consuming fire.”

These various Eastern Orthodox Christian statements, even the prayer in the Liturgy, are typically Greek, and not sufficiently Jewish, in failing to understand why our human fire is ‘seized’ by the Fire of God. It is not to ‘drive away every passion.’ It is not to ‘flood us with Light.’

The Fire comes not to purify the heart, but to purge the heart, so the heart can be ignited for its true calling, its real mission..

The human passion is cast into all manner of tests and trials, tumults and troubles, in its arduous calling to go ‘out’ into the world, not straight ‘up’ to heaven, and to ‘press ahead’ in time, not remaining ‘statically fixed’ to the memory of the paradisiacal point of origin. It is checked out in the existential arena, sifted by the Evil Spirit, searched out in depth by the Spirit of Fire. Yahweh will not spare us going through the waters, Yahweh will not spare us going through the fires. We go through, not around, not above; we ride the Waves of Water and Fire.

The burning of the Fire of Spirit uncovers our untruth and confirms our truth of heart, but it does more than this= we are brought down into the abysses where the Fire of God will do something radically new. The human passion goes through the burning of purgation in this life, not to ready it for heaven after we die [or to grant a foretaste of the brightness and glory of heaven before we die], but to ready it for the new and more radical burning of the Fire of Spirit which will ignite its depths.

This means purgation by the Fire of Truth is only preparation for joining the Suffering and Reversal of the Truth in the Cross of Christ.

Christ= "I came into the world to kindle Fire, and how I wish it were blazing already" [Luke, 12, 49-50].

The Fire that Christ knows is not yet kindled, and wants to be kindled, is a burning not purgational in any sense. It is much bigger than that, it is much profounder than that.

The new action of the Fire of Spirit is in the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, of Christ.

The Fire is not to lift us up to heaven.

The Fire is to take us down into, and through, hell.

4,

The Fire is not helping us get to the Light; on the contrary, the Light is only really radiating when it accompanies the Fire on its perilous journey and savage fight for the world.

Isaiah, 58, 6-12=

"Is this not the fast I have chosen? To loose the chains of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the poor who are cast out into your house? When you see the naked to cover him? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing will spring up speedily.. Then you will call, and Yahweh will answer; you will cry, and he will say, 'here I am.' ..And if, from your soul, you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul: then will your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And Yahweh will then guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters cannot fail. And you will rebuild the old waste places.. and you will be called the restorer of paths to dwell in."

Yeshua the Mashiach insists on a Light of saving that works side by side with the Fire of redeeming in, and for, the world.

Mathew, 5, 13-16=

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be recaptured? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in a house. Let your light so shine before humanity that they can see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

5,

There is no plan, no theology, no model, to depict the 'basic' change of heart brought by the depth. In the depth, truth and suffering become linked. No truth without suffering; and no suffering that does not, after wrestlings and strange endeavour, reveal a hidden truth.

God checks us out in our depths, to prove our love can go as deep as God.

Last summer in Crete, I had visionary dreams. In one there was a series of peculiar challenges that block passion to be overcome. In another, a voice said, "passion propels you into the service of something you would otherwise ignore."

On the night of 11—12 August 2010, I heard something= "The voice of God is like a storm in heaven" – or= "is the storm of heaven."

We spend our time as a tale that is told. This story is voiced by the Daemonic already in heaven, and its drama is shouldered by the Messiah on earth, while its propulsion in depths of God and humanity is supplied by the Spirit.

The suffering that is Messianic generates the Fire of Love which is the Fire of Spirit.

As followers of Christ, we are not saved by mystical heights, moral statutes, ascetical disciplines; neither the Bible nor the Liturgy are sufficient to us.

We are yoked to the Suffering Royal Heart whose Deed gives us the Fire.

We seek Fire, we await Fire. The aim of our life is Fire.

We are not Scholars, Moralists, Ecstatics, or anything else of such nature.

We are the material which the Holy Fire will seize and on it will burn.

Most religious people have not signed up for this!

The passionate know, already, it is this-- or nothing.

The question to us is simple. Do you want to become all flame?

Do not mistake this as the sunshine of Eros, as the monastics do. It is the Fire of the dragon, whose breath and heart-beat we heard from far off; now it can breathe through us and make our heart as terrible and tender as its own.

The Fire is born of depth, and in its suffering, forges the truth of a love without bounds.

PROPHET AS SERVING THE KING

The prophet is interesting, in that when he is a 'herald' and a 'mentor' to the king, he is caught up in worldly drama. But what went wrong with the monks, in Buddhism no less than Eastern Orthodox Christianity, is that they cut their link to the king—warrior, and so ceased to serve the drama of 'change' [changing the world] in which the king—warrior is the lynch pin. In short, when the desert serves the city, when the desert monastic goes into the desert to receive from God a revelation to help the city to which he must return – like Christ's 40 days in the wilderness – then the derivation of the monastic from the prophetic is obvious= the monastic continues the prophetic.

Deuteronomy, 8, 2; 5; 12-16=

“You will remember how Yahweh your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your inmost heart, whether you would keep his ways or not.. Learn from this that Yahweh was training you as a man trains his child.. [When things go well for you, and you taste the abundance of Eros given to you by God], do not become proud of heart. Do not then forget Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ..who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground.. that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.”

The 'ordeal in the wilderness' is the furnace where the Daemonic Fire burns the heart to 'give it strength' and to 'win for it power' [Deuteronomy, 8, 17-18], so that in its future, it can follow all Yahweh's ways, to love him, to serve him "with all your heart and soul" [Deuteronomy, 10, 12-13].

The Daemonic God subjects the heart to this ordeal, and by forcing us to remain in it and go through all its challenges, is responsible for the existential strengthening and empowering of our heart muscle that is the result. Never the less, Yahweh warns= "beware of saying in your heart, 'the might of my own hand won.. [such an outcome] for me.' Remember Yahweh your God: it was he [who made this possible, by pushing you farther than you would ever choose], thus keeping the covenant.. that he swore to your fathers" [Deuteronomy, 8, 17-18].

However, when the monastic goes into the desert to escape the city, and aims for some kind of 'return' to God that excludes the drama of the world, then whether the monk seeks Paradise at the beginning of time, Heaven above all worlds, Enlightenment [Void is Form, Form is Void] Now, the Kingdom Within, and similar mystical and ontological panaceas, makes no difference, because in this case the monk is excluding himself from what the prophet serves-- the redeeming of the world process through its very tumult and trials, its 'drama.'

THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

1,

God 'appears' not to have power, or to eschew any use of power, to many Christians who foolishly believe in the Cross as promoting 'passivity', weak capitulation, even masochistic enjoyment of pain.

Whilst [ancient and current] 'crusading' under the sign of the Cross is obscene, the Cross is a power, the final power of God, at work in the world. The only power God will use is redemptive in its wisdom and effect.

This power is not given to the passive, nor to the aggressive. It is not 'in the power of', nor is it 'power over.'

2,

To the broken, and to the risk-taking, who embrace human vulnerability, human fragility, human poverty, God reveals the divine strength that works through human weakness; to our heartbreak, and to our venturing despite it, God grants his power.

To gain the true power of God, be faithful to the true heart of humanity.

It is not a formula, not a recipe, not even a rule or instruction. It is a way of living and doing.

Live it, and do it, and you will change your heart about the way things stand. You will stand, and from that vantage point, everything changes.

DIVINIZATION

The Daemonic divinizes us, in and through the heart, in and through love.

“Man is a creature who has received the command to become God”= St Basil.

“To reunite, through love, the created nature of the human with the uncreated divine grace”, the usual formulation in St Gregory of Nyssa, is Eros divinisation, but this only happens as a consequence of the Daemonic divinization that is through the heart and thus through freedom.

“God unites himself only with gods”= St Symeon. When God’s heart comes to house itself in our heart, we undergo this awesome coming as something not beyond us, not a deus ex machina, but as an event ‘paved the way for’ in our own depth, ‘something that only comes to us from the free motion of our heart..’

As Christ overcame the temptation to fail existence in the heart, so we are called to overcome the same temptation.

Such is the Daemonic. It makes us a lover like God loves.

In Eros, we are enveloped in love, and dance within its cosmic architecture and dance to its natural rhythms, celebrating it as gratuitous gift. In Eros, we are always, as Red Indians put it, ‘a part of it.’

In the Daemonic, we are not part of anything, rather, the royal personhood is free in the radical existential sense, and thus as we trust our depths, sacrificing self-will, and resisting the Hostile Will, and answering the call of the divine will to ‘come out’, so we stand on love in the depths in our ‘motion’ of heart, and by this we ‘win’ our heart, and thus ‘win’ our divinisation.. God only unites with gods= God only unites in heart with hearts tried and tested, checked out, come through, and ‘true.’

The Daemonic divinizes us in a unique way, making in us humans the same fiery heart as God. This is Holiness.

HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE?

In Eastern Christian prayers I have heard these phrases=

'The depth of God's loving kindness'-- it must be as deep as hell.

'The depth of sin'-- heaven must go deeper.

'Lions and dragons are in the depth'— the lion is the royal and golden heart, and the dragon is the dark passion of tears and flame, the passion wounded and stricken that alone stands up and becomes the pillar.

When Christ descended into Hades and Hell, he plunged into depth, severing his last root in and protection from the height; the Crucified One who descended into depth ceased to be the Bright Christ, the Christ of Greek Eros, and became for humanity's sake the Dark Christ, the Christ of the Jewish Daemonic.

Only the Resurrected Christ has won the victory in the depth. Therefore the Sun of Eros only returns, all shining, through a journey and battle undergone in the agonized ecstaticness of the Abyss. This is the mystery stranger even than the mystery of God qua God; for this is the mystery of what God will suffer, and what God will do, to bring humanity through. What God loses for humanity's ultimate gain is the supreme testing and proving of the divine love.

Henceforth, light will only be reborn from darkness, joy will only re-emerge from pain.

Henceforth, there will only be a dark sun, descending to and rising up from the Abyss.

This is the new heaven, which will make a new earth.

Christianity has made hardly a start with this Truth.

THE SECRET WISDOM OF GOD

The high and the broad is knowledge for those whose souls desire it.
Knowledge begins in desiring.

Depth is wisdom for those whose hearts can bear and endure it. Wisdom begins in unchosen suffering. Aeschylus= "we must suffer into truth." Wisdom searches out the deep things of God 'beneath' existence.

Job, 26, 7=

"Have the gates of death been revealed to you
..or have you seen the gates of deep darkness,
where is the way to the place of deep darkness?"

Isaiah, 7, 10=

"Again Yahweh spoke..
Ask a sign of Yahweh your God;
Let it be deep as hell or high as heaven."

Ecclesiasticus, 1, 1-2=

"All wisdom is from God, and is given to them that fear and love God.
All wisdom is from Yahweh our God, and has always been with him, and is before all time.
Who has numbered the sands of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of the world?
Who has measured the height of heaven, and the breadth of the earth, and the depth of the abyss?"

Psalms, 94, 3=

"For Yahweh is a great God, and a great king.
In his hand are the deep places of the earth."

In his left hand.

Paul, Ephesians, 4, 8-9=

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
And he gave gifts to humanity.
But in saying 'he ascended',
What does it mean but that
He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth."

Ascending and gifts= Salvation.
Descending into the lower realms in the deeps, even into hell= Redemption.

There is no wisdom-ology. There is no and cannot be any logos of wisdom.
There is a spirit of wisdom.

Theo-Logos will not ever be able to express the deeps searched by the Spirit of God.

Spirit-wisdom is different. You cannot put it into words, unless you break their order, coherence, beauty.

What the heart learns from its terrible struggle 'in the hands' of the Daemonic is beyond any speaking. It is unspeakable. It is cried, sighed, inarticulately voiced in the silence that is a different prayer when all praying is done.

It is in the silence of the fatherless, it is in the silence of the widow, it is in the silence of the broken. It cannot be comforted, it is inconsolable.

It is in the extinction of any remaining hope in this life, when we still are secretly thinking we can side step the blow, and avoid the revealing of the chasm.

Let the rationalists and moralists continue to prattle their ungrounded confidence in things unseen.

Those who are of the heart are broken-hearted, and realise it; they have come to life's heartbreak, and in the empty abyss, the consuming hell, the dead pit, they are neither reached nor changed by the Light of God's Face, because they 'know in their bones' their only ignition after having burned down to ashes is the Fire of God's Heart.

This is what the Messiah brings that is new, the Second Covenant. It begins on the Cross, then Descends into hell, and effects the change there, in the groundless ground of existence, and finally emerges victorious in the Resurrection.

Ecclesiasticus, 51, 4, 7= "And you have freed me from ..the depths of the bowels of hell."

Redemption is deep. The Fire goes deep, because there is no other remedy for the tragedy lodged so far down, in all of us.

"Who has searched out the wisdom of God that goes before all things?"
[Ecclesiasticus, 1, 3].

THE SECOND CHANCE= Pointing To The Future

Like Christ, to suffer and to carry becomes our passion's willingness, and rejoicing, because we understand this action to be redemptive for the whole world process from paradisiacal beginning to eschatological end. No one should disrespect the vital importance of the mind becoming enlightened; but there is a suffering that both defeats the heart, yet can become redemptive for the heart, and thus for the world which the heart is called to redeem. Divine Light was always in the world, but only through Jesus the Christ came a new and final Spiritual Fire.

Out of our passion, so muscular in possibility and so spent and lost in actuality, we praise the Passion of Christ. His Passion alone reaches the heart at its most desperate, with the paradoxical power to change that into the heart at its most trusting, and bold= the heart for existence we were first inspired by as a child, but gave up on as an adult.

The paradox of the Messiah, saving and redeeming, is the paradox of Yahweh. The Holy One of Israel is 'a light and a fire' [Isaiah, 10, 17].

Light= the heavenly king comes in glory; to behold him is [key to] Salvation.

Fire= the heavenly king comes stripped of all glory, naked, raw, ugly; we cannot bear to look upon him, but his pain penetrates our heart; to be pierced by him is [key to] Redemption.

The king of heaven can only become the king of earth by inverting his crown of gold into a crown of thorns.

The wine of heavenly ecstasy must become the bitter gall mixed with earthly vinegar.

Salvation is good news for those who can be consoled.
Redemption is good news for those who are inconsolable.

O Yeshua, bright and approachable, let us be bathed in your luminous glow.
Let us rest our head on your shoulder, as a friend.

O Mashiach, dark and grieving, on the day of trouble when no one comes,
your dark flame rekindles the ashes of despair. Let our heart enter the conflagration.

What is a continuation of the past in Christ is God's Light.
What is new in Christ is God's Fire.

It is where the Light cannot go, it is where the Light stops, that the Fire leaps into action.

The Light illumines and sanctifies the human.

The Fire is God's Holiness, and only the Fire makes the human holy.

The Light of the East= mystical and ontological.

The Light of the West= moral and rational.

Both are Light.

Neither is Fire.

"For he is good God and loves mankind."

..a good God= Light.

..loves mankind= Fire.

"Light of Light, and True God."

Light of Light= Eros.

True God= Daemonic.

Eros= the Grace only poured out from the Pleroma.

Daemonic= the Truth only won from the Abyss.

The Messiah is reversed on account of the world.

The world will be reversed on account of the Messiah.

The Redeemer must be stripped of his true glory. His worth is concealed.

The world will be stripped of its false glory. Its worthiness will be manifested.

Mary, visited by the spirit who announces the coming Incarnation of the Light, never the less senses and foresees the inversion of the Fire that will become the inversion of the world. She announces the coming Cross.

Luke, 1, 51-54=

"..He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low
degree,

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy."

Isaiah, 61, 1-3=

"The Spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has annointed me to
bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-
hearted, to proclaim liberty to all those held captive by evil, to comfort all who
mourn, ..to give them the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.."

The Beatitudes of Christ work according to the same inverse paradox=

Blessed are those who mourn,
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
Blessed are the singular in heart, for they shall see God at work in everything. They will see everything with God's eyes.

The Reversal brought by the Cross signals doom to the world's unreality and false worth, but release of the world's potentiality and true worthiness.

False worth= the high and mighty, the imperious, the rich.

True worthiness= the powerless, the oppressed, the impoverished.

The former have made an individual success out of a common tragedy. They do not need God's Redemption. They have elevated themselves in a bogus worldly salvation. This fails to attain the felicity and soundness of the real salvation, and covers over, obscures, denies, the need for Redemption. Only the world's 'losers' bear eloquent testimony to the heartlessness of the world's 'winners.' They do not put any window dressing on the world's abject lack of any genuine victory worthy of God and of humanity.

All are in abject defeat.

The rich try to invert this truth, and the poor live it out.

Thus will the rich be shockingly discomfited, and the poor surprised by joy, when Redemption punches through.

It will be God's doing. We do what God requires of us to cooperate with it.

The poor, in every sense, are better placed in existence to respond to the meaning and impetus of Redemption. The rich, in every sense, will always be more offended by the Cross than anyone else= they will resist it 'with all they have got', 'for all they are worth.' In reality, they have nothing of any value.

It is harder for a rich man to enter the Messianic Kingdom than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The 'eye of the needle' was a narrow, and low, gate in the wall surrounding Jerusalem. To get through it, the camel had to have all its baggage removed, and kneel down very close to the ground. Then it could enter.

The bigger they are, the harder they fall= when that bigness of stature in humanity's eyes is smallness of stature in God's eyes.

Isaiah, 2, 7; 11-12; 17=

"Their land ..is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end of their treasures and their land is filled with horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.. [but] the lofty looks of man shall be humbled and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day. For the

day of the God of Armies shall be upon everyone who is proud and lofty, and upon everyone who is lifted up; and they shall be brought low. ..And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of men shall be made low..”

Sirach, 35, 18=

“Yahweh will ..crush the loins of the unmerciful, and ..will take away the multitude of the insolent, and break the sceptres of the unrighteous.”

The poor signify the real hurting, the real situation.

That is terrible to bear.

Yet it is an additional burden and blow, when we think ourselves better than this terrible poverty, to have to throw away our pseudo richness with its pseudo accomplishment, and pseudo high station.

The ‘great and good’ according to worldliness have been served with a warning.

The first will be last, and the last will be first.

Those already in the Pit are closer to the Cross, and more ready to embrace its Reversal, than those in the Tower built over the Pit.

The Tower will collapse and the Pit give up its dead, when Redemption comes.

Christ’s wounding releases the deadened from their fear of being wounded.

Christ’s burdening releases the crushed from their fear of being burdened.

His heart assumed our worst, so that our heart can assume his best. ‘My strength is revealed in weakness.’

VI: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL FUTURE

“Who has directed the Spirit of Yahweh,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?
Whom did this Spirit consult for his enlightenment,
And who taught him the path of justice,
and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?”
Isaiah, 40, 12-17

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.”
Zachariah, 4, 6

“O God, I will sing you a new song.”
Psalms, 143, 9 [Septuagint]

“There is no God-- the bastard.”
Francis Spufford, ‘Unapologetic’, 2012

ON THE WILDERNESS ROAD

The Messianic 'New Covenant'= The New Heart In Humanity

PRELUDE

'Salvation' is to be differentiated from 'Redemption.' The Jewish Messiah is not a Saviour, not a Chief Saviour, not a Necessary Saviour; and certainly not any kind of [childish] Rescuer. Rather, he is the Redeemer of all humanity. As a Redeemer, he has unique qualities needed to bear the impossible task to which he is called.

The question that arises is= how do human beings 'freely, personally, lovingly' participate in the redemption wrought by the Redeemer?

1,

According to the prophetic witness of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the First Covenant between God and the Jews would end with the Exile of the entire Jewish people to Babylon [600 BC]. The immediate implication was stark and terrible. The original covenantal relationship between God and the Jews had not worked out. Thus the Jews would cease to exist as a people of God, a people called by God to live and act for him in the world.

This catastrophe was going to befall the Jews because they had not kept, but had repeatedly betrayed, their original covenantal relationship with God. Yahweh had shown patience and forbearance over centuries, urging his people to return to their primal 'hesed' with him. Finally, Yahweh concluded this return was not possible. "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways" [Psalms, 95, 8-11]. Isaiah is instructed by Yahweh to tell the Jews what is so very amiss in their condition. The heart of the people is "callous"; their eyes are "ever seeing but not perceiving", their ears are "ever hearing but never understanding"; such eyes are "closed" and such ears are "dull" [Isaiah 6, 8-10]. In the Acts [28, 25-27] there is a summary of Yahweh's assessment of the Pre Exilic nations of Israel and Judea= "For this people's heart has become calloused, they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts.. and I would [be able to] heal them."

This assessment by Yahweh of what has gone wrong with the Jews is more subtle than it first seems.

On the one hand, it refers without doubt to the failure by the Jews to create a communal togetherness rooted in justice for all people, as required by Yahweh from the beginning. The Old Covenant had increasingly failed during the time between Moses leading the Jewish people out of Exile in Egypt [1200/1000 BC] and their going into Exile to Babylon [600—500 BC], and it is noteworthy that the decisive degeneration occurred when a people who had been desert nomads settled down, and became crop growers, and then

traders, growing rich, and developing all the evils familiar today from a social, political, and economic, set up run by Mammon. A proto capitalism where the few rich profited at the expense of the many poor, and where power was concentrated in the hands of those with money, was blasted by the early prophets again and again. Through Amos [800 BC], God repudiates beautiful liturgical ceremonies, whose incense stinks in his nostrils and whose songs offend his ears, because what he wants the Jewish people to do is to establish justice. He wants justice to flow like a mighty stream, like a raging river, irresistible and undivertable.. Instead, the wealthy and powerful lord it over, and cheat, the poor and powerless. The official law sanctions oppression of the losers by the winners.

On the other hand, Yahweh's assessment points out that the Jews are strict in their observance, outwardly, but this does not profit them, because inwardly they are shut down, and so not inwardly following what they ostensibly outwardly observe. They observe it 'ever' but it does not go into them, it does not reach the heart, and thus it cannot work any change on them. They go through religious motions, but do not know what they do.. It leaves them untouched, at the core and in the basis. Thus, their eyes are blind and ears are deaf, despite the fact the eyes are 'ever' seeing, and the ears are 'ever' hearing, in regard to religious things. The eyes never stop reading holy text, the ears never stop listening to holy text, but it avails them nothing, because more inwardly, and more deeply down, the heart is 'callous', so they cannot 'understand with the heart.' Despite always seeing, they do not perceive what is being shown to them; despite always listening, they do not get what is being said to them; they do not understand with the heart because the heart is not given, not open, not available. They have 'hardened their hearts' [Hebrews, 3, 7-9].

This paradox is significant, and still operative today. You can have a heart hardened against God, yet feverishly spend all your time fixed on Scripture, or other guidances and helps of God, seeing such things without perceiving them and listening to such things without comprehending them. Indeed, there is actually an inverse relationship between the heart being hardened against the inner truth of religious things, and the outer fixation on them. This is particularly obvious with fundamentalists. The Biblical words are seized upon, and thrown at other people in a manner both stupid and bullying, because their inner truth is not alive in the heart. A certain rigid outer fidelity to God betokens an inner rejection of all that God is, means, gives, and does. The fanatic loyalists of God are often those whose hearts are far from God. Clinging to the things of God, be it Scripture, Liturgy, or anything else, is the sign that the heart cannot open up to God, but is radically and fundamentally closed against God. The person's callous, and hard, heart reduces the things of God in religion to a formula, a guarantee, a certainty, because the heart is full of fear, and hate, and cannot accept God's 'ways' which grant freedom to the world, and offer love as the only power capable of ending the karmic law operative in the world wherein good or ill actions have inescapable good or ill consequences.

Still, though this problem revealed in Isaiah is extreme in fundamentalists, in an important sense it addresses everybody. Without the heart, we can spend every minute and every day 'ever' seeing, and 'ever' listening, to religious things, but we will not understand them from the heart, and therefore they will not heal us. Indeed, whether they are strictly observed, or laxly observed, makes no difference. Neither conservatives nor liberals, neither patriarchy nor matriarchy, reaches and changes the heart. The old callous heart, the heart hardened against God and therefore also hardened against the neighbour, remains unmoved. You see all the time without perceiving, you listen all the time without hearing, because your heart is not in it.

2,

The two-fold disaster facing the Jews—losing the Old Covenant with Yahweh and thereby losing their whole *raison d'être* as a people – was almost unthinkable, a shock wave of immeasurable proportions.

Suddenly, it was all over.

Because he could offer his people no cheap solace, no phony fantasy escape, Jeremiah became an outcast, repudiated by king, other prophets, priests, and the common folk. Jeremiah was thrown into despair for his people by this coming cataclysm. Yet he accepted the existential 'realism' of the karmic law of good or ill actions having good or ill consequences, and did not believe any supernatural rescue would nullify, 'as you sow, so shall you reap.'

At precisely this lowest ebb, and seemingly out of left field, God reveals to Jeremiah that there will be a New Covenant, and this will be a fresh beginning, a second chance not reduced in power compared with what did not work out, but increased in power. The First Way relied upon trying to remedy the old heart of humanity; the Second Way would function differently because it would rely on God giving a new heart to humanity. Where human faithfulness had decreased, God's faithfulness would increase.

The old conflicted heart, the inherent half-heartedness of humanity, had always pointed to the need for whole heartedness; flashes of that greater heart had always managed to get free from the chains of the lesser heart, but these had always tragically fallen back. Humanity was capable of love, and not capable of love, at once. In the future, humanity would at last be set free in the heart, with a whole heart able to love unconditionally.

The answer is not to go on trying to perfect the old heart of humanity, for 'you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' Rather, the way forward is to bring forth a new heart out of the old heart, a new heart with a new power to do what love always summoned us to do, and we wanted to do, but could not.

This is a rebirth for humanity, since the heart is the core and depth, the entire driving engine, of our being and doing in this world. The second chance is likened to a second birth because whereas before our heart came from flesh

and blood and the Spirit was 'added' to it, so in this coming state of existence our heart will rise up more directly from the hand of the Spirit, and the Spirit will not visit but reside permanently in the heart. Through the heart, the entirety of our humanity, physical, psychic, mental, spiritual, will become alive in the Spirit.

This was foreshadowed in the past, pretastes of it occurred in former times [Psalms, 37,31; 9,10; 76,1; Jeremiah, 7,23; 1 Samuel, 2,12; 3,7; Psalms, 32, 1-2].

However, its complete realisation and its universal spread is new. In the future dispensation, the Spirit and the heart are partners, in a profound way. God's Heart and Passion of Spirit will come to dwell in the human heart and passion of spirit.

All this constitutes "good news."

3,

Four questions loom large. They are differentiations of what is really a seamless poem.

[1] What is the new heart? What is it like? What are the promises God makes to humanity concerning it? Are these promises made only to Jews, or to all people? Do such remarkable pledges of God apply only to humans who are believers, or to everyone, believer or non believer no different?

[2] How will the new heart be given to humanity? Will it be like taking a magic pill, with an instant effect on us? One day we have the old heart, and something divine happens to us and, suddenly, we have the new heart the next day? Or will it come to us more slowly, to give us time to make it our own, time for it to root in us and grow authentically, from deep to surface, from inside to outside?

[3] As the old divided heart bequeathed humanity an intense struggle between greater and lesser hearts, will struggle still figure prominently in the process of acquiring the new heart? If the new heart comes to us quickly, will we go, in one leap, from a struggling to a confident heart? One leap from a heart at war to a peaceable heart? One leap from a fragmented to a whole heart? Will the new heart be some artifice of a divine deus ex machina? If, on the contrary, struggle still is necessary in the way in which the new heart must be born from the old heart, rather than simply replacing it, or just being imposed on top of it, then what is the nature of that struggle? Must it not be, in some important respect, different from the old struggle of the greater heart against the lesser heart, so powerful in David, and the other existential heroes of faith? Or, will it be both similar to the old struggle, and yet different as well?

[4] The New Covenant is Jewish. It is offered to the Jews who will be starting again on its basis after the Babylon Captivity ends [500 BC], thanks to the Persian king Cyrus who overthrows the Babylonian Empire, and frees the Jews to return home. The Old Covenant ends, and the new Covenant begins, somewhere between going into and coming out of the Babylonian Exile. Consequently, the specific question for those who still call themselves religious Jews is this= are they trying to reconstruct the Old Covenant, 2,500 years after the prophets said God had ended it? Or, have they entered the Second Covenant? Are there, in effect, currently two kinds of Judaism, one identified more with trying to shore up and make good the Old Covenant, and the other trying to discover what is really involved in starting afresh through the New Covenant?

It is the Jews seeking the New Covenant who became followers of Yeshua, because for them, he was the Messiah. The point is, the New Covenant needs the Messiah to come, because it operates through his coming. The new heart of humanity will be Messianic in shape, and dynamic.

4,

There are complications..

Such a momentous shift in the whole foundation of humanity, a radical change in the whole meaning and dynamic of being human, and of living and acting from our humanity, cannot be mechanical, or captured in a precise formula. It cannot be rationally reduced to an equation that neatly adds up. It is existential, and thus cannot avoid being messy, ambiguous, ambivalent, long drawn out in time, a leap of faith and a wrestling of heart.

It is a Mystery. It is a Paradox.

Poetic evocations of it are more 'accurate' than theological analyses. We can, as human and as persons, offer testimony of our experience of it, but we cannot turn this into a map and a plan.

It will be full of quirks, surprises, both ordinary and extraordinary things, both primordial things that once were and future things that are not yet; it will mix 'a few laughs' [because humour is part of the Daemonic] with many tears, much sweat, and costly blood.

God's old promises do not cease, but are incorporated into the new promises. The old struggle in the divided heart, for an unimpeded heart, will in a sense continue, yet woven into this will be a new struggle to give birth to the new heart from the very 'soil' of the old heart, in its agonies and ecstasies, in its grief and glory, in its terror and beauty.

For God, the old heart has terrible pathos, it moves his heart, and he will not just throw it away, to arbitrarily create something 'better.' The new brings the old along with it, and resolves the old by the very process, however pained and protracted, in which the new is born from the old. The old becomes, not

the crashing and end of our humanity, but the ground of gestation, the pregnant earth, that – once its mysterious time of 'birth pangs' is over -- will deliver the new humanity.

Hence there is both continuity and discontinuity between the old struggle and the new struggle.. It is not carrying on with the past, business as usual, yet it is not an abrupt break from the past. It brings something from the future to now, and this alters the past's ability to dominate now.

Now is the moment for the change..

5,

There is an issue of the way in which this life shattering and world shaking gift is to be given by God to humanity. There is the linked issue of the way in which humanity is to receive such a gift. The poem is in two sections.

God: The gift is given.

Humanity: The gift is received, wrestled with, suffered for, opposed, accepted, misunderstood and understood, and only 'finally' embraced.

God: the seed is sown, the spark is ignited.

Humanity: the gestation is long, the pregnancy is difficult, at times it seems still born, at other times it is awaited with joy.

God: the deed of giving the gift.

Humanity: the process by which the gift is assimilated, allowed to instigate new things, kindle new flame and bring to fruition new fruit.

God: the gift is given freely, from love, and has creative energies that will work underground long before they surface and come to the fore.

Humanity: the gift is responded to freely, from love, and is made 'one's own' creatively.

The previous way would be for the old heart to continue, and gradually run out of steam, finally all washed up, its venture wrecked. Tragedy would have the final word..

The subsequent way is for that very problem in the old heart to become the good earth, the fertile soil, for the birth of the new heart. The new way is, then, that the old goes through peculiarly searing trials, tests and travails giving birth to the new. The old blocks the new, in one sense, if continued with. In another sense, the old is the necessary matrix for the new.

There remains a conflict, then, over whether the old will do as it always did, or will be taken into a spiritual mystery where its underlying tragedy, its inherent inadequacy and inevitable ruin, become paradoxically the very humus, the dynamic fertilizer, for an almost unbelievable growth of the new out of the old. St Paul had a very hard struggle with this strange new mystery, sometimes understanding it, sometimes misunderstanding it and needing to be corrected

in his own ingrained dualistic tendencies. How can a new strength come out of the old weakness? In the old heart, strength and weakness are separated, and totally inimical. For people who dualistically and moralistically distinguish spirit and flesh, spiritual knowledge and bodily desires, the paradox of what it really means to be 'born again' is entirely misunderstood. St Paul took the correction, and thereafter gloried more in his infirmities than his exalted mystical experiences of heavenly heights, but those who believe the old heart is super-naturally and instantly whisked out from below, so the new heart can be instantly and super-naturally whisked in from above to replace it, have not accepted the lesson St Paul had to learn from the Messiah= "My strength is revealed in weakness."

This is a matter of giving the old heart in its totality to the spiritual mystery that needs it, and paradoxically needs its lesser even more than its greater, to accomplish the new birth. The new strength is revealed 'in' -- right in the midst of -- the old weakness..

The old has one meaning when it is all there is, and goes on its way toward ultimate break down. The old has a very different meaning when it accepts the 'promise' of the new, and becomes caught up in the new journey and battle, the new leap of faith, that arises when the old is proceeding into the new.. We rightly ask, is this possible? Can there be any new, or is the old all there is? Can the new be born from the old? Will the process of passing through the old into the new work, or will it too break down? Am I a fool to trust it? By sticking with the old, at least I am 'safe rather than sorry.' If I go out on a limb for the new, will I be let down? What can I rely on? Can I really rely on promises of God written in some text? Is that enough to take a chance on any second chance for humanity? Or must these promises be delivered in a different way, to have any persuasive effect on me?

These are the anguished existential questions unavoidable on the road out of the old into the new.

There is a gap of time, separating when the divine gift is offered to humanity, and when it is accomplished by bearing fruit and kindling flame in humanity. It is not accomplished, but only begins, in any single human life. It will only be accomplished at the end of all time when it has had the time to work through all human lives.

What alters, dramatically, right now is the destination where one, and all, are going.

It is the mysterious divine gift arriving right 'now' that creates a new 'future.' From now, when we embrace the gift by going with the process in us which its seed and spark sets in motion, everything moves in a new direction.

6,

Something in Judaism cannot make the leap into the new heart, and thus must be jettisoned. Something else in Judaism is involved in that leap, and

thus must be retained. The continuity of the Second Way with the First Way is summed up in David. The discontinuity between the First Way and the Second Way is summed up in Moses.

The bridge from First Way into Second Way is not the Law; it is the struggling of those who may have been less strict in obedience to the Law, but used the heart more, tried to love from the heart, and made continuous errors and were subject to unending falls, as a result. 'To those who love, much is forgiven.' These heroes of existential faith, passionately loving more and passionately sinning more than the Law abiding, are the precursors and prefigurements of the Messiah.

It is of vast importance, then, that in Isaiah [55, 3] God speaks of the New Covenant thus= "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David." The Second Way was never promised to Moses, because it is only to David that God's 'faithful love' can be promised. It would be lost on Moses, for he would think staying within the Law was enough to change the heart. Only David, forced to go farther inside and deeper down into the heart's mystery by the sinning that stalked his attempts at loving, could appreciate that he needed God's faithful love, if his heart was ever to change at the core and in the basis.

The New Covenant cannot build on the people secure in the belief that the Mosaic Law suffices as medicine for the heart. The New Covenant builds on the heart that was in David, and all the other wave tossed and fire scorched strugglers, the men and women of passion, giving birth to that which resolves their struggling, crowning it, blessing it, not in spite of but because of all its vicissitudes, mistakes, and turbulences, which it 'passes through', always getting up again after falling down.

Keeping the Mosaic Law cannot give birth to the new heart. Being a lover like David, even if this risks more failure for the sake of trying more love, is exactly the 'mixed' wheat and tares from which the new heart is coming.

The new heart is born out of the old heart, and this is long drawn out, and a struggle more unbearable and more unendurable than before, yet it honours the struggle that went before, raising it to a new level of intensity and deepening it because of what is at stake in it= the human tragedy and the possibility of its redemption.

There was always something in the human heart God rated highly, God loved deeply, precisely in its struggle, precisely in its hard tussles and deep troubles. This passion, so inhibited in the Law abiding, and so vivid in the existential heroes of faith, is the 'sufferings and raptures of the Spirit' that we must go through if our names are to be written in the Book of Life.

There was always something in the human heart God respected, mourned over, fought for. Even when he was fighting against us, God was fighting for us.

There was always something in the human heart, so pitiful and full of pathos, that moved God's heart so much, he would never give up on it, whatever abject condition it fell into.

In the poor heart, so torn and wracked, so captured by evil yet moved by the Fire of God to love madly, and excessively, beyond all considerations of our limited dust, God first found the worthy servant, the beloved partner, the heart made for the divine heart, the heart that cannot be separated from God by devil, world, nature, or anything above or below, in the past or in the future.

In our sad and pathetic heart, our brave and vulnerable heart, our innocent heart too small for what God puts upon it, God still finds material on which his passion can burn. In our hurt yet willing heart, always willing to have a go for God and for the world, God finds the heart he tested, he proved, he searched out and found deep enough for his own heart.

God makes up the lack, by breathing his Fire into our poor clay.

God will never over rule our freedom. He does not have to. He has our heart.

The devil will never understand the human heart. Its humanness is the flaw in love the Evil One cannot tolerate.

For God, it is the flaw in love that makes everything possible. It is the flawed human heart that has God's faith.

In the turbulent heart of David, passionately sinful and passionately loving, God found something redeemable and redemptive.

David is the ancestor of the Messiah.

7,

Jeremiah [31, 31-32]= "The time is coming, proclaims Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them." [Hosea had likened Yahweh to a loving husband and the Jews to an unfaithful wife.] "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, Yahweh announces."

St Paul quotes in full from Jeremiah [31, 31-34], adding two sentences of his own [Hebrews, 8, 7-13] as commentary= "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people.. By calling this covenant 'new', he has made the first one obsolete.."

This seems to assert not only that the Jews did not 'live up' to the original hesed between God and them, but also that this covenantal relationship was inherently inadequate.

The Old Covenant could throw humanity into heart struggle, which was its real purpose, but of itself, within its own frame of reference, it could not resolve that struggle in a way satisfying to God and fulfilling to humanity.

The Jews were always evolving in their religious consciousness, constantly upended by Yahweh so they could never settle with him and get safe and secure, but were always led by him into new human and divine territory. The 'promised land' was always ahead of them, never behind them. They had to throw off primitive misunderstandings, and outgrow their earlier attempts at [premature] closure, and this was facilitated by being drawn into a wilderness of the Spirit where they are forced to keep struggling, keep journeying and keep battling, toward the real land of the promise= the changed heart of humanity, and the world reclaimed for God by the human heart ruling it as the true king.

The human heart was always the focus in the religion of the Jews, the means and the end.

The New Covenant is the climax of all that change, that shedding of outer skins to become more naked and transparent before God, and hence go deeper into the potentials and problems of the human condition in living in this world.

Paradoxically, losing the Old Covenant 'in order' to awake to the need for a New Covenant long before it is acquired is another crucial step on the wilderness road.

8,

There is another lesson in this story of the ending of the first attempt to draw near to God, and God meeting its failure with the offer of a new approach to the whole problematic situation. We too, like the Jews, will crash and burn. We all betray the first hesed, whatever it was in our case. We are all a whoring human wife who lets down the loving divine husband.

Perhaps the most unexpected paradox is, if you do not crash and burn in your first, and sincere, approach to God, the second chance will never mean anything to you, and you will not enter it.

We must be the Jews only coming out of a first exile to find there is a second, and worse, exile awaiting us further down what we thought was 'the living road.'

This is how it bites. We are well and truly lost, God guides us out, we groove with God for a while, and then it fades, and we come to a second loss of God, far more horrendous than the ignorance of God we were stuck in before. The honeymoon is long gone, the marriage has run out of steam. This is when the New Way becomes necessary, because the Old Way has been failed by us, and also failed us. It got us out of our first exile, but it is powerless to stop us

heading, head-long, for a second exile far more of a debacle than anything previously. The disaster is new, and the remedy will have to be new to take it on.

You are between Egypt and Babylon. If you are happy there, the second beginning will not reach you.

Despite the glory of breaking free from Egypt, your spiritual adventures and strengthening in long desert wanderings, and the paradisiacal moments in a garden of plentiful fruits and spiritual abundance, it has over a longer time span all run out, and now it is suddenly over, and you are an unwilling passenger in the cattle trucks of humanity going to Babylon.

In this state of affairs, where the first relationship to God has crumbled, and it is a tragedy beyond blaming God or you or anyone else, you will cry out 'deep to deep', and only at this juncture will the Second Covenant become relevant. Its crazy promises will be the only thing to penetrate an impenetrable doom.

9,

Jeremiah takes up a very non-Scriptural, almost anti-Biblical, stance concerning the Old Covenant. Its problem, he insists, was because this covenant was written in mere words on flimsy paper. Such verbal marks can be interfered with by later scribes, and revamped to suit all too human concerns, thus falsifying the original written testimony. [This actually happened with the Jewish Bible. Did Jeremiah foresee it?]

In stark contrast with any written Scripture establishing the Old Covenant, the New Covenant will be established by the Spirit of God writing it internally 'on the heart.' There will be no more need for any Bible, for the Spirit of God will lead the heart into 'all truth', and the heart will encounter this directly in its experience of the Spirit, without the need for external guidance from any Sacred Text.

The Hebrew phrase Jeremiah uses is 'Brit Khadashah', for New Covenant, and in at least one place, he deploys a slightly different phrase, 'Bris Chadasha' for New Testament. It is from this passage in Jeremiah that the followers of Yeshua the Mashiach took their collective name. New Way, New Testimony, New Life in God to Redeem history.. Yeshua only once uses this phrase, and doubtless he is quoting from Jeremiah, on the night of the Last Supper, when he speaks of his coming sacrifice on the Cross as "the new covenant in my blood" [Luke, 22, 20; Mathew, 26, 28; Mark, 14, 24]. The wine and bread of Eros are to be mysteriously and sacredly connected to the extinguishing of breath, and shedding of blood, the ultimate descending of fire, on the Cross.

The New Way written in the heart= not a yoke of external discipline nor an instruction of external teaching, a heart singular and divinely impassioned, as opposed to the old divided heart without any permanent divine presence.

In the Old Covenant, the Spirit is 'upon' people, in the New Covenant, the Spirit will be 'in' people [Ezekiel, 36, 26-27].

In the Old Covenant, the Spirit overshadowed the heart 'sometimes', coming and going like a wind that blows where it wants to, without anyone being able to predict what it will do. In the New Covenant, the Spirit will be given 'permanently' [Isaiah, 59, 21]. Temporary Visitation by the Spirit will give way to Permanent Indwelling of the Spirit.

In the Old Covenant, the Spirit was given to lovers of God, 'spiritual people.' In the New Covenant, the Spirit will be given to 'all people' [Joel, 2, 28-29].

In the Old Covenant, the Spirit was given within certain restraints. In the New Covenant, the Spirit will be poured out in 'abundance' [Isaiah, 44, 3-5]. Abundance implies richness, a full communication of gifts, including the most secret aspect of the Spirit as the divinizer of humanity. In the Old Covenant, the Spirit often inspires and empowers people to do the tasks God calls them to accomplish; the Spirit of God facilitates our service, works, deeds, for God. Whilst continuing in the New Covenant as Helper, Encourager, Comforter, Counsellor, the Spirit begins to bring the divine into people in a manner that renders their humanity more aflame with the Godlike.

In the Old Covenant, people could lose God's favour, such that the Spirit was withdrawn from them for a time. In the New Covenant, people are secure in God, because of the indwelling of the Spirit, and they will therefore experience themselves as on solid ground in the kingdom of God, which will be 'an everlasting kingdom' [Daniel, 7, 27].

Since the Holy Spirit is of God, and is God, fully Divine, and not just some chief emanation of God, so in the New Covenant there arises a much more close, divinely fashioned relationship with God, thanks to the Spirit. God is available to people, not hidden but disclosed, immediately accessible, and can be consulted at any time. Dostoyevsky foresaw a coming spiritual age when 'external religion' would be rendered less and less necessary, because people would get food, instruction, wisdom, direct from the Spirit.

The New Covenant is more grounded in the heart, and more 'spiritual' because the Spirit of God will live in the human heart, and render it a vehicle and vessel of the Spirit in the world.

10,

Jeremiah's inspired description of the New Covenant, and the new heart it will forge in humanity, is simply breath taking.

[1] God's Ways will be directly inscribed into your heart= "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" [Jeremiah, 31, 33].

[2] God will be in you= "I will be their God, and they will be my people... I will put my Spirit in you" [Jeremiah, 31, 33, Ezekiel, 36, 27].

[3] You will have personal knowledge of God= "No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh', because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" [Jeremiah, 31, 34].

[4] There will be universal forgiveness of humanity's sins= "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" [Jeremiah, 31, 34].

These four assertions by God in relation to the New Covenant, the giving to humanity of a new heart, are beyond extraordinary. They defy belief! They are 'more than we could have hoped for.' In the hell of dereliction, in the hell of exile from God, exile from our neighbour, exile from our own heart, a revolution in the foundation of the human dilemma suddenly looms up, and reaches us in the very place of 'the worst case scenario.'

--The Spirit will guide the heart into 'truth in the inward parts.' The term 'Law' in this setting works like the term 'Tao' in The Tao Te Ching= it refers to what is, reality without illusion, truth without falsification, fidelity without disloyalty. When 'what is' becomes all there is, then there can be no more falling away, no more division, in heart. That choice, generated by taking unreality seriously alongside reality, is no more.

--As spirituality spreads, so religion will disappear. The Temple as external organisation will pass away, because God will be in each, and shared among all. Other prophecy described this as the end of everything when 'God will be all in all.' Yeshua is referring to it when asked by the woman at the well whether the Jews should worship in the Temple in Samaria or at the Temple in Jerusalem, some Jews arguing for the kosherness of the one, other Jews arguing for the validity of the other. He replies that a time is coming when this kind of question will be irrelevant, since people then will worship 'in Spirit and in truth.'

--There will be no more Bibles, no more Sacred Codes, no more preaching. Each person will know, thus all people will know. Disputes over opinions, doctrines, teachings, will become pointless. Different experiences of the God common to all, and creating their common bond, will not be threatening, but enriching; instead of creating discord, they will create a complex accord. Unity in diversity will be the communal reality.

--All conditionality in God's faithfulness to us disappears; God's love becomes unconditional.

If situated in their real Daemonic context, these four promises reveal the end-point of all the tears, sweat, and blood, all the hellish deeps, of the Daemonic Road. It was all for this. It was worth it, for this.

11,

The version of the New Covenant in Ezekiel [36, 26-27], coming during the Exile in Babylon, echoes that in Jeremiah, for God says to humanity= "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your

heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my promptings.."

[5] We will receive a new heart and a new spirit, a new passion of heart.

[6] The heart of stone, the 'callousness' of heart, will pass away, and a human heart, a 'passible' heart of vulnerability and affectedness, will arise. This heart will be unified, no longer fundamentally conflicted, torn between the two hearts, greater and lesser. Its heart and spirit will go with God instinctively, naturally, immediately, un self-consciously.

[7] God will put his Spirit in our heart, and so God's heart will dwell in our human heart, and God's Fire will be ignited in our human fire. Our passion will burn with a new ardour, a new fervour, a new zeal, of love, never before possible.

This New Way is not the time-limited First Covenant, which like all earthly things wears out and passes away. The New Covenant is eternal. It will govern time, and never run out, to the end of time. This is the Covenant of Redemption.

In Isaiah [61, 8] God says to humanity=

"In my faithfulness I will.. make an everlasting covenant with them."

This echoes exactly Jeremiah [32, 40]= "I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

In Joel [2, 28-29] God says to humanity=

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy."

Clearly, then, the onset of the Second Covenant is not the same as, nor to be confused with, its completion, its final victory.

Much time, much struggle, comes between the former and latter, even in one life, but more especially, for humanity as a whole.

Nowhere in the Jewish Bible does it say that the new heart, and the Spirit of God living in it, will be given only to Jews, or only to believers, or only to the religious, or only to those worthy of it, or only to those who explicitly accept the Messiah through whom it comes; this final and most loving gift of God to humanity is for believers and non-believers no different.

It operates as does the God who sends the rain on both good and evil, it functions as does the God who shines on just and unjust alike.

The gift is for one and for all. It includes everyone, it excludes no one.

12,

Both in the Post Exilic Isaiah, and in the Post Exilic psalms of David, the Messiah becomes the special and necessary instrument through which God will give a new heart to humanity.

The new heart does not come to humanity only 'from' the Spirit, but also 'through' the strange and heart-rending figure of the Messiah. A visible Exemplar, and an invisible Dynamizer, a Heroic Figure and the Divine Power that enables him to go where he must go and to do what he must do= these two work conjointly to bestow and perfect the Messianic Gift in humanity.

It would be imbalanced to stress the Messianic Hero and neglect the Messianic Spirit. It would be equally imbalanced to stress the Messianic Spirit and neglect the Messianic Hero. There is a visible face and deed, there is an invisible power and spiritual impetus, in the Messianic Agency of God.

The Messiah has the intimate relationship with the Spirit we did not have in the old heart but will have in the new heart.

The new heart of humanity will be Messiah-like, and will be filled and enflamed by the Messianic Spirit.

As the Spirit was the divine power necessary to sustain and energize the Messiah, so the newness of this Spirit for humanity is the newness of the power to make us like the Messiah.

What he is, we will become. Where he goes and what he does, we are invited to follow, our footsteps guided by his and moved by the empowering Spirit moving him.

This is why there is a paradox of continuity and discontinuity between the old heart and the new heart. The pre Messianic heart is connected to, yet differs from, the post Messianic heart, as 'anticipation' to 'fulfillment.'

From our creation, the human heart was made in the image, and called to become the likeness, of the Messiah.

13,

In Jewish prophecy, extraordinary claims are made for the Messiah both because he has a new power of Spirit in him, working through his action, and because his heart is more all-encompassing, and more profound, as no heart manifest in humanity, or even revealed of God, ever was before.

The new heart is greater and deeper than the old heart, but that does not mean the old heart entirely lacked greatness and depth. Even Moses suddenly performs one genuinely Messianic Deed of radical self-sacrifice for the sake of redeeming all his people, so unlike his judgemental and impatient

anger, his moralistic condemnation, of their back sliding. But the human tragedy put a limit on how much the old heart could hold and do.

The new heart is therefore not some artificially enhanced perfection, some deus ex machina wholeness immune to the human condition wherein we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made.' The new heart is not some 'higher spiritual purity' above and untouched by our 'lower earthy nature'; rather, it is the fulfillment of what the old heart was always dynamically aiming for but could not reach.

The Messiah redeems what God always deemed fitting for us. His coming is not alien to us, but addresses where we are and what it takes to come through.

Hence, the Messiah answers the age old human question, and age old human dilemma= what is the heart? What is it for? Why do we both want to use it and resist doing so? Why this contradiction?

Consequently, the old heart, in its very humanity of heroism and tragedy, is crucial to the Messiah's Deed 'for' us, and the Spiritual Process it kicks off 'in' us.

The Messiah brings the divine more fully into the human, humanizing the divine. By virtue of this, the Messiah enables the human to be brought more fully into the divine, divinizing the human. The divine-humanity is the end result, and it only comes through the heart. 'Not I, but Christ in me', St Paul said of this.

Yet, by the same token, it cannot be forgotten, nor down played, that there is a serious 'problem' in the old heart, of immemorial age and lodged deeper down. If this were not so, no Messiah would be needed.

The Messiah does not just surgically remove the old heart, and insert the new heart in its place; how bloodless that neat operation would be! It would be quick, easy, and would cost nothing, because the spiritual doctor would not need to get down in the mire with those being helped, nor need to be affected by their painful condition. Some people think it is this straightforward. One day you meet the Messiah, you confess your sins that only he can take away by suffering for them as your proxy, and then wham bang, the next day you have his new Spirit and new heart in fullness. You are fixed. You are home and dry. This transfer is a matter of Spirit blotting out flesh, higher imposing itself on lower, for the lower's 'own good.' It happens immediately, and without strain. A magic wand is waved, and hey presto, all is fine.. This is the Lie about the Messianic Agency told by Satan.

This over simplified scenario is in any case about 'salvation', and does not understand that the Messianic Mystery is not about salvation, but is for the sake of the universal redemption.

St Peter's anguished ups and downs illustrates the human role in actively receiving, personally responding to, the Messianic Mystery; it is initially shown to us by the Messiah enacting it, and then is passed on to us by the Messianic Spirit planting it all the way down in us, and nurturing its slow 'fermentation', crystallisation, growth, so that its spark is being ignited, its fruit is ripening, only as we wrestle with it and come to terms with all it implies.

Thus, consider what Peter had to go through. He was the first to recognise Yeshua as the Messiah. The Spirit facilitated Peter to encounter this, though he is far from fully embracing it, nor fully living it out, nor fully letting it work through his depths and change the ground he stands on. Despite this huge moment made possible for him by the Spirit, Peter still subsequently betrays Yeshua three times.

The moment when you acknowledge Yeshua as the Messiah awaited from olden times, the turning point when you recognise Yeshua as your redeemer, is not the end of your conversion to him, it is just the beginning. The more dramatic and sudden change involved in aiming in a new direction must not be confused with the more day to day, and lengthy, change involved in moving toward that new destination.

Both what the Messiah does to persuade us, to bring us on board, and what we do to get on board, stay with it, see it through all the way, has been compressed and misdescribed by the 'instant salvation' scenario. The answer to, 'are you saved?' is, 'no, I am being redeemed.' The answer to, 'are you born again?' is, 'I am not yet born again, I am in the travails of it, I am playing my part in it-- and that is my love for the Messiah, my assent to his gift. But as Peter went through hells with this lengthy journey and battle, so do I. In any case, my redemption means far less to me than the redemption of humanity. I cannot be redeemed until everyone and everything is redeemed..'

From our side of the divine-human relationship, the task is= to go on being redeemed in your person, and to go on redeeming other persons. How can you recognise those authentically being redeemed? By the fact that they are genuinely redeeming of their fellows, loving them, as the Messiah did, paying for them, as the Messiah did.

But this is ahead of the story.. The instant salvation scenario moves too fast through the narrow straits because it has no faith in what is really happening there.. The Messiah is easy to admire at a distance, but hard to trust, to rely on for life and death, because the straits he plunges into are where we are blocked and lost, in despair of the human venture, and convinced it is already over. The instant salvation phantasy is seemingly attractive because it ascends; its tawdry escape takes us higher up than the narrow straits deeper down. The Messiah descends.

The Messiah goes down to the sticking point, the terrible place that is the deal-breaker with God, and he does there what we cannot, but he does it for us, so we can do it.

This is why he wins us. This is why we love him. We know how much he loves us from how much he will do for us, to what lengths, at cost to himself, he will go for us.

We know what love really is, because we know the bitter taste of having failed it.

14,

You have been told the doctrines too often, and the language in which they are couched is corrupted.

The Messiah can reach you where no one and nothing else can go, but the words used to describe this, in their Satanic flavouring, and salvational misunderstanding, do not touch you. Shouldn't we try to express the key points more in a poetry that might open 'closed' eyes, vivify 'dull' ears, and will be 'understood' in the heart?

There are four things in play here, if you need to differentiate the seamless poem..

The dynamic, on the Messiah's side, is two-fold= [i] there is a Showing by the Hero; and [ii] there is a Planting in us by the Spirit of what he shows.

The dynamic, on the human side, is two-fold= [iii] there is a Winning of us over to the Hero's deed, such that we follow it in our action; and [iv] by virtue of assenting to and following the deed, a Process of death and rebirth, our being born again, is kick started and gets going at our core and in our basis.

But the order in which these factors unfold is that they trigger each other in a kind of dance. We need more poetry to amplify the dynamic inter-weaving of the four factors.

[1] FIRST FACTOR in the Poem of Redemption-- The Messiah's Action

The Messiah is an Example of the new heart he wants to pass on to us. He lives it out, he enacts it in the world. In him, it is on show, all the time. We are witnesses of how it works, how it proceeds.

[2] SECOND FACTOR in the Poem of Redemption-- *Won Over To The Messiah's Action*

We turn over a new leaf in the heart. We cannot change the old heart dominating in us, but by following the new heart exemplified in the Hero, we signal a willingness to change, an assent to the process of change wherever it will take us outwardly and whatever it will take us through inwardly.

'Repenting' means not just turning away from sin, but more importantly, turning toward the Messianic Mystery as the new goal for the heart to aim at.

We are won over to following the Messiah only by love. His love for us evokes our love for him. Anything you love ends up going inside you. This Leading Exemplification of real heart goes right into us, and goes deep.

We only learn from those we love. We love those who can love. Who should we trust and rely on? Someone whose heart is true, strong, loyal, just, merciful; someone who can love. The Messiah is love. The Messiah enacts love. This surprises, shocks, throws us. We warm to it, yet we must test it. How constant will it be? Will it remain with me not just at my best, but also in my worst? Will it abide with me, even when I have abandoned myself? When I am in hell, will it come there, to drag me out, kicking and screaming?

[3] THIRD FACTOR in the Poem of Redemption-- *Planting the Seed and Spark In Us*

The Messiah is like the sower, and the fate of the new heart he gives us is the seed that is sown in ground either receptive to, or hardened against, it. In the parable, Yeshua points to three different ways in which the seed fails to take= [a] It falls by the wayside, has no root, and withers in the sun. This means the Messiah's gift does not get into the soil of our earthiness, it does not affect the place where we weep and hope; we see it indifferently, or hear about it dryly. It does not affect the heart because we keep our heart back. [b] The birds get it, and snatch it away. This refers to evil spirits, and their machinations, in trying to debunk the Messiah, or in various ways, intimidate and break any inclination in us to follow the Messiah. [c] Thistles choke it. This refers to worldly cares, busy busy obsessions that distract us from what really matters. [d] The 'good soil' is not a matter of being Law abiding, like Moses tried and failed, rather it means we witness the Messiah's deeds and story from the heart, and realise that this Heroism is addressed to our broken heart, is precisely geared to the human tragedy, and therefore we offer the old heart, greater and lesser, to the Messiah's new heart. At first, he will be an ideal to us, far off. Gradually, as his seed and spark work in us through the Spirit's planting and harvesting activity 'below the neck', so we will draw closer to the new heart. It will cease being ideal, and will become real.

[4] FOURTH FACTOR in the Poem of Redemption-- *Dying and Being Reborn Through the Spirit*

By turning over a new leaf in the heart, aiming differently, we co-operate with a process driven by the Spirit in which two things happen at once, one more visible, the other more invisible. On the one hand, we do what we can, come as far as we can, to follow the lead of the Hero, and thereby learn more about his new heart by the living and enacting of it personally; on the other hand, surprising factors of the new heart will come to birth in us from within and deeper down, such that we begin to be like our master. We become -- little by little, and sometimes with dramatic sudden shifts -- the Messianic Hero on Fire with the Messianic Spirit. As he was the Hero for us, so we become the Hero for others, empowered and acting by the Chivalrous Spirit at work in his works, his doing, his deed.

A strange paradox takes over at just this point, in this process.

The more we accept our own tragedy and realise we need the Messianic Hero to win the victory that can change it, so the more we accept the tragedy in other people and are moved to do whatever we can, small or large, so that the victory passed on to us is passed on to them in their need.

The dance of these 4 steps is the real process of being 'born again.' This is how we move from the First Covenant into the Second Covenant.

15,

The account of the Messianic Mystery is incomplete unless we honour the meaning and dynamic of the 'victory' the Messiah 'wins', and wins 'universally' for all of humanity. For it is really this mysterious victory in the narrow straights where we never go, except when we unavoidably fall into in our deepest hells, that wins us over to the Messiah, and sets in motion our change of heart.

The Messiah is challenged to win the new heart for humanity in the very cauldron faced by the old heart. Only by this victorious deed can he win us to his example, persuade us to his cause. Why?

By suffering our defeat to reach us in it, yet overcoming it from within its core and at its basis, he makes defeat the catalyst for, the door to, victory.

He 'passes through' the hell we cannot get free of, but are imprisoned in, and drags us along with him.

That the Messiah does this not for his glorification, but for ours, is what tells. He is humbled in, and emptied of, divinity, in order to give something of divinity ultimately transfiguring to us, in the very abyss of hell where we need it most. He decreases, that we can increase.

This is why criminals, mad persons, the broken, will enter the new kingdom of the Messiah before the Law abiding. The sinners know they need drastic change of heart, because they cannot contain, inhibit, skate over, the problem, as if the Law provided sufficient discipline to keep it under wraps. The sinners have failed in all self-control, and they have become the problem. They know they are beggars before God. They know they need a new heart, a new beginning.

Those who cannot strive, or whose strivings have come to naught= these realise they need a new kind of help, and will accept it when it comes.

16,

The victory the Messiah wins for our sake in hellish deeps 'wins' us to his New Action and New Spirit, his New Way. Why?

Because it does not take the problem away from us, but gives us the new example and new power of a way through it that we can work with and prove ourselves, given the help it offers us. To be helped back to our feet, and left to walk, is help that shows faith in us, blesses us, accepts us at our lowest ebb and believes in our coming through to the other side.

This help neither abandons us nor patronizes us. It goes with us, it suffers and pays for what is too much for us, yet it grafts us to that suffering and paying so that, once grafted on, we can suffer and pay what before was beyond us.

The key point in all this is love.

Love has to 'win' the heart. The human heart cannot be compelled to love. Winning our reduced capacity to love to a fuller capacity to love has to be done through a Deed, and in a Spirit, of Love. The fuller love cannot force the reduced love. That would be unloving. Love cannot depart from loving in how it tackles the absence of love.

This is why telling people they must accept the Messiah, or they will end up in hell, is another plank in the Satanic Lie. No one responds to that, except those who are fearful. 'Perfect love casts out fear', St John realised from his own experience of the Messiah.

God leaves us free, and therefore nominally every human being is at liberty to say a final No, rather than any final Yes, to the Messianic Mystery. But this overlooks how loving the Messianic Agency is, and ignores the deeper conversation of 'deep cries to deep' between the human heart and God. 'With God all things are possible.' To try to turn the yes and no in the human heart towards the Messianic Turning Point into a rational and moral formula, you're 'in' if you say yes, you're 'out' if you say no, misunderstands the whole winning of humanity by the Messiah, in and through the heart. Are you saved or damned by virtue of your yes or no to the Messiah? The question operates on a false premise, and is irrelevant. Salvation is exclusionary, redemption is all inclusive. The Messiah is the Redeemer.

We cannot be persuaded by threats that tell us to get on board, or else. That conditionality is false to the new heart which excludes no one, and includes everyone, and will 'in the end' find the way to bring all into love, however much they once stood outside it.

Yet 'all inclusive' cannot itself ignore human freedom, by becoming an automatic formula. You do not force the heart into the shape you want it to assume, nor do you tolerate the heart as a lax indifference to its fate. Winning the heart is a third way beyond cramping it out of fear of what it might get up to, or not caring whatever it gets up to. Patriarchy is not love, Matriarchy is not love. Winning the heart is neither conservatism nor liberalism.

Winning the heart is the action of love. Only this action can reach, persuade, and change the heart.

If the Messiah wins us by love, we cannot win others by violent compulsion or by bland non interference that is dis-engaged.

If our heart is not changed by the Messianic Mystery, we are better advised not to try to influence anyone else by mere words talking about it. If we do not know it by the way it won us over in heart, and changed the heart, then we literally have not a clue what we are saying to people about Yeshua as the Messiah. Spinning words round what we have not gone through merely adds our own confusion to the confusion of other people.

For the many people only luke warm in living and acting from the heart, deceived by normality and trapped in convention, asleep and sleep walking, it is probably death that mercifully bestows the second chance.

At our death, all pretenses are swept away, and our heart nakedly will confront the Messiah's heart. In this direct communication, will the Messiah's golden heart still fail to get through to the person's shrunken heart? Or will they see, hear, and understand, for the first time?

The new heart is given to an old situation where the old heart came unstuck. The new heart proves itself in the old situation, by what it can give, lose, sacrifice, and yet come through. This is what persuades us it can work in us. The Redeemer must go through a horrendous test, a terrible trial, to win redemption for all of humanity.

This, however, is just where he goes and just what he does. He goes to the place of dereliction where the old heart cannot be fixed, and it is just here that the new heart is fought for, and won.

We go where the Messiah went and do what the Messiah did, joined to him, wound to wound. As he suffered for us, so we suffer for others. This is being redeemed and redeeming.

17,

The Messianic Mystery ends all previous conditionality by which God responds to us. It is unconditional love.

For only unconditional love is 'faithful' to the end, accepting everything, bearing everything, paying for everything, by suffering for its sake.

It is suffering for what is loved that ends conditionality.

Such is the Messiah's Reversal. Such is Yeshua's Sacrifice on the Cross.

This is why it is revealed to John in the Apocalypse – which ends the Old and New Scriptures, and draws heavily on Ezekiel and Daniel's apocalyptic visions of the 'last times' -- that Yeshua the Messiah has 'opened a door into heaven that cannot be closed.'

18,

What the Redeemer accomplishes will be 'passed on', since it is for all of humanity [Revelation, 5, 1-10]. It renders humanity one tribe, one body, one complex unity-in-diversity, in a New Age and New Kingdom of Universal Love, with no insiders or outsiders, no Greek or Jew, no Male or Female. The 'politics of identity' -- my group against your group -- fades away; no privileged versus dispossessed, no valid versus invalid. Diversity -- at all levels from the personal, through the social, to the cultural -- will be free to proliferate as never before, yet will not be a grounds for conflict, rivalry, dehumanizing the other..

Universal Forgiveness will be the driving force of this new reality of radical comradeship among all peoples. God will not remember our sins. We will not remember each other's sins.

If I am hurt by someone's failure to love, I can bear the suffering redemptively, forgiving them, and refusing to make their inability to love a reason for ejecting them from the circle of love. By how we bear suffering for others, so we keep a door into the circle permanently, and unconditionally, open to them.

This is why the Redeemer is 'the first fruit of many.' He opens a door previously shut, and as a result, many will pass through. In the end, all will pass through because it remains open.

He opens the door, but he calls and blesses other persons to carry on this redemptive work with him, so that at the finishing of it, the work will have been not the Messiah's alone, but the Messiah in alliance with the rest of humanity. He is the king, but we are made kingly by taking on his Way, Truth, and Life. He and you, he and me, he and us, we all do it together. Humans are redeemed, but they redeem fellow humans. The love is passed around. Everybody can have an entry into it.

The Messiah is the centre, but what he passes on has a ripple effect, first passing to a few who want it, then passing from them to a few more who can receive it, and thereafter to more and more people.

'Passing it on' happens in the mysterious and potent sphere 'between' people, or what Martin Buber termed the 'inter-human.' It happens through the dynamics of inter-personal relationship. If a person has Authenticated something given to them, and it glows out of their person, their being, their action, giving them Authoritativeness, that will provoke interest in others who encounter them. If we see someone has genuinely been helped to move in a direction we respect, then we are curious to investigate whether it could help us shift.

If, however, a person has an inauthentic relation to what supposedly helped them, this too will radiate from them. When it is fear, hate, arrogance, tyranny,

that is emanating from their person, this gives the game away. We can see for ourselves that what they claim was a help simply dehumanised them, making them less, not more, human.. Nor does it make any difference if someone is an official of some religion, or has a 'high role' in its hierarchy of power, for if nothing real has changed them, then assuming a kosher identity externally will not hide the internal lack. The role becomes geared not to serving people, but to granting status, prestige, privilege, the floating of an enviable identity, so that ordinary people will look up to and defer to it.. Nor are people persuaded by argument, especially when it is driven and usually slanted by an egoic agenda of 'I am right and you are wrong', which results in a refusal to listen to the other who is different from the self. Arguing degenerates into gutter dogs barking at each other, to claim pissing rights over turf. This is monologue pretending to be dialogue. Nor does the holding of good 'principles' really change the person espousing them, nor anyone else, since aspiration toward the ideal often masks an unwillingness to fully confront what is real, and enter the wrestlings involved in change at this level. Idealists tend to float ten feet above the ground, rendering 'love, truth, beauty, goodness' an unobtainable star in the sky, allowing cynics to seize the ground and run it for their unprincipled ends. The 'moral high ground' is ineffective, precisely because it is too high up..

Finally, claims of authority on any basis, Scripture, Church, Tradition, cut no ice. No healing medicine touches anyone except through the Mystery of the Spirit, by whom, and in whom, it comes to life. If it is alive in anyone, they never resort to its authority to oppress or impress other people. Authority means nothing. Authenticating something in the living of it, and attaining Authoritativeness only from walking that difficult road, matters supremely.

If someone has moved from unloving, or half loving, to be wholly loving, or moving towards it, then 'what they are on' can raise a real question in those on the receiving end of it. This is mission= loving as we were loved, and especially, loving the loveless-- suffering, carrying, paying for, the loveless. How we react to 'the least of these' is the key criterion of whether the Messianic Mystery has spoken to us, gone into us, is coming to birth in us. Preaching at people is not mission. Thrusting Bible, Liturgical Cup, Traditional Lore, at people is not mission. Religious Imperialism is not mission; trying to tyrannize people in other religious pathways to give up their tradition and join yours, because theirs is wrong and yours is right, is doing the devil's work.

You -- if changed for real -- are the mission, in your person, being, action. By your way of life, by your relating to people and the world, you can convey the Heroism, and Power of Spirit, that made a difference to you.

To die for people, as an ultimate sacrifice of love, means accepting their rejection of the sacrifice in its truest and deepest meaning. There would be no real Cross, no real sacrifice, if this dying proclaimed to those for whom it was made, 'if you do not accept this sacrifice for you, then you are damned.' Such a threat is Satanic; it was never said by the Jewish Messiah during the entire ordeal described in the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, nor was it said by Yeshua

dying on the Cross. The reality is, Yeshua said to God about his killers, who are all of us, 'forgive them, they know not what they do.'

The test of the authenticity of our sacrifice for love, be it little or ultimate, is that those to whom it is given, those for whom it is done, do not have to accept it, understand it for what it is. They can, on the contrary, belittle it, reject it, misunderstand it entirely. Love has to make a sacrifice because those on the receiving end of it cannot love, and in their state of ignorance and tragedy concerning love, it is inevitable that they will mock and disparage, sneer at, the heroism of love's deed, as well as denying it is of any relevance to them.

Look at St Paul in this regard. As a zealot and Pharisee, a Mosaic not Davidic Jew, he engaged in exactly this sneering, and denial, even holding the coats for those fundamentalist Satanic religious people who stoned the first martyr for the Messiah. St Paul was an accessory to murder, in the name of religious correctness, veracity, kosherness, authority-- and all the rest of the Satanic trash that disfigures religion. People insist on 'validity versus non-validity', turning religion merely into a club with those inside and those outside. Sometimes the club keeps to itself, but all too often it goes on a crusade, killing everyone who disagrees with it. You would think members of the club have got 'god' in their back pocket. They are 'justified', and so can do anything they want to non members of the club, including murder, theft, disrespect, hypocrisy. If you are justified by 'god', you can get up to anything you like, and still feel arrogantly superior to those you are wronging.. Look at what the whites did to the Indians in America, in the name of Christ. Look at the real nastiness that fundamentalists in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or any other religion, spew out onto all those who dare to disagree with them. They are devils who think any amount of evil doing to other people is fine and dandy, because it is done under the cover that God made them angels. Well, God did not do that.. They are presuming with God, presuming to know things about this life and the world that no one knows.. What we don't know far exceeds anything 'revealed' to us.

By its fruit you will know the tree, Yeshua asserted. This is the only 'bona fides' that counts. By the rotten fruits of any supposedly religious club, we know the tree is rotten, whatever spurious religious validations, and excuses, are made for it..

Paul had a change of heart when he met Yeshua on the road to Damascus; he left the Mosaic Law and entered the Davidic 'troubled heart', and from the latter he could be shown by the Spirit that the Messiah had come in Yeshua. Before this life changing 'heart attack', Paul would have failed to understand, even remotely, what the human heart is, what the Messiah who assumes its problem is, much less realising that Yeshua was this long awaited and hoped for Redeemer. If someone as religiously hard hearted as Paul once was can change, then cannot every religious fanatic change? Paul certainly did [though those who abuse his letters want to read back into his words the same narrowness he shed].

But many people cannot change.. That is all right. The door remains open, and does not close, depending on whether people come through it or not. Faith trusts we will all get through it together 'in the end.' In the meantime, the lovers 'bear' the non-loving..

You make your Deed, in the power of Spirit, and let it fall as it may. This is Warrior Way. You do not give way to the lesser heart; but you do not insist that the greater heart be praised and recognised by people, nor even 'approved as valid' by God. The blessing of God is in the action because it is 'called', and the blessing is in the Spirit who empowers, inspires, lives in, such action.

The Messiah as Action calls to us, and when we reply with our action, so the Spirit steps in to complete what we are lacking.

We are not alone in this passing on. Others help us, as we help them. This too is a declaration that the Messianic Gift is not for the individual, nor for a small group of individuals; it is for everyone. If it could only include a few, and lost the rest, it would have failed to take hold. Its failure would be a final tragedy, more terrible than the tragedy it seeks to undo and overturn.

This does not mean that redemption neglects the unique person, skimming over their particularity in order to gather in the collective. Rather, it means that personal redemption is not the ultimate aim; the ultimate aim is the redemption of all persons, past, present, future, and therefore the personal redemption matters less in terms of how far it gets and matters more in terms of dynamising the universal redemption. Did I block it? Did I move it along? A sign of being redeemed is to stop thinking of yourself, your future, and begin caring about the future of all humanity. If you ended up fine, and the rest of humanity were lost, would you be fine with that? If so, you may be saying 'Lord, Lord' to the Messiah, but what he is saying to you is, 'I do not know you.'

My redemption is bound up with the redemption of others; we help and hinder one another in a patch-work quilt being woven, over time, which God alone can see.. If I did one small redemptive deed with my life that frees another person to do a bigger deed, or several such deeds, in their life, and this person in turn freed several others in their lives to do more crucial redemptive actions, then redemption would be 'on track.'

Many people cooperate with it in no religion, not knowing they do. Many people cooperate with it in other religions, not knowing it is there; Dogen is more redemptive than Buddha. Some people who explicitly say they cooperate with it in reality are betraying it, as Yahweh told the Pre Exilic Jews in regard to the Old Covenant. Some people explicitly following it are 'in process' with it, an unfinished 'work in progress', trying to be true to it, having accepted its invitation, but still turning over the new leaf and still being reborn.. These true followers of the Messianic Mystery know full well they are still learning, still growing, still discovering the meaning and power of the reality, life-long.. You will know them by their humility. Nor do they hector

other people with doctrines, trying to convert them. Argumentative debates, threats, nonsensically inflated claims of instant, magical, supernatural, bloodless, transformation, convince no one with a heart that is sincere. Such things are like the snake oil sold by the hucksters; the buyers should know better if they had a lick of sense, but already being deceived, they seek more deception. They are like the people who believe the obviously fake promises in letters telling them they will be granted huge amounts of money if they send back the coupon, and of course be sure to spend your money on the company's product to guarantee you will get the 'free' prize!

The callous, and hard hearted, need religious pap, because they cannot trust the heart to understand what is harder, truer, deeper..

God never 'punishes' love for being doctrinally wrong, and 'rewards' any kind of religious correctness that risks little or no love.. I may have the 'wrong' religion, or 'no religion', yet if I love, God is faithful and is with me in my genuine endeavour. If you follow a religion but, by virtue of that, close down on love, it is better you had never known of that religion.. For some people, religion is the road to hell paved with good intentions. For such Satanic religion, the over-turning of its certainty, guarantee, over simplification, childish demand for rescue, coldness, bullying, is the only redemption available to it.

What would redemption be to Oliver Cromwell? Or to Augustine of Hippo? Or Anselm? Or Calvin? For the callous hearted who are religious, only the breaking of the heart will make a change.

This is why St Paul enumerates all manner of advanced spiritual states and charismatic talents, and says, 'if I have all of them and have no love, I am nothing.' That rejects both Satanic judgementalism that shrivels us, and Luciferian flattery that inflates us.

19,

It is clear that Yeshua went on loving those who crucified and mocked him without retaliation; indeed, he did not resist humanity's freedom to entirely reject his deed of love and punish him for it.

It follows that people are free to approach the Messianic Mystery, or be repulsed by it, or simply ignore it..

The few who do go with the New Way do so for all the rest who do not go with it, and that is why the witness of these few is crucial. If they cannot be redeemed, and thus cannot redeem, their testimony to the Event that supposedly changes everything and everyone is null and void. A specially heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of those who follow the New Way. If it does not live in them, and does not pour out of them to all and sundry, both generously [Eros], and sacrificially [Daemonic], then their 'witnessing' to the Event that they claim is profound enough and dynamic enough to 'change the world' will have been in vain. If we are only loving conditionally, like the

rest of humanity, demanding an equivalent return on our generosity, and demanding thanks or assent in our sacrifice, then we betray the Unconditional Love revealed in the Messiah.

Humans always distort even inspired things, and that is why everything is two sided, with a fuller or truncated version of itself. Over time what started well often deteriorates, and must be renewed. Human failure among the followers of the Messianic Mystery is to be expected, and works as valid testimony as well, since brokenness brings us closer to the Messiah and the Messianic Spirit than worldly success, or even spiritual attainment. We can befriend people in hell, from our hell. Much that will be redemptive, over time, can come from those who cannot do much of anything for other people or the world, but can 'confess' the hell that unites all of us. This can serve to kill off all religious clubs. We come together humbly, because we are all in deep need. This is why in the early gatherings of the followers of Yeshua, there was communal and public confession of failings.

We should never attend these gatherings in our 'Sunday best' clothes. If we cannot literally come naked, then we should come in the rags that confess to each other we are all bums, all derelicts, all the mad, all the criminal, all the outcast, all the broken. This is witness to each other, and those in the world, that the human tragedy needs redeeming, and nothing else can go far enough to work.. There is no 'fix' for us, worldly or spiritual.

Gathering round the Messiah is not only a group of 'repenting sinners', but more important, a group of 'tragic failures.' We have all sinned, but more vital, we have all failed to rise to the calling of love we were created, and indeed 'designed', to carry forward and realise in the bitter arena of the world. Some people disguise this better than others. Some people handle this better than others, making less fuss and inflicting it less on others, though to do this, they swallow it and inflict it on themselves. A few people, markedly standing out from the many, drag themselves more upright, and act heroically, becoming that very rare breed among us, the lovers, the people of heart, yet even the most heroic fall before the end. It is not just that they have feet of clay, and are tarnished 'like everybody else'; nor is it even that those who love more have bigger flaws. All that may be the case. None the less, the flaw in love farther within and deeper down finally creates the 'tragic hero' whose fall evokes pathos and pity in all who behold it.

There is a flaw in love which, in our brokenness, we witness to, honestly, openly, inclusively.

Yet, there is a problem in witness to the Messiah if this becomes truly betrayed, distorted in its very structure, from the ground up. The issue is this= if we never love redemptively, we cannot witness to a love that redeems us. Yes, in our abjectness of doing nothing, in our suffering, we can authentically witness-- but how many followers of Yeshua are doing even that much? Like everyone else, they prefer to 'put their best foot forward.'

However, if we manifest Satan in the name of Christ; or if we manifest human follies, vanities, power lusts, avarice, and all the other sins, in the name of Christ; if we resort to action, but in this positive action never manifest the Messianic, then that becomes serious. For that undermines any and all basis for witnessing to the Messianic Mystery. Certainly, we can all point to heroes of faith we love and admire because they genuinely 'stepped up.' Thank God for them, even if few in number. They witness that it is possible to follow the Messianic Mystery authentically, and be changed by it.

We cannot pretend to people we are not sinners, exactly like them; we cannot pretend to people we are not tragic, exactly like them. These 'faults' must be on show, so that anything redeeming our worst case scenario, anything true enough, deep enough, spiritually powerful enough, to engage our nadir, is also seen. But, what if all that people see in the followers of the Messiah is the same old same old? What then?

The issue is not what this dire witness says about fallible human beings. The issue is what this witness says about the Messianic Mystery supposedly able to change fallible human beings.

Hence how followers of the Messianic Mystery relate to each other is a serious problem, for if their community is as divided and status driven as every other human grouping, then 'nothing has happened' to change them. They testify there is no Messiah, and Messianic Spirit, in their midst.

Sure, as crazed and murderous soldiers like those in so many other armies, the Crusaders can go to the Holy Land, raping and pillaging and slaughtering, not just Muslims in Jerusalem, but also Greek Christians in Constantinople. Why not? Neither the 'heathen' Muslims, nor the 'alien' Eastern Christians, belong to the Western Christian religious club. So, the Crusaders just do what people who think they are 'blessed to do evil' always do, no different from anyone else. But they do all this 'normal evil' in the name of Christ. Now this is different. It is not just a question that the Crusading soldiers are sinners like everyone, or tragic fallen heroes like everyone, because they claim to have been affected by the Messiah and the Messianic Spirit.. Their action bears eloquent testimony that they have not even been touched, much less affected, by the Messiah. What do these 'knights of God' really serve? They serve Satan and their own callous heart. To 'claim' they serve the Messianic in the action they perform is a vast betrayal, a real distortion, of all it means.

If you want to go on doing the old action, as always, do not make the new claim. Only make the new claim if your action can prove it.

Yes, religions have always had their fair share of people betraying the whole spirit. But what happens when this betrayal happens repeatedly, in the leaders as well as in those on the ground? Worse, what happens when this betrayal gets built in as a 'design fault' in the very manner by which the supposed witness is conducted?

How much conditional love, and human inability to love, masquerading as love can the religion of Love afford, before all witness to it disappears?

This is the point we have reached at the present moment. Every tradition of witness to the Messianic Event has, over time, claimed to be acting from the Messianic capacity to change the human condition, but none of these traditions have manifested that change to the world, and thus all of the traditions have not much dented what is 'worldly' about the world. The Satanic, the humanly sinful, the impotent and indifferent, has too often been the only witness manifested to anyone who cares to look at it, and now a days people have, understandably, stopped even bothering to look. A Native elder once said to me, "I never saw any heart in Christianity." Is this because this Oglala wise person was blind, or because in fact the Christianity witnessed to him by the Americans acting in Christ's name was indeed always heartless? How many American Christians died to defend the Native Indians being raped and pillaged? How many Natives died because of Christians raping and pillaging? Do the maths.

Better to say to people, 'I am an ordinary schmuck, and what I do to you I do out of my schmuckness', rather than saying, 'I follow Christ, and he sanctions me to steal your land, and murder your men and women, your old people and children, because you do not follow his Way.'

The Messianic Way needs witnesses to its strange power to change the old heart into a new heart, a new heart even different to the greater of the old heart, much less different to the lesser of the old heart. If all the witnesses are liars, if they manifest nothing but the old heart, mostly at its worst rather than its best, then what they are really declaring through their witness is that the Messiah has not yet come! If the Messianic Event had really occurred, people would be different.. Some people, at least, would be different.

Can you blame the Jews who believe the Messiah is yet to come? Their expectations of the immediate and far reaching improvement the Messiah would bring are doubtless exaggerated, and confuse the conversion point that begins redemption with the end point that completes redemption. There is a gap between start and finish, even in one life, and one life is not enough time to reach the climax of redemption's road, except as foreshadowing. All of time is needed for it to work.. As creation was a risk taken by God, so this reclaiming of the human tragedy is also a risk. It is all there is, the last throw of the dice. There is no other way out, above, or around, the human tragedy. This is the way through, and there is no other way on offer..

Given this, then the question becomes, has anything started to change fundamentally for all humanity since Yeshua came as the Messiah? If it is too harsh to say nothing has changed, perhaps it is fair to ask how much has changed? Some advance on the redemption road has happened. It is patchy, and episodic, and there is plenty of reason to fear the Messianic Watershed in History has not happened, or if it did happen, it already has stalled..

If we grow faint hearted, and luke warm, it will fail. The traditions of Christianity would seem to fear people of grief and fire, the kings, the warriors, the prophets, the existential sages, the holy fools, the sacred clowns, the broken down, because they are disturbers of the peace, the restless who cannot be pacified by the worldly or sacred feast because they know the hour is late and the task calling them to arms is not settled. The renewal of Christianity will be down to such Daemonic people. The ante will go up, just to stay in the game, and the people of heart passion who are lovers of the Messiah, and filled with the Messianic Spirit, will have to step up. The Heroic always act for everyone, and encourage everyone to the same.

It is necessary to show to people the extreme Holiness of the Fire of Love, putting no conditions on the give-away, even if this cannot happen very frequently; yet, it is equally important, more frequently, to manifest the truthful and acute wrestlings to reach the New Heroism of Messianic Love. Thus, the person converted to the Messianic does not really know the extent and meaning of what they have embraced. It has not had time yet to work on them, nor they to work with it. The real 'converting' of what we were into what we will become is long drawn out in time and intense in struggle, with reverses, defeats, retreats, as well as break-throughs, epiphanies, new acceptance and deeper understanding, more complete commitment. Like the Jews we go into periods of back sliding, and falling down, yet as with the Jews we also get up, even on shaky feet, and return to the fray. We come again.. We keep at it, and this makes us humble, rather than proud about what we can achieve on our own -- or proud about what God will magically bestow upon us; not finding the road easy, but failing on it and keeping going, will make us modest rather than arrogant, over bearing, and vain. We will be grateful for friends and allies, whose help and fellowship we need to keep trucking; we will accept comrades wherever we find them, not necessarily among our families and fraternities, our political, economic, and religious 'affiliation' groups, but among those who are different, alien, other..

The Messiah eventually makes allies out of all humans, and therefore the Messianic Spirit is not confined by our human boundaries, which protect our individual, social, cultural, identity. The Spirit brings together and mixes together very different peoples and very different traditions in the common cause of redeeming the world. What does it matter if different people and different traditions call this differently, or do this differently? Or have no concept of doing it, yet are doing it all the same? The Spirit moves all these different threads of life to move in a more mysterious, less defined, way, so as to weave together the patch-work quilt of universal redemption.

Many different flames of love, many different creative engines of love, unite round the Heroic Messianic Lover, implicitly or explicitly, and the Messianic Spirit weaves many things together providentially. Because redemption includes everyone and everything, everyone and everything has a stake in its outcome and contributes to that.

Time is essential, and cannot be rushed to some premature apocalyptic ending, because humanity is invited to do the active work of redemption, and

not just occupy the receptive role of the redeemed. The unredeemed push those being redeemed into deep waters, and harsh fires, confronting them starkly with whether they love Christ enough to 'spend' their love for those stuck in the hells of lovelessness, as he did.

20,

The real nature of the Messianic Road is depicted by Yeshua in the 8 Beatitudes. These sayings are entirely Daemonic. The meaning in each is immense. They are the only sign posts we have, in a real sense.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.. Blessed are those who mourn.. Blessed are those who are meek.. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.. Blessed are the merciful.. Blessed are the pure in heart.. Blessed are the peacemakers.. Blessed are they who are persecuted and slandered for the sake of the Messiah..

These are redemptive, each one and all taken together. Spending a life time working on just one of these mysteries of the New Way would be enough.

Through these 8 spiritual realities, the promises of the Second Covenant, already seeded and sparked, will start bearing fruit and igniting fire.

The mysteries of the future, the end, will begin to emerge in the present. It may only be in flashes, yet that builds momentum. Pressure builds from the four corners, until there is a critical mass; then, suddenly, the tipping point is reached. As my friend John Gibbens puts it, for everyone there is a 'turning in the road.'

The fruit of the new way= a new heart in which God dwells, in every person.

The flame of the new way= a new passion through which God acts, towards and for the world.

To know God directly, without any external intermediary; and to act for God from the heart, without any external prompting.

Is this happening now?

Will it happen more in the future?

There are plenty of reasons to be uncheerful. Things are desperate.

Evil is on the increase.. Yet, precisely because of that, a more creative and profound love steps up to counter it. What we cannot dredge up is Daemonically forced out of us, by the reality we cannot escape. Evil destroys us, for real; precisely because of that, evil profits us, because there can be no more empty posturing, no more identity building and identity polishing. The unknown heart in us, the unfathomable passion, has to step up.

And it will.

It already is stepping up, and it will do more in the future, as the options run out, and the alternatives get more severe.

Time is against us. Time is running out. For that very reason, time is on our side, because both our brokenness and heroism are all that is left in the situation as it gets harsher, and more dangerous.

As all the doors closed in the room of no exit for Yeshua, so as this happens to us we will discover something strange. The human heart, and the Messianic Mystery that redeems it, are at their most dangerous, unpredictable, and potent, when time has run out and it is all over bar the shouting.

For the Messiah and for us, it only really begins at the last gasp.

Everything is truly lost.

Everything is truly in hand.

No doctrine, nothing religious. Only the risk. My heart, your heart, our heart, risking his heart.

The dragon awakening is the heart of God.

21,

Yeshua said he had to go for the Spirit to come. This did not mean there was no Spirit in the world before him; Shamanic peoples, and the Jewish people, knew the Ruach from experience. What it means is that the Exemplar is too powerful whilst present to us; the Exemplar must withdraw in order that his seed and spark can be developed in us, in our own way, according to our own response to it, by the working of the Spirit. We lose the Messiah, as actual figure, and are left with the Spirit recreating all he means in each and among all. This is not an imitation of Christ, it is a genuine becoming Christlike in as many different ways as there are different persons with different callings and different gifts.

The Spirit is the wild card in the deck.

Redemption is the Way of Spirit. It is a hard road; and a road not marked out but inherently mysterious.

The Wilderness Road is where we have only the Spirit to guide us. The Spirit takes us into danger because at our most exposed we become more open, and permeable, to the impetus of Spirit.

On the Wilderness Road we will lose our way.. Foe will become friend, and friend will become foe. This is a Road of Reversal. Things are often the

converse of what they seem= up is down, down is up; in is out, out is in. Bad is good because it pushes you beyond the envelope, and good is bad because it keeps you secure within the frame. Reversal is the ultimate of 'holy insecurity.' When we know nothing, we are advancing; when we think we know something, we are stuck.

The holy people are not plaster cast saints. They just kept going.. Neither worldliness, the devil, their own weakness, could stop them from just dragging themselves along, to stay in the hunt. In spite of the limitations of their life, they saw it through to the end. They did not bail out prematurely, turning back.

A Greek Orthodox priest once pointed out that the place we are headed is truly new, and thus even past illuminations, visions, revelations, cannot prepare us for what we will become, and what the world will mean to us, as we go toward the Messianic Mystery. Previous signs and wonders may have hinted, but they are not sufficient to ready us, to prepare us, for what is changing. We need to go with that change into the Unknown.

The constant is only the Messianic Deed far out in front of us, at the unseeable and inconceivable end of the line, and the Messianic Spirit leading us as we walk toward it, changing us as we go, step by step.

The Redemption Road, for the whole of our life, is in this 'in between' where it is, as a friend once said, 'half won, half lost, half only just beginning.' This is full of existential tension. One day it seems to be going well, the next day it gets stuck in hell; on a third day there could be a turnaround, or hell could seem unending. You do not know. You have no guarantee, apart from the Messiah going through the narrow straits ahead of you. But, even if he has, and if you love him and will follow his steps, will this render certain you will pass through those same straits when they put the bite on you? You are free to love-- but that means you are free to walk away all along this road. You could give up on it even at the eleventh hour, even if you had come far. Such freedom is terrifying. It makes us dizzy, as Kierkegaard said. We could grow faint in heart, and keel over..

The Biblical injunction to 'fear not', urges us to risk it all for the Messianic rebirth promised to each and to all, not just those living now but those who will live in the future, and even those stretching back into the past. This rebirth is not accomplished yet, not in any individual life, not in the lives of the many generations of humans. Thus we must not fear but keep faith with the rebirth, despite the hiatus between its start and end. We have the taste of the new heart, but it is not in us fully yet, nor in many others. We must trust it will be, to go so far out on an edge, with the Messianic Calling.

Those whose fear demands the religious path be thought of as neat and tidy, clearly demarcated, protected in certainty, guaranteed like signing on the dotted line of a legal document, are not walking this road.

Faith, in this gap between beginning and end, is trust 'we can all get there, finally.' It is trust in the Redeemer, trust in the Redemptive Spirit, yet more than that, it also has to trust the long drawn out redemptive process at work in humanity; it has to trust that it can work in each, and work in all, over the long run. As the redemptive process grows stronger in the person, so their faith in its working in other people grows stronger. None the less, this is a lot to trust. To have faith in the Messianic Mystery means putting our trust in a divinely promised and humanly hoped for Possible Outcome for everything and everyone; yet since there can be no certainty and no guarantee that this ending will triumph, faith means staking our life on it now, right in the middle of the journey and battle, which could go either way. By putting faith in it, we add our strength to its cause, we put our back to the wheel and push. Still, faith is a step into a numinous dark, faith trusts and risks the Unknown.

It takes a peculiar faith to keep faith with this long and arduous journey and battle of humanity. Faith is what we live for, and what we will die for. Will we live and die for this?

Moreover, according to St Paul, and many others can report the same, our struggle to keep faith with the redemptive process offered by the Redeemer's Deed and Power of Spirit to us and others, is actually a fight with hidden and powerful spiritual evil. It is a race run uphill against terrific spiritual opposition. In this battle and journey of our own redemption which becomes our willingness and passion to battle and journey for the redemption of others, we will clash with a purer evil, both worldly and spiritual. This is why Paul speaks of the good fight he has fought [1 Timothy, 6, 12; 2 Timothy, 4, 7], the race he has finished, the faith he has kept. In Ephesians [6, 11-12], Paul urges us to warriorhood= "Put on the full armour of God.. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this wicked world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The old warrior way is probably closest to the new way of faith in redemption being able to come through, 'whatever it takes' and 'against all the odds.' We are fighting for an unseen truth of love, against a hidden enemy. To have trust in something half here, half still far off, half concrete and half mysterious, is no 'walk in the park.'

The devil bet against God and humanity in the story of Job, and did not prevail. We should not, out of fear and laziness, overestimate the devil's potency to stop redemption in its tracks.

In the New Kingdom of the New Age, the 8th Day of creation that never ends, there will be a 'new heaven and new earth', for all the former things will have passed away, and this means there is no longer eternal hell and eternal heaven eternally divided. Their division actually began to end on the Cross of Christ, through the Reversal foretold in the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah, and when Redemption is done, so that division is done.

In the Old Covenant, only God can forgive. In the New Covenant, the Messiah forgives all of humanity through his suffering of their hell. This is a

new heaven, and it ends hell by undercutting its basis in the heart. Love proves deeper than hell. When joined to this New Action and this New Power of Spirit, humans can love and forgive humans. That is what is eternal.

Love is beyond heaven and hell. Everything we do for love, in the New Covenant, is beyond heaven and hell. Not letting anyone go down, but going down with them to bring them back, is love.

Those in the Old Covenant, but calling themselves followers of the Messiah, get none of this, because they neither see, nor hear, nor understand, from the heart. The Spirit has not come to their heart.

There is nothing more misleading than the old callous, stone, heart wrapping itself up in meaningless words of the Bible it cannot understand because its heart remains unchanged, untouched, by the New Way. Its heart is firmly entrenched in the Old Way, at its most fearful and constricted.

Fundamentalism is the religion of the devils in hell who want humanity to join them eternally. They believe in 'heaven versus hell', because nothing of the true human heart, in its redeemability, reaches them in their heartless place of judgement, duality, damnation. They distort the divine Fire, because they resist its love, and so for them, the Fire becomes hellish.

If we resist the Fire of Love, it is 'hell' to us.

We can fall into various profoundly deep existential hells, but we remain reachable by redemption because we have a human heart.

22,

It is fruitless to try to 'identify' the followers of the Messiah.

You tell me who are those who walk this redemptive second way. Are they Jews? Some.. Are they Christians? A few.. Are they anybody who has gone deeper in the heart, even if they have no words or pictures to convey the unexpected and even impossible second chance they found glowing there under the ashes? Certainly.. There are people of various religions, and of no religion, on the Redemption Road. All of these are a minority, the leaven in the bread, the salt in the food.

As a whole, humanity has not yet really tried out the New Covenant of Redemption.

Yet that should not stop any one of us on this Wilderness Road now.

In the future, as Dostoyevsky foresaw, and the Russian Orthodox priest, Alexander Men predicted, the Second Way of Redemption, hardly yet begun, will begin in earnest, and advance rapidly.

That the dynamic, the movement, the change, is in this direction, whatever the contrary forces, is what matters.

It is where we are headed.

Redemption is love upping its ante, in God, and through his Messiah, in humanity.

The Second Covenant asks of us-- will you stay in the game, and play it out to the absolute end, when the ante goes up?

There are plenty of reasons to despair, for most of the evidence suggests that among human beings love doesn't work..

Reasons to be cheerful boil down essentially to two=

[1] The Messiah puts the Spirit in us, by his deed. The Spirit brings the Messiah alive in us, by our deed.

[2] What the Messiah initiates for us, the Spirit brings to completion in us.

The Spirit is 'groaning' within our depths, not just passively waiting but actively pushing for the old heart of humanity to give birth to the new human heart.

The way forward is simple, like the advert for hard candy= 'suck it and see.'

Use the heart, and see where that takes you.

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship Yahweh the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him will worship in spirit and truth."
[John, 4, 23-24]

"May God give you the power through his Spirit.. so that Christ may live in your hearts.. and then, planted and rooted in love, you will.. be able to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine." [Paul, Ephesians, 3, 17-20]

"Spirit of God
The breath of creation is yours

Spirit of God
The groans of the world are yours

Spirit of God
The wonder of communion is yours

Spirit of God
The fire of love is yours

And we are filled
And we are filled”

[Celtic]

NOTES IN THE LIFE

Getting through the mess is the only 'proof' of religion.

Existential discourse is a commentary on lived life, life lived by persons. It is thus a commentary on story-telling.. A kind of second order, or meta, storytelling. The life lived by the person tells a story, and in commenting on it, another story is told, speaking of the edges, gaps, abysses, latent in the primal story.

Theology, even if mystical [Eastern], not rational [Western], is too abstracted out of life.. Life is ambiguous and a mess. God does not design for us 'the best of all possible worlds', but almost the converse. God dumps us in the worst of all possible worlds, yet is with us [if we allow it] in the worst.. Thus by struggle, doubts, clashes, lapses and recovery from lapses, we proceed through the moral and existential maze.. It is the journey and battle 'through' that matters, because that decides where we get to in the end. Where we get to in the end, as a living being, as a personhood of heart with will and freedom, is the key thing. You could say only arriving there 'proves', even 'articulates' much less 'explains', what theology is 'really talking about' [too abstractly, too cleaned up, too shorn of life's chaos].

So, as ideals are no good because they cannot be incarnated, and romantic tales too imaginative are no good because they pretty up far too much the actual struggle on the ground over an abyss, so theology is no help in 'getting through.' Wisdom teachings, like those from the sages, are helpful because they are 'notes in the life', notes about the struggle, talking of traps and temptations on the road itself. Living is our hunt for, and tussle with, the God whose "understanding is inscrutable" [Isaiah, 40, 28]. Any religion, but Christianity especially, has to prove itself on the road, or the devil has won the gamble he made with Yahweh in The Book of Job. Theology gives a spurious impression of victory before it is actually won in [and for] this world; and it is a fair fight, because it might not be won..

This existential commentary, delving, investigating stories deeply and by this creating another story out of them, the story at their heart, the story fought for, suffered for, paid for by blood, sweat, and tears -- this is Jewish. This militates against gracious and subtle Greek Orthodox theology no less than all the cramped and mean theologies of the West.

And of course, it goes without saying, that it is where we all get to, as a togetherness, that is truly key. That too is Jewish.

APOPHATIC AND CATAPHATIC= The Error of the Philosopher's Intellectualist Mysticism

1,

The 'apophatic' path, the way of negation, the *via negativa*, is the vital starting place for any relationship with the divine mystery. There are plenty of things unseen, unknown, not conceived, a puzzle to intellect, a mystery to the contemplative perceptiveness of philosophical reason, in the cosmos, in the earth, in the world.. But the divine mystery is not on any analogy with these, not akin to any of them, not like anything discovered or undiscovered in human experience. We cannot by searching, whether 'taking thought' or 'not taking thought', find what God is or is not. God is the Creator of all that is, thus God is beyond all that is, and cannot be reduced to the terms of reference of anything that is.

To deny that any concept, any image, any word, or likeness to any form whether sensible [picked up by the senses] or intelligible [conceived of by the mind], can be applied to God is both true of the radical mysteriousness of divinity, and has vital implications for human existence.. It grounds us in the sharp realisation of the absolute and radical Otherness of God. This prevents idolatry, and stops the human tendency to grant authority to anything less than God even if it purports to be 'from God', 'sanctioned by God', 'in the name of God.' Giving glory only to the Creator precludes giving an inappropriate glory to mystics, priests, monarchs, sacred texts, sacred ikons, and the like.. It challenges many illnesses of human misappropriation of God. These always have as their premise that the person knows God all too easily and all too well..

The apophatic path also tells us in a very practical sense that the gap between Uncreated and created cannot be crossed by the creature acting from their own intelligence, virtue, ascetic disciplines or spiritual yogas. Only the Uncreated can give a 'leg up' to the created, or more ultimately, 'descend' to them. The implication is, we cannot by any human effort, intellectual, moral, physical, reach 'up' to God. To get ready for God's approach, by all such efforts, is a different kettle of fish entirely.

The apophatic stance is a harsh medicine for= worship of religious idols, kowtowing to religious authoritarianism, and impossible attempts to cross a gap that only God crosses-- or not, as the case may be.

"History, including the history of Christianity, is littered with caricatures of God, like so many mental idols which have led people to either cruelty or to atheism. ..how ..could people have accepted a God who seemed to them worse than themselves, or at least inferior to the highest demands of ..conscience? ..People never cease to project on to God their individual and collective obsessions, so that they can ..make use of him. But they ought to understand that God cannot be apprehended from without, as if he were an

object, for with him there is no outside; nor can the Creator be set side by side with the creature. 'In him we live and move and have our being' [Acts, 17, 28].. But, enclosed as we are within ourselves and also enclosed 'in his hand', we can know him only if he freely establishes with us a relationship..” [Oliver Clement, 'Roots of Christian Mysticism', 1993, p 26].”

“Every concept formed by the intellect in an attempt to comprehend and circumscribe the divine nature can succeed only in fashioning an idol, not in making God known” [Gregory of Nyssa, 'Life of Moses'; in Clement, p 27].

The apophatic awareness, or consciousness, of the Reality of God is paradoxical. The created rests in the Creator, but the created cannot contain the Creator. Thus the Uncreated cannot be reduced to anything whatever derived from the created.

The apophatic, or 'negative', approach to the divine mystery starts from the apprehension that the Uncreated is radically unlike everything in creation, cosmos, nature, world, be it vast or minute, formed or chaotic, visible or invisible, high or low, broad or narrow, bright or dark, spoken or mute, and thus cannot be known by human beings.

The Uncreated is equally beyond anything we can imagine, speculate, hypothesize, fantasize, invent, create..

The Living God, the Real God, is radically *different* from everything that exists, and is therefore radically *unique*.

God is *incomparable*= nothing can be likened to God in the entire creation, top to bottom, one end to the other end; there can be no analogies for what God is or is not derived from the entire created realm, be it physical, mental, spiritual, be it visibly tangible, invisibly subtle, purely mysterious.

God is *not commensurable*= has no common measure or standard of comparison; the divine mystery is *utterly disproportionate*, as one writer on Maimonides [circa 1100 AD] puts it.

A Jewish friend, exasperated with listening to all the careful nuancings of metaphysics, spluttered, 'God is God', and then lapsed into silence. The exasperation, the statement pulled out at full stretch, the silence which followed-- this is as good as any of the religious philosophers, and better than most. We get it..

Thus God is not 'being or non-being', not 'nothing or not-nothing', not 'fullness' and not 'emptiness'.. God is God, and 'neither negation nor affirmation' gets any closer to that Absolute Reality beyond all relative realities. "Nothing compares to you" can only be sung to God.

2,

There is a danger in not starting with the apophatic way.

But there is a worse danger in staying with it, and not moving through its complete paradox. The danger is especially evident in the abstracted, or highly mentalised people, who cannot love. For them, there is a secret appeal in a more obscure reduction of the divine mystery than any of the gross types of idolatry and authoritarianism which they easily attack= the reduction of God to an abstract nothing, an abstract zero, an abstract 'ungraspable' non-entity. This error appeals to those who cannot love because in this way God cannot affect them, touch them, move them, in the heart; rather, God remains safely at a great distance, because the Realness of God is only signified by an unformed and impossible to formulate something or nothing in the head.

Hence, given this abstract 'negative of all positive statements, beliefs, imaginings' remains confined to the person's head, its exact articulation matters not one jot. It can be the Nobodaddy – 'nobody's daddy' of William Blake – or the Supreme Being beyond being but at the pinnacle of all being, or the Ground of Being undergirding everything, or the Neo Platonic One, beyond everything yet engulfing it as drops of water dissolved in an ocean.. You can play this game with keenly sophisticated Platonic terminology, Jewish terminology, Christian terminology, Zen Buddhist terminology, and it makes no difference whatever. One abstract 'non-thing of any sort whatever' is as good as another.. Western Buddhists are among the worst offenders in this abstraction away from things confused as spiritual, or even as enlightenment, because of the huge axe they have to grind against the idolatrous and authoritarian mono-theism they want to escape.

The 'abstract' becomes a refuge for a mere machination of the mind; instead of a humble acknowledgement of what cannot be grasped by the mind, the abstract 'absence' of anything positive is confused with the metaphysical, the transcendent, the spiritual. This is a sterile Void= a Void constituted by the mind. The person remains untouched by the Great Mystery beyond the mind.

For, the full paradox is that you cannot confine God in any way, including making God stay beyond everything. God does not! God overflows his limitlessness to touch, enter, affect, the limited. He does not stand on his dignity. The transcendent becomes immanent. It is important to not conflate the transcendent with the immanent, for if we do that, we lose much of the meaning of the dynamism of the transcendent becoming immanent. Apophaticism really means= it is the transcendent which becomes immanent.

If God were just the Radically Other, so what? The Creator might have produced the creation and gone away, leaving it to its devices.. In which case, then we are better off ceasing to 'mark' or 'note' God in any way, even apophatically. For, apophaticism is in danger of establishing a God so unlike everything created and human, this Nobody's Daddy is wholly irrelevant.

The apophatic path, rightly walked, is mystical, not philosophical. It encounters the Divine Mystery. It viscerally registers that meeting with an inarticulate shout of joy, amazing! Or with hushed silence and rapt

attentiveness, like a sudden and sharp intake of breath. Or, with tears impossible to explain..

When apophaticism is proper mysticism, not philosophical religiosity, then in meeting the divine mystery, the person confronts the full paradox, and passes through it, from the apophatic to the cataphatic, from negative to positive, from absence to presence, because this is the dynamic we encounter in God. God is 'moving' like this, and so when we really meet God, we are set into motion in this same manner.

Thanks to the negative starting point, all our poetic analogies, stories, likenesses of human and created things to God, are purged, purified, cleansed. They take on a terrible power, and beautiful poetry. The God of no name is the source, the origin, of the names of all beings, things, creatures, persons. This God is both hidden and revealed by all the beings, things, creatures, persons, he has created out of love for them. The mystery is masked. The mystery is expressed. Everything conceals and reveals its Creator at once; that is the full paradox, and that is the valid symbolism of Uncreated and created= the Void that is not Form and the Void that is Form, the Silence that cannot be Spoken and the Silence that is Speaking.

God is beyond yet that very beyond overflows, exceeds itself, reaches out to what it creates out of love. "The inexhaustible nature of transcendence is expressed in the profusion of creatures. The universe is the first Bible" [Clement, p 27].

"That God is, and that he is everywhere and fills the universe, is known by the [spirit beings] and those who have purified themselves.. But where, how, and what he is, not one amongst all beings knows" [Diadochus of Photike; in Clement, p 59].

"The world is still the vast theophany honoured by the religions of antiquity" [Clement, p 29].

The divine mystery sends out multiple 'rays' of that mysteriousness. "Each ray.. is a divine Name, and these Names are innumerable. ..the [Greek] Fathers [of Christianity] also identify them with the 'powers' or the 'energies' that spring from the unapproachable nature of God" [Clement, p 28]. We do not know God 'in essence', as divinity is in and of itself. We know God 'in the energies' of divinity that ecstatically go out of God, go beyond the beyond of God, to enter and penetrate the creation; we know God in the powers of divinity that uphold, nourish, inspire, guide, illumine, strengthen, all beings, human and non-human. All being is held in God= immersed in the creativity and loving activity of God that is always moving toward it. "The energies, the powers, then become so many modes of the divine presence. ..Thus every creature names.. in its own peculiar fashion, the divine Names" [Clement, pp 28-29].

"O thou who art beyond all,
..No name describes thee.

What mind can grasp thee?
No intellect conceives thee.
Thou only art inexpressible.
All that is spoken comes forth from thee.
All creatures praise thee,
Those that speak and those that are dumb.
The universal longing, the groaning of creation tends toward thee.
Everything that exists prays to thee.
In thee alone all things dwell.
Thou art the purpose of every creature.
Thou art unique.
Thou art each one and art not any.
Thou art not a single creature, nor art thou the sum of creatures;
All names are thine, how shall I address thee,
Who alone cannot be named?
Have mercy..”

[Gregory Nazianzen; in Clement, p 28]

These names of the created naming him who cannot be named are the ‘no words songs’ sung in everything as a prayer to the Creator, meeting the love that made them with a love of gratitude, thanksgiving, praise, and also, sighing, groaning, hurting. I cannot know you. I can encounter you because you relate to me. I can question your coming and goings, when the heart wonders why they are as they are, in what this means for what we are..

It is God’s love that passes from the beyond to the immersed. Love links apophatic and cataphatic, holding them in tension, striking the exact balance between when to remain silent about that of which we cannot speak, and when the poetry of the words that acknowledge love is needed, and urgent, and cries out, irrepressibly, despite the risk. He who loves more risks more to love more. He does not hold back, out of the fear of the God exalted above everything. He rushes in, not only to thank but also to battle with the God who humbles himself, strips himself, ultimately empties himself, to make and consolidate relationship with us.

We cannot know God outside this relationship he initiates. We can know God in the relationship he initiates, by freely responding to it, and vowing to remain true to it, keeping faith with it, no matter what.

This is why the Bible claims that we can only see, hear, understand, the matters revealed by God with the heart.

We were created by God for a purpose we cannot fathom.. Only God can disclose it to us. It would seem to require we give ourself wholly, as God is given to us.

3,

“The mystery that is beyond God himself,

the Ineffable,
that gives its name to everything,
is complete affirmation, complete negation,
beyond all affirmation and all negation.”

[Dionysus; in Clement, p 31]

“This simultaneous [rejection] of affirmation and negation means that God’s transcendence eludes our very idea of transcendence. God transcends his own transcendence, so that he may not be lost in abstract nothingness, but may give himself” [Clement, p 31].

God is hidden, yet given. Hidden from us= given to us. It is the hidden that comes to us, and giving itself to us, creates in us that longing in each and every created thing, being, creature, person, for seeking God. It is the dynamic propulsion, movement, hurt, in us. We want to know, we have to know, the Unknowable.

Not knowing God “will awake in our soul the longing to know him further; this longing will lay bare our soul; this nakedness will make us like God” [Gregory Nazianzen; in Clement, pp 32-33].

Mystical Unknowing does not mean not knowing anything whatever.. It means seeking that which we cannot know as abstraction, as object, in its core as it is in itself. But it means chasing a numinous beast in a hunt that is driven from the cells singing in our blood. It means an unknowing that is the only possible knowing of love. It means entering in with what has entered us. For, it is the Heart of God that bridges the ontological gap between God’s hiddenness and givenness. For the heart, which we cannot know from the outside, moves outside its inside, and approaches us in dynamic movement, and in a host of differing kinds of action, and this hidden heart given to us penetrates our heart, and we know it ‘heart to heart.’

This is more than face to face meeting. Face to face is meeting in the Light.

This is heart to heart meeting. Heart to heart is meeting in the Fire.

God is the ultimate pain in the heart. The deepest passion is forged in this furnace.

It is more than the Refiner’s Fire, purging and strengthening the heart. It is the wound of God’s heart in the human heart.

In this wound, we uncover the lineaments, the paths, the sinews, the beating heart beat, of the Fire seeping into us, like blood from a wound.

In this wound, why God created us as a heart, and what the heart is called to, will be unhidden.

Then we know as we are known.

We know the love that loved us before we existed, and we know the existence hidden in, and given to, love.

We know the Fire.

4,

God is inaccessible, yet God is “a springing forth, a creative and redemptive leap outside his essence, ..to communicate [the divine energies] to creatures by personal actions, because the living God is a God who acts” [Clement, pp 31-32].

Jewish tradition gives God different names on the basis of different actions. This takes the form, ‘when God does this, he is called by such a name; when God does that, he is called by another name.’ The Jewish Bible is full of such Names of God that are at the same time the Deeds of God that strike to the heart of the matter of human existence.

Action is Fire. Action comes from the Heart.

“..fire can be experienced everywhere.. It shines with a total brilliance and at the same time its presence is secret, being unknown outside of the material that is making it visible. ..it gives itself to anyone who approaches it: it restores [people] to life with its quickening warmth.. It is active, powerful, everywhere present and invisible. Neglected, it seems as if it did not exist. But as a result of the friction which is a kind of prayer it suddenly appears, leaps up, and spreads all around” [Dionysus; in Clement, p 33].

“God, the unfathomed deep beyond all, takes us to himself, as a father his child’ [Clement, p 199].

In Greek, there are two roots in the word for God, which is ‘theos’= *theira* -- to found, and *theein* -- to leap.

God’s love founds and God’s love leaps. What does it found? Where does it leap?

It Founds the radical heart to heart of Fire, in a vow of blood.

It Leaps into the Abyss where the human heart is defunct, to regenerate its power in passion to stand firm and go beyond all limit, by paying the price with blood.

“This is the sign by which to recognise those who have arrived at perfection: even if they were to throw themselves into the fire ten times a day for the sake of humanity, they would not be satisfied. That is what Moses says to God: ‘Now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin – [even] if [this means] blotting my name out of the book [of life] which thou hast written’ [Exodus, 32, 32]. That is

also what.. the apostle Paul says: 'I could wish that I.. were accursed.. for the sake of my brethren' [Romans, 9, 3]..” [Isaac of Nineveh; in Clement, p 275].

Love stands firm in passion.

Love leaps beyond all measure in passion.

The vow has been made, the price has been paid.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CONCRETE AND PARTICULAR 'EXISTENT'

1,

Existentialism – though it is never an 'ism' but an attitude, a slant -- goes against one of the most deeply lodged Western prejudices= that truth needs to be formulated. This goes back to Plato. For Plato laid down the foundations for the modern belief that truth must always be stated 'positively' in his teaching on ontology [what exists, what is]. Why so?

Plato attributed ultimate being to ideas of things, rather than the things themselves. The famous dictum 'essence precedes existence' is most relevant to the Platonic Forms that pre-exist everything, such that the metaphysical idea is the starting point, and only thereafter does it take on flesh and become an actually existing physical entity. Its 'essence' contains all defining features of the idea; thus the idea is a universal category covering all possible instances of it, and such instances are merely specific, or local, variations on its general theme. As Christos Yannaras ['Elements of Faith', 1991, p 34] points out= "...what exists before the concrete existence is a logical necessity, certain principles, or ideas, to which each concrete existent is subject... a world of ideas which contain the 'models' of every existence" must precede and define their actual existence.

Against this metaphysical idealism, Yannaras argues for the ontological priority of personhood. It is not the ideal essence which precedes and defines the existent, but it is the concrete person who constitutes the initial possibility of existence, the beginning possibility of being. The person precedes ideas, the person precedes essences.. Hence existentialism repeats the old Jewish, and anti-Platonic, mantra= 'existence before essence.'

Existence is not just the manifestation of a pre-existing essence. Existing has its own reality, which is stranger, and more at risk. Eternal Forms do not become manifest as particular existing things/beings/persons. The uniqueness, distinctive and unrepeatable, of the actually existing person precedes the categorical and schematic scaffolding of 'pure' ideas.

But modern science repeats Plato's idealism, simply transferring it from the metaphysical to the physicalist. Science puts ideal laws above, or before, concrete existence, and as with Plato, sees the concrete existent thing/being/person only as a particular and local 'variation' on the Invariant Rule.

This way of seeing kills the particular's living mystery, its otherness and ultimate value as a unique, concrete, immediate, thing, or being, or person.

Science, as a modern Platonism, has what is primary and what is secondary in reverse order. The living mystery of the particular, the local, the specific,

the here and now, the immediate= this is the event of life, experienced and related with, on the ground.

Categorical schemes, rules, universals and generalities= these are secondary, just a framework, but not the real life.

2,

Yannaras [pp 149-150] singles out another facet of this scientised Platonism. People nowadays in the West reckon truth can be individually possessed and thus made into an object which can be dominated.

“For truth to be transformed into an object of possession, it must have a given and definite character, it must be identified with its formulation, with the ‘letter’ of its formulation-- the truth must find in its formulation its immutable boundaries. The identification with the definitive formulation objectifies the truth: it makes it an object which the comprehension can possess and rule. And insistence on orthodoxy, on the first and authentic objectification, is the fullest possession of the truth.”

Against this 'cataphatic' approach which favours positive formulation, Yannaras offers the 'apophatic', or negative, approach to the truth that is lived, from the ground, by the concrete, unique and unrepeatable, person in relationship with other persons. He says of this= “The ‘apophaticism’ of.. truth excludes any objectified understanding.. whatsoever. The truth is not exhausted in its formulation, the formulation is simply a boundary or border of truth, a ‘garment’ or ‘guard’ of truth. ..Therefore knowledge of the truth is not attained by comprehension of the formulations, but with the sharing of the event of truth, in the truth of life, in the immediacy of experience” [p 150].

Sharing in the event and experience of truth, not insistence on the correctness of theoretical formulations, is how truth operates between persons. Sharing the event of truth in life precedes any formulations. Knowledge is verified as an event of communion. Heraclitus= “Everything that we share, we know to be true; what we have that is peculiar to us, we know to be false.”

Yannaras comments= “Knowledge is only proved true when it is verified by common experience – only when by its announcement we share with others, understand and are understood, are in tune with the common experiential.. [wisdom]” [p 153].

Yannaras' apophaticism identifies truth with life, and life with its only bearer= the person. Intellectual schemes cannot be substituted for the immediacy of experience and the emergent truth of relationship.

Existence -- the practical and existential terrain -- is marked by what Yannaras speaks of as 'the dynamic indeterminacy of life.' This is another description of the terrain in which all truly 'on the ground' activity operates.

However, just as we fraught human beings change love into a commodity easy to get, so too we constantly “substitute the dynamic indeterminacy of life with schemata and definitive models of life” [p 154]. Then “the uniqueness of life is understood by its classification in the objectivity of the general case-- the verification of experience is assured by refuge in its schematic definition” [pp 154-155].

Yannaras puts his finger on the net result= “The defining of truth assures the effective objectivity of knowledge and constitutes a kind of law of truth” [p 155].

“...truth is identified with its formulation and knowledge with the individual understanding of this formulation. The truth is separated from the dynamic of life, it is identified with the concept, with right reasoning. Right reasoning replaces the dynamic indeterminacy of life; ...logic is raised to a final authority, either in the form of moral rules or as a command of social and political practice” [p 155].

Yannaras concludes= "Apophaticism means our refusal to exhaust knowledge of the truth in its formulation. The formulation [seeks to] ...distinguish.. it from every.. falsification of it. ..At the same time though, this formulation neither replaces nor exhausts the knowledge of the truth, which remains experiential and practical, a way of life and not a theoretical construction" [p 17].

A way of life is a path to maturity, both in the work and in the one doing the work. Going deeper into the world, and going deeper into oneself, in the relationship of world and self, bears its own fruit of living and doing. This fruit is not fame and fortune, but the ripening of world and of self, in collaboration.

The same is so in regard to the Mystery of God. We draw near to the divine reality by means of a way of life, not by means of a way of thinking. A way of life includes every organic function of growth and maturity..

Yannaras sums up [p 14]= if a relationship is loving, you have faith in what you relate to, be it mother or father, or the earth itself. This bond does not require logical proofs or theoretical securities, unless the relationship has itself been disturbed. Only then do the arguments of the mind try to substitute for the reality of life.

DOSTOYEVSKY= The New Spirit of Humanity Emerging From The 'Crisis of Modernity'

PRELUDE

Dostoyevsky is the artist of passion who has searched out the depths of God and the depths of humanity. Nicholas Berdyaev's book on the Russian novelist ['Dostoyevsky', New American Library, 1974] is probably the most useful, because it comprehends the existential temper of Dostoyevsky's quest for faith, and realises that the confrontation with the Daemonic marks the deeper meaning of modernity, and the new spirit of humanity that will come out of the ashes of modernity. Modernity's struggle with the loss of faith, the loss of God, the loss of morality, the loss of all the old cosmic beauties and doctrinal certainties, will eventually forge in suffering and fire a new Christianity of heart depth. In the heart depth of humanity the Spirit will plant the heart depth of God.

But to reach this new spirituality, we must embrace the 'hell' that has characterised modernity's loss of faith in anything-- and not try to run 'back' to the old beauties and certainties which we leaned on in simpler -- less ambivalent, less ambiguous -- ages. Time is the vehicle of the Daemonic; there is no going back to what once was in unawareness-- there is only going forward, by taking on the hellishness modernity has unleashed, towards the greater holiness that will arise out of precisely all the complications, reversals, unknowns, pains, of destruction, of 'the old ways'..

Dostoyevsky is opposed, equally, to humanism and the older way of religion.. With the old ways of religion gone, and never to return, the only hope is that humanity is moving forward towards a very different kind of religion, a new religion shorn of 'religiosity', a religion inherent to the heart and its passion. This is the doing of the Daemonic.

1,

"To Dostoyevsky is due the striking phrase that 'beauty will save the world.' He knew nothing higher than beauty, it is the supreme expression of ontological perfection, divine.." [pp 58-59].

This is pure Platonism so far.. But the next is Daemonic=

"..but [beauty] is also antinomian, divided, impassioned, terrifying; it has not the godlike calm of the Platonic idea but is scorching, variable, full of tragic conflict" [p 59].

Beauty becomes full of antimonies when it leaves the great round of the cosmic whole and the impersonal flow of nature, to become part of the human struggle with time, the world, history.

“Beauty did not appear to him in the cosmic order, on the divine plane, but through man, and so it shares the eternal unrest of mankind and is borne along the stream of Heraclitus” [p 59].

One of Dostoyevsky’s characters in ‘The Brothers Karamazov’ says, “God makes nothing but riddles.” And again= “Beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there, and the battlefield is the human heart” [p 59].

2,

Berdyaev puts his finger on what is radically new, and prophetic, in Dostoyevsky [pp 60-66]=

“Dostoyevsky appeared at the moment when modern times were coming to an end and a new epoch of history was dawning, and it is likely that his consciousness of the inner division of human nature and its movement toward the ultimate depths of [existing] was closely related to this fact. It was given in him to reveal the struggle in man between the God-man and the man-god [or superman, meaning.. the incarnation of the spirit of AntiChrist.. involved in man’s self-deification]-- a conflict unknown to preceding ages when wickedness was seen in only its most elementary and simple forms. Today the soul of [humanity] no longer rests upon secure foundations, everything round him is unsteady and contradictory, he lives in an atmosphere of illusion and falsehood under a ceaseless threat of change. Evil comes forward under an appearance of good, and he is deceived; the faces of Christ and of AntiChrist, of man become god and of God become man, are interchangeable..

“..contemporary people have ‘divided minds.’ They are the sort of folk whom Dostoyevsky displayed to us, and it is not the slightest use trying to apply the old moral catechism to them-- access to their souls is a far more complicated business. It is the destiny of such people over whom the waves of an apocalyptic environment are breaking that Dostoyevsky set himself to study, and the light he shed on them was truly marvellous. Far-reaching discoveries about human nature in general can be made when mankind is undergoing a spiritual and religious crisis, and it was precisely such a time when Dostoyevsky appeared on the scene; he marks an absolutely new stage in anthropological knowledge, one that is neither humanist nor.. Christian in the [old] traditional sense of the fathers of the church.

“He was not content to rediscover ‘the old and eternal Christian truth about man’, which had decayed and been forgotten in the humanist era. The experiment of humanism and the experience of freedom had not been in vain, a negative quantity in man’s history. A new soul had been born, one with new doubts and a new knowledge of evil but also with new horizons, new perspectives, and a thirst for new relations with God: mankind had reached a more advanced state of spiritual maturity. So we find that the profoundly Christian anthropology of Dostoyevsky differs from patristic anthropology. The science of man known to the fathers and doctors of the church, the

understanding of the ways of mankind that can be discerned in the writings and lives of the saints, was no longer sufficient to answer all man's questions or to understand all the doubts and temptations that beset his new stage of spiritual growth. Man has not become better, he is not nearer to God, but his soul has become much more complicated and his spirit has become bitter [troubled, anguished, apprehensive]. Certainly the Christian soul of the past knew sin and let itself fall under the dominion of Satan, but it did not know the rift in the personality that troubles the people that Dostoyevsky studied. In times past evil was more obvious and more simple, and it would be difficult to heal a contemporary soul of its disease by yesterday's remedies alone.

"Dostoyevsky understood that. He knew all that Nietzsche was to know, but with something added; whereas his contemporary, the hermit Theophanes, a high authority among Russian Orthodox ascetics and spiritual writers, did not know what Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky knew and therefore could not deal with the misery engendered by mankind's fresh experiences. The thing which Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche knew is that man is terribly free, that liberty is tragic and a grievous burden to him.. ..they had seen the human soul at the moment God was withdrawn from it and so undergoing a religious experience of a very special kind, which after a long period of wandering in darkness will produce a new enlightenment. That is how the religion of Dostoyevsky differs radically from that of Theophanes, and why the 'startzi' of the monastery of Optina did not acknowledge him as fully theirs after reading 'The Brothers Karamazov.'

"Dostoyevsky found that the road to Christ led through illimitable freedom, but he showed that on it also lurked the lying seductions of AntiChrist and the temptation to make a god of man. ..Dostoyevsky had said something new about man.

"Dostoyevsky's work.. [signified] the defeat of humanism. [He and Nietzsche] have made it impossible to go back to the old rationalistic humanism with its self-affirmation and sufficiency, for it is shown that the way.. lies further on and that man cannot remain simply man.

"Dostoyevsky.., before [Nietzsche], had shown that the loss of man by the way of self-deification was the inevitable goal of humanism. Dostoyevsky recognised that this deification is illusory, he explored the vagaries of self-will in every direction, and he had another source of knowledge — he was a prophet of the Spirit. ..kill God, and at the same time you kill man, and on the grave of.. God and of man there is set up a monstrous image — the image of the man who wants to be God, of the superman in action, of AntiChrist. ...For Dostoyevsky there was both God and man: the God who does not devour man and the man who is not dissolved in God but remains himself throughout all eternity..

"..man, with all his dynamism and contradictions, remains himself all through, indestructibly [human]. Here Dostoyevsky avoided ..the mysticism of many Christians for whom man vanished and left only the divine. Man has a part in eternity, and when Dostoyevsky explored the deep places of life he came

upon the [deeps] of God as well. All his work is a plea for man. He was in radical opposition to the Monophysite spirit: he recognised not one single nature, human or divine, but two natures, human and divine. He took such a strong line on this point that, compared with him, the Eastern Orthodox and [Roman] Catholic conception seems almost.. to suggest an inclination to absorb the human in the divine nature.

“Dostoyevsky was bound to man more than any thinker before him had been.. But his love for man was not the love of the humanists: ..he foretold a path of man’s suffering, in accordance with.. [human] freedom. Without freedom, there is no man..

“Now the way of freedom is the way of suffering, and man must follow it to the end.”

3,

This new freedom, which searches out everything for what it really is under the surface, and embraces evil not only out of weakness but in a spirit of experimentation, and as an expression of liberty -- this radical freedom of no limits, only countered and overcome by the suffering of passion for love -- this is the Daemonic.

Following the extreme freedom, deep suffering and deep dark, to the end-- this is the way of the Daemonic.

Everything that cradled us, framed us, over-arched us, must be lost-- for the sake of finding the heart tested and proved as God’s abiding in time. This new heart is the final deed of the Daemonic which redeems the time.

BERDYAEV ON DOSTOYEVSKY

Culture versus Civilisation

Russian writers like Leontiev and Dostoyevsky denounced Western Europe's "new mercantile civilisation with its middle-class spirit" [Berdyaev, 'Dostoyevsky', p 174]. "There were two spirits fighting in the world, and the spirit of commercial civilization was beginning to win because the Christian principle of culture had been betrayed= material well-being was hiding [all deeper truth]. That was the tendency of civilization throughout the world, but it was most clearly marked among European [and American] peoples" [p 175].

"The struggle between religious culture and irreligious civilization was always imminent in Western Europe itself and was fought out there.. Again, Nietzsche, with his impassioned dream of a Dionysic culture, was a loud protest.. against the same triumphant advance of middle-class civilization" [p 176].

"..while civilization may lack spirituality altogether, culture is always spiritual: it is bound.. to a sacred tradition, and veneration for the persons and things of times past" [p 177].

A Russian Orthodox ikon painter= "The Indian peoples of North American had true culture; it is the absence of any culture that marks modern America and Europe, and much of the so-called civilised world."

"Leontiev longed hopelessly until the end of his life to see a new type of culture.. which would stand up to the withered civilisation of Europe; ..he saw instead the victorious progress.. of that general levelling which he hated so much" [p 177].

"Dostoyevsky showed that the nomadism of the Russians, their restless and rebellious wandering, was a profoundly national trait. 'Only universal happiness can give peace to the Russian wanderer: he will find peace in nothing less.' ..[This is] Dostoyevsky's dynamism, rejecting everything fixed and stable.." [p 179].

Dostoyevsky's novels of the underworld depths are prophetic. He looks to the future, in an apocalyptic way, not any return to a golden but lost past, to bring about the victory of freedom and love over the current and predominant loveless enslavement..

The Messianic is not the Missionary

"They have their mission, ..to spread the faith, but missionary consciousness is not the same thing as a Messianic consciousness. ...Messianic consciousness is not nationalistic, it is universal. The Jews were not one people among other peoples: they were the one and only people of God, divinely chosen to [redeem] the world and prepare [the way for] his kingdom

on earth; and the Messianic.. is always a reJudaization of Christianity..” [p 181].

But the false kind of ‘Messianic mania’, whether in Russia in the 19th Century [as Dostoyevsky showed in ‘The Possessed’], or in America through-out its history [the ludicrous belief in ‘American Exceptionalism’], or anywhere else [the British Empire was marked by this ethos as well], is dangerous.

The Grand Inquisitor

The story of the Grand Inquisitor, told by Ivan in ‘The Brothers Karamazov’, presents a chillingly dehumanising ‘solution’ to the human predicament.

Christ returns to the world, but the Grand Inquisitor -- who is a prince of the church -- explains to Christ why he must be crucified again.

The Grand Inquisitor accuses Christ of giving humans too much freedom, too much responsibility, too much mystery; this believes in them too much, and by putting too heavy a load on their shoulders, it fails to love them in their vast limitation. To love them truly is to let them off the hook, to give them the ‘bread, circuses, magic’, they need to keep them happy, like sheep munching grass in a field. A superficial contentment with the superficial: that is all humanity is capable of. To expect more of them is cruel.. All this, and more, the Grand Inquisitor throws in Christ’s face, as a rebuke.

The vast majority of people prefer ‘contentment without freedom’ to ‘freedom with suffering’.. This is the basis of the Grand Inquisitor’s negative and rejecting judgement on Christ. “Did you forget”, the Grand Inquisitor asks him, “that humanity prefers peace and even death to freedom of choice of good or evil? ..instead of giving clear cut rules that would have set humanity’s conscience at rest once and for all, you put forward things that are unfamiliar, puzzling, and uncertain.. Humans look less for God than for miracles.. You did not come down from the Cross because you would not coerce humanity by a miracle: you wanted a free faith and not one born of marvels; you wanted willing love, not the obsequious raptures of slaves before the [divine] might that has over awed them. But you thought too highly of humanity: they are only slaves.. It was pitiless of you to value humanity so highly, for you required far too much from them. Had you respected them less you would have asked less, and that would have been more like love, to give a lighter load. Humanity is weak and despicable” [pp 191-192].

Berdyaev relates what the Grand Inquisitor offers humanity to Christ’s three temptations by Satan in the wilderness. “[He] refused them in the name of humanity’s spiritual freedom, for it was not his will that the human spirit should be won over by [guaranteeing] bread, by a [tyrannical political or religious] kingdom, or by miracles” [p 196].

The Grand Inquisitor is the real ‘Anti-Christ.’ This spirit appears in history in many forms. “For Dostoyevsky, the [Roman] Catholic theocracy was one of them; it can be discerned in Byzantine Orthodoxy, in all Caesarism and all

Imperialism. A State that knows its limitations will not give expression to the Grand Inquisitor's ideas, nor will it strangle spiritual freedom. Throughout its history Christianity seems to have been constantly beset by the temptation to deny this liberty.. So burdensome is the yoke of liberty to humanity that they have ..tried to rid themselves of it within Christianity. The principle of authority that plays so large a part in the history of the church.. [is] a denial of the mystery of Christian freedom, the mystery of Christ crucified. Truth nailed upon the Cross compels nobody, oppresses no one; it must be accepted.. freely; its appeal is addressed to free spirits" [p 197].

"A divine.. power, triumphant over the world and conquering souls, would not be consonant with the freedom of humanity's spirit, and so the mystery of [the Cross] is the mystery of liberty. ..every time in history that humanity has tried to turn crucified Truth into coercive truth they have betrayed.. Christ" [pp 197-198].

"Whenever this has happened church people have assumed the mask of earthly sovereignty and laid hands on the sword of Caesar. On the one hand, the organisation of the church takes on a juridical aspect and her life is subject to rules and regulations; on the other, her [teaching] assumes a rationalist aspect: Christ's truth becomes subservient to logical restraint. ..If we regard Christian truth rationally and juridically.. we abandon freedom for compulsion" [pp 198-199].

"Dostoyevsky stood alone in his conception of Christian liberty, but he had the mark of universality none the less. His [stance] was similar to [that of] Khomiakov, and the Russian Orthodoxy of these two was not the Russian Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Philaret and of Theophanes the Recluse" [p 199].

"Christ repudiated all temporal authority for himself. ..Christ knew no power except that of love, which alone is compatible with freedom. His is the religion of unconstrained love between God and humanity, and the attempts to actualise this in Christianity have generally been very far indeed from Christ's own vision" [p 204].

'Unconstrained love'= passion. The passion between God and humanity cannot be forced, dictated, ordered. The heart is only given freely. God wants the heart—not behaviouristic compliance..

"Theocracy cannot but involve compulsion; all the theocracies of history, pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian, have been tyrannical.. The theocratic idea is bound to come into conflict with Christian freedom, and in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor Dostoyevsky dealt severe blows to this false theocratic notion of an earthly paradise.." [p 211].

The New Christianity

In effect, Dostoyevsky was the prophet of a new Christianity.

“Zosima by no means represents the traditional staretz [‘spiritual elder’]; he does not, for example, resemble the Father Ambrose of the monastery of Optina.. Zosima knows something about the tragic destiny that Dostoyevsky was discovering for humanity, ...of which the staretzi formed in the old school knew nothing. [Zosima says] what no living monk of Optina would ever have said: ‘..do not fear men’s sin but love them even in their sin, for then will your love resemble divine love and be greater than any other on earth. Love all God’s creation, the whole of it, and each tiny grain of sand. Love every leaf, ..love the animals, love the plants, love everything. Love all things, and you will find the mystery of God in all things.. Love to throw yourself on the ground and kiss it. Love all people. Love all things. Seek this rapture and ecstasy. Water the earth with the tears of your joy.. Don’t be ashamed of such ecstasies but rather prize them, for they are a gift of God not given to all’..” [p 206].

“Only at the end of humanity’s tragic journey was the new holiness to appear” [p 206]. It is from the depths of the ‘underworld’ struggling and suffering, from the divided men and women lost in the hell of the heart, that the new humanity has to be born.

This is the implication of Christ’s Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, for modern humanity. We must pass through the tragedy, go through the long dark tunnel, before we can re-emerge, changed in depth. The old way, of trying to rise out of the darkness and pain of the underworld depths by light, no longer has any impetus.. It is not relevant to the time.

“There can be no more humanists.. after Dostoyevsky-- we are all doomed to be tragic realists. This tragic realism is the mark of an age which lays on us a heavy responsibility that [people of older generations] could hardly have borne.. [It is in this time] that ‘those cursed questions’ [the existential questions] became real and vital, matters of life and death..” [p 215].

Dostoyevsky followed “the tragic way through division and darkness” [p 220]. “For him, humanity’s only road is through tragedy, inner division, the abyss, the attainment of light through darkness” [p 221].

In reality, no light can go into these places, and all light is defeated in the abysmal depths. Only the Fire of Spirit can go through this tragedy that is so ‘deep’, and change it at source. It is Fire that must be kindled in the long journey through our human lostness. Enlightenment is inadequate; only the Fire of a new holiness will spark redemptive change in the ‘black inexplicable pain.’

Christians are not simply lacking the Light, they are without the Fire.

“There are plenty of dead things in Christianity, and their putrefaction spreads pestilence that can poison the well-springs of life. In some respects Christians are more like minerals than parts of a living organism: we are petrified, dead words come out from lifeless mouths. ‘The Spirit breathes where he will’, and he will not breathe upon souls that are religiously desiccated: they must be

first remade and baptised anew, but with fire. ..loss of faith, spread of materialism, these are only secondary results, consequences of the stiffening and death that has gone on within Christianity, in the lives of Christians. A Christianity given over to stereotyped rhetoric, formal and spiritless in its rituals, debased by over reliance on priests, cannot be a life-giving force” [p 225].

If Christianity is to become the religion of the new age, the actualising of the Second Covenant that has hardly begun, “there must arise within it a creative movement such as the world has not known for a long time” [p 226].

Dostoyevsky turned his eyes to the future, when his fellow Christians were almost entirely living in the past, clinging on to formulae and habits that had died on their feet long before.

Fate will have to roughly jerk Christians “out of that state of middle class self-satisfaction in which.. they obviously hoped to stay forever” [p 227].

It will take rebaptism in Fire, and that is the Daemonic. The Light of Eros cannot spark this change..

The new Christianity will arise from people who give their heart, freely, yet passionately, for in their depths, not Light but Fire will dwell. They are not any new enlightenment. They will be the new holiness.

THE THREE AGES OF HUMANITY IN DOSTOYEVSKY

The Russian F. Dostoyevsky is arguably the greatest novelist of all time. [Eros people will prefer Tolstoy, but those scarred and scorched by the Daemonic will prefer Dostoyevsky.] Less well known is that he also saw history in terms of a changing relationship between humanity and the spiritual.

[1] The Age of Dante= God in heaven, in the cosmos, in nature, takes care of humanity

The first experience of the sacred cosmos 'objectively' surrounding humanity. The world as given to us is already meaningful. This is in fact Eros, from Shamanism onward.. In Christianity, it reached its high water mark during the Middle Ages.

[2] The Age of Shakespeare= Humanity is the only divinity

The 'humanist' revolution begins when the sacred no longer 'holds' humanity, and humanity flexes its muscles on its own, bringing on romantic art, positivist science, Nietzschean Superman spirituality, and the rest.. This is the rise of Secular Humanism, in all forms [some religious ones as well, though mostly religion is obviously rejected as inhibiting human powers].

To find and release human powers is the project of Secular Humanism.. Any 'god' is an embarrassment, unless -- as in the Jungian doctrine of Self and Individuation -- the divine can be regarded as an extension of, an addition to, humanity. Only a god who is humanity at a higher gear, humanity 'more so', is acceptable. No Other who has Authority is allowed.. We must be free to cultivate our own powers, and open up the hidden treasures of our environment. Given our expansion, and the digging up of the latent potentials in our setting, we will be self-sufficient in the here and now. We need not be troubled over any 'other world.' Humanity neither needs divinity, nor profits from it, but on the contrary, humanity is merely held back by anything smacking of divinity.

This Humanism goes through sub phases.. [a] From the Renaissance to the Reformation, the divine is being shed, because it is being pared down only to the rational and moral. This is a prelude to ditching it entirely. [b] With the European Enlightenment -- the watershed -- we enter Modernism. We seek the Big Picture through purely human tools, in art or science, but that fails after a while.. No one believes in anything. Everything crumbles.. [c] There is now no big picture, no big theory-- not even any such thing as 'one theory.' Everything fragments, and turns absurd. Thus Post Modernism enters the ultimate Relativism. And Capitalism has a field day, romping home the winner of the argument, because there is no moral vision left to oppose it.. We know nothing much, we aren't up to much, but we can eat, get fat, get rich. There is still Mammon. But that is all which is left..

Both post-modernism and fundamentalism arise as reactions to modernism, and therefore are heads and tails of the same coin. 'There are no reliable basics' versus 'Back to the only reliable basics.'

[2a]= Post-Modernism-- ironic ennui in the face of modernism's failure.

[2b]= Fundamentalism-- a reactionary crusade against modernism's failure.

[2a]= 'There are no reliable basics.'

[2b]= 'Back to the only reliable basics.'

[3] The Age of the Spirit= God in the depth of the heart

Secular Humanism collapses into the Anti-Hero of Post Modernism, but where next? Just more and more Mammon until the earth is totally destroyed, community is entirely divided, and the machines are set to take over? They might as well take charge, since humanity is played out.. From trying to glorify humanity on its own, we have ended up with humanity devoid of all point, meaning, purpose.

Yet this is precisely when passion of heart, and the Fire of God, the Ruach, come into their own. They alone can fight Mammon, and the pervasive emptiness in mind and soul and heart it brings. 'The fire next time'..

According to Dostoyevsky, depth is the theme of the Third Age, and in this time, therefore, depth psychology will shade into depth spirituality. Even depth physics will shade into depth spirituality.

POST-MODERNISM ON THE 'MESSIANIC TURN'

Derrida's 'Coming of the Impossible'

1,

Post-Modernism as described by one of its exponents=

"[Its] labyrinthine prose tempts some to read it only as an academic parlour game used for inconsequential power struggles in high-brow university religion and philosophy departments" ['The Cambridge Companion To Post-Modern Theology', 2003, D. Long, p 133].

Post-Modernism is as far from William Blake's 'clear mystery' as it is possible to get. A sludge of words, not just abstract words but words 'mentalised' to the point of absurdity, typifies too much Post-Modernist writing.. This betrays a mind, despite all the insistence on honouring the 'other', which has become adrift from any anchoring in reality, and so this mind becomes like a car whose engine is being revved frantically but the gears are not engaged. The engine huffs and puffs but the car goes nowhere..

When words are mentalised to this extreme degree their communication is lost, and they become virtually unintelligible. The bombast and posturing accepted, even required, in French intellectual 'discourse' has done people like Jacques Derrida no favours.

2,

Post-Modernism is the collapse of Western secularism, rationalism, scientism, into full scale relativism. It ceases to be possible to believe in anything, for it is all an arbitrary 'construction' of a certain time and a certain place, a particular and finite human response to ongoing historical exigencies. There is no such animal as truth, only points of view.. The claim that human knowing is concretely 'situated', and therefore cannot claim to be absolute, doesn't have to end in relativism, however. The embodied quality of human knowing, a knowing from within existence with no spurious rationalistic god's eye view from outside it, can point in a very different direction.

Yet Post-Modernism takes delight in 'deconstruction' of all the unwarranted and unsubstantiated assumptions of modernism. It is the gadfly on the bloated arse of Modernism, stinging it with potent venom. This need to deconstruct the confident 'mastery' of everything in Modernism means that, in correcting one false extreme, Post-Modernism has to go to the other false extreme. Thus, Modernism's 'certainty' that it has explained and therefore conquered everything, its [tyrannical] absolutism, its over ambition in developing grand theories of the 'big picture', has to be blown to bits by Post-Modernism showing that uncertainty is more firmly based, that nothing is explained and nothing is conquered, and that the big picture is not ever within any human grasp. But this brings in a fatal relativism. Whether such relativity is seen as playful and open-ended, or rather, as the final collapse of all value

and all meaning, the impossibility of the commitment and risk of passion, is a matter of debate..

Each extreme, Modernism and Post-Modernism, is misleading. In Modernism, the earlier absolutism of God, itself false, is assumed by humanity; especially in regard to humanity's capacity to unlock all the conundrums of itself and nature.. But all that means is the falsity of absolutism passes from God to humanity. Not surprisingly, with all due deference to Freud, Darwin, Marx, et al, the human perspective has made no better a success of explaining everything than when God was deployed as [deus ex machina] explanation for everything. But God is not absolutism, and humanity only becomes a false 'god' by assuming the mantle of absolutism.

If we have no business with absolutism, then neither do we need to get caught up in relativism..

3,

Never the less, a more interesting way to look at what Post-Modernism is seeking to do is possible. Kevin Vanhoozer regards Post-Modernism as a kind of apophaticism, a way of negation, necessary to get rid of all the 'idols' that we create with our positive, and groundless, confident assertions. In short, Post-Modernism smashes the West's most treasured idols, especially the idols of secular-humanism, and positivist-scientific materialism.

He speaks of Post-Modernism as preparing the way for 'Messianic' religion=

"One candidate for 'most repressed other' in modernity is religion. [The grand schemes of modernism, says post-modernism, eliminated a host of 'others' that it could not force into their totalizing structures.] ..a strident secularism has kept religion out of the public square. ..Postmoderns have played Hamlet to modernity's Horatio, insisting: 'There are more things in heaven and earth.. than are dreamt of in your philosophy' [Hamlet, Act 1, v]. Postmoderns [point] not only in the direction of the other, but also toward the 'beyond.' ..In particular, the postmodern condition has enabled the recovery of two neglected forms of religious discourse – the prophetic and the mystical – that seek, in different ways, to invoke the beyond: justice, the gift" [ibid, pp 16-17].

The Prophetic call for Justice is the Daemonic, whilst the Mystical fountainhead of the Gift is Eros. Somehow, Derrida stumbled on the Left and Right Arms of God!

Vanhoozer continues=

"Even Derrida, in his later work, has begun to speak of something that is 'beyond' deconstruction. Better: deconstructive analysis 'is undertaken *in the name of something, something* affirmatively *un-deconstructable*' [p 128, 'Deconstruction in a Nutshell', JD Caputo, 1997]. This something, it turns out, is 'justice.' Everything depends, however, on his distinction between justice and law. 'Law' refers to the formulas and structures that make up some

judicial system. The law is deconstructable because it is constructed in the first place, historically instituted and constituted. In short, law is always 'situated' and hence prone to partiality. One deconstructs the law in the name of a justice to come, a justice beyond present [merely] 'human' formulations. ..This is not to say that Derrida knows exactly what justice looks like. Indeed, justice.. is the impossible, in the sense that it is incalculable on the basis of factors that are already present. Nevertheless, deconstruction is the desire that justice is 'to come.'

Another religious theme ..is that of the gift. For Derrida, the gift is as 'impossible' as justice. As soon as we give something to someone, we put that person in our debt, thus taking, not giving. The gift disappears in a web of calculation, interest, and measure. Such is the [problem] of the gift, according to Derrida. It cannot be given without creating an economy – a system of calculation and exchange – of debt and gratitude. 'It is reintroduced into the circle of an exchange and destroyed as a gift.' Can a gift be given in modern societies ruled by various forms of exchange? ..social convention work[s] with a logic of equivalence; however, the true gift is always extravagant, exceeding what is strictly required. ..Only an 'expenditure without reserve', a giving that expects no reciprocity, a reciprocity that forgets a gift has been given, would.. measure up to Derrida's requirements for a true gift" [ibid, p 17].

Vanhoozer concludes= "Neither justice nor the gift is, strictly speaking, of this world; yet both are that for which postmoderns hope" [ibid, p 18].

Not 'of' the world, but 'in' the world.. Coming from beyond but entering into, and radically changing, this world.

Vanhoozer [ibid, p 18] argues for a parallel between the gift and sacrifice=

"Abraham had to sacrifice his son, to give Isaac to God, without expecting anything back. Derrida writes that 'God decides to give back, to give back life, to give back the beloved son, once he is assured that a gift outside of any economy, the gift of death.. has been accomplished without any hope of exchange, reward, circulation, or communication' [p 96, Derrida, 'The Gift of Death', 1995]. Being responsible to the other involves a kind of death to self. Again, there are no rules for calculating responsibility, because I, and the other, and the situation are not anonymous variables in a moral equation but particular persons in singular situations. There are no logarithms for determining one's obligations. 'Every other is wholly other.' This Derridean maxim.. closes the gap between the ethical and the religious."

Now it gets even more interesting. For Derrida resuscitates the Messianic as where Justice and the Gift, and the Sacrifice, are leading. The Messianic, far from being an outdated reject from a blind and moribund religious past, is what comes after both Modernism and Post-Modernism have had their day..

Vanhoozer [ibid, p 18] concludes=

“Derrida’s affirmation of the ‘impossibility’ of Justice, and the Gift, is a gesture not of nihilistic despair but rather of faith: the desire for something *other* than what obtains in the present world order. Some such expectation of ‘the other to come’ is inscribed in the very structure of deconstruction and that gives it its ‘messianic turn’ [p 159, Caputo, *ibid*]. Postmodernity abolishes conceptual idolatry.. in order to make room for faith.”

This is quite extraordinary coming from Derrida, but then ‘the Holy Spirit blows where he wills’.. As Christ said to Peter, only the Spirit reveals to people what the Messianic is, and who the Messiah is.

Derrida is an unlikely candidate for Spirit-visitation, but that is the whole point about the Messianic Age to Come which he foresees in his deconstructive hammering of the idols of Western culture, in effect, of every culture influenced by the bourgeois ‘god’ of the West. There is no justice, there is no gift, now, but these once were in the old religion – especially in Shamanism but also in early Christianity -- and these will be in the religion to come. The coming Messianic religion felt and intuited prophetically by Derrida will be, according to all the major Jewish prophets who describe it, ‘religionless.’ Derrida is in a peculiar way the exact kind of prophecy we can look forward to in the future. No trappings of religion, no religious organization, little religious creedal belief, but something more dynamic, and real, replacing all these= the ‘spirit’ and ‘truth’ of things such as Justice and Gift. In effect, what Derrida calls the coming messianic religion, or ‘the turn to the messianic’, is in spirit and in truth another statement of how Ezekiel describes the Second Covenant when there will be no more churches, no more bibles, no more formalized beliefs, because the spirit and truth of the divine revelation will dwell in the human heart. In the coming Messianic Age, every human heart will know God directly.

This is what Derrida is anticipating. Deconstruction clears the way for this.

4,

Not surprisingly, Derrida distinguishes the ‘Messianic’ from the belief that a particular Messiah has already come. The latter has not happened for Derrida, as it has not for many Jews. But even here there is more hidden, latent, commonality between Derrida and people for whom the Mashiach has come in Yeshua than might seem to be the case.

For, the dynamism of the Second Covenant brought by the Messiah has not really got going yet. This could mean Yeshua was not the Mashiach. It could mean those calling themselves ‘Christians’ – followers of the Messiah – have not risen to the call of the Messianic Spirit. Or, there is a third possibility. Laying the foundations among Christians for the Second Covenant has taken ‘longer than expected’, but is still on schedule. It is still coming, as a ‘non religious’ person like Derrida smells on the wind.

Thus, Derrida’s hope in, and faith toward, the Messianic is perfectly compatible with either the Jewish stance that we still await the Messiah, or

the Christian stance that the Messiah has indeed already come. For the simple fact is, we still await the Messianic Age. We await the prophetic and justice, we await the mystical and the gift. We await the end of what the lack of justice, and the lack of the gift, engender in human history.

Either way, Jewish or Christian, Vanhoozer's commentary on the 'Messianic' still holds=

"The messianic is a structure of experience, apparently universal, that opens us to an unknown future. The faith in deconstruction is 'through and through a messianic affirmation of the coming of the impossible' [p 197, Caputo, *ibid*]. The messianic is the unforeseeable, the beyond that is always desired but never [yet] attained. ...the post-modern condition is essentially, that is, structurally, messianic: constitutionally open to the coming of the other and the different. Faith, not reason – faith in a religionless, viz messianic, religion – is thus endemic to the postmodern condition" [*ibid*, p 18].

The Messiah foretold by the Jews ushers in the Mystical Gift of Eros in a new way, brings the Prophetic Fire of Justice in a final way, and ends religion.

Religionless religion, and the odd pot pourri of religionless religious people, is on the rise, and quite widespread in the wake of post-modernist undermining. We do not want to go back to either the tyranny of God or the tyranny of secularism and science when they are set up as a tin-pot 'god' of the same ilk, and bringing the same error of non humility, non risk taking, and non passion= no leap of faith. A plague on both houses..

What most people do not realize is that the dynamic movement, the radical change, towards religionless religion, the religion Yeshua described as 'in spirit and in truth', is being 'pushed' by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Movement, the Spirit of Change, the Spirit of Mystery and Paradox that works out in our living of it, not in what we think.

What Derrida and many others do not realize is that this shift going on, this awaiting of Messianic Realities, is a shift from Logos to Spirit.

The West, in particular, has always been too much Logos, too little Spirit. But the clash between Eastern and Western Christians is really a clash between two levels of the Logos. The East is rooted in the mystical and cosmic Logos; the West is oriented toward a degeneration of Logos into mere 'logic' [thus puritanism, rationalism, emotionalism]. But neither East nor West has really yet embraced the Spirit of God, the Ruach. Both East and West have struggled with the sacred pattern of the Logos, in different ways at different levels, and neither has really tasted, much less drunk deep from, the cup of the Spirit handed to Yeshua in his dramatic last days. The Holy Spirit who is patternless in changing history, communities, persons, is yet to come to Christians in anything approaching the Messianic fullness of the Second Covenant.

None the less, the future anticipated -- after the hammer of deconstruction is finished smashing all the idols -- by people like Derrida is the future brought by the Spirit.

We have overcooked Logos, and undercooked the Spirit.

Maybe it had to happen like that, to protect us from 'spiritual' errors all too easy to be fooled into when there are no handrails, no foundations, no discernments.. But the Bible tells us, 'do not quench the Spirit.'

Only in the coming of the Messianic, only in the Messianic future, will we really experience, taste, be indwelt by, the Spirit of God, and this will be so different, all we can do now is have poetic hints, poetic intimations, inarticulate inner groanings.

It is Impossible. But that is what makes it possible. For only God can do it, through the Spirit, and with our participation.

You see the first signs of this even now. No, not among liberals, not among conservative fundamentalist-evangelicals; but in people ostensibly in religion yet religionless in it, and in people ostensibly not in religion but very religious in their religionless stance. These are all Third Way people, people of a character not revealed yet, because they remain 'hid with Christ' until the Messianic Spirit comes universally with real power. These people will be looser in form, but stricter in essence= they will exemplify Bob Dylan's 'to live outside the law, you must be honest.'

It is not guaranteed, it could fail. Yet faith is the leap of passion into the unknown, and that is trusting in the Spirit.

We all cry, in the heart, Spirit come!

And something nascent in the heart senses a change. The Spirit is coming.

Hoka hey.

THE EXISTENTIAL IRRELEVANCE OF SCIENCE

1,

'History as a System', 1962, Jose Ortega Y Gasset=

"Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions.. Yet science is but a small part of the human mind and organism. Where it stops, man does not stop."

[p 13]

"That science is incapable of solving in its own way those fundamental questions is no sufficient reason for slighting them."

[p 14]

"The assurance that we have no means of answering [final] questions is no valid excuse for callousness towards them. The more deeply should we feel, down to the roots of our being, their pressure and their sting. Whose hunger has ever been [sated] with the knowledge that he could not eat?"

[p 15]

"The nineteenth century, utilitarian throughout, set up a utilitarian interpretation of the phenomenon of life which has come down to us and may still be considered as the commonplace of everyday thinking. ..An innate blindness seems to have closed the eyes of this epoch to all but those facts which show life as a phenomenon of utility."

[p 16]

2,

The problem is not science but scientism. Science goes on unveiling things about nature, and our link to it, that benefit people, intellectually and practically. Occasionally science even recovers that contemplative vision of the whole, or even aspects of it, which the ancient Greeks called 'theoria', and meant to see the unified shape of something and indeed its essential quality. But scientism is a different matter. Scientism seeks to limit any and all paths to knowledge to that offered by science, and indeed, operates with a narrow notion of science which does not stand up to serious criticism [see 'Science's First Mistake, Delusions In Pursuit of Theory', Ian O. Angell and Dionysios S. Demetis, 2010, which critiques theory construction and evidence gathering, showing that to deploy the scientific method it is necessary to rely on many 'non-proveable' assumptions, and that its deployment invariably generates contradictions that undermine any confident conclusions].

In the Middle Ages religion occupied a role that exaggerated its power and prestige, and in that process, religion lost its true meaning. Modernity had to dethrone religion from that absolutist position in human culture. We should

have learned the lesson that no human activity can occupy such a tyrannical role. Instead, all that modernity did was to elevate science to the old role previously occupied by religion. That makes science the new religion, and as happened with the old religion, leads to a falsification of what science really is capable of.

3,

A commentator=

“Rudolf Bultman spoke of the scientific worldview which tried to reassure man by deceiving him about the essential uneasiness of human existence. According to Bultman, this is a deceit because it reassures man precisely when the questionableness of his existence breaks in upon him; it deceives him because it tries to persuade him that his destiny, his responsibility, his guilt, his suffering, and his death, are not a riddle with which each one of us must deal; it deceives man because it tries to persuade him that everything is just an instance of a universal process that follows its own laws and that the meaning of existence can be understood as soon as these laws are understood.”

Science sings a siren melody which invites humanity to ignore the wound to the human heart that is key to both our pathology and our passion, our crippling and our creativity. We give a big sigh of relief. With the burden of pain and greatness put down, we can live comfortable, shallow lives, the intellect guiding us into ever more bland, dehumanised abstractions.

4,

“Man must not only make himself: the weightiest thing he has to do is to determine what he is going to be.” [‘Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre’, p 155]

“Man’s being is made of such strange stuff as to be partly akin to nature and partly not [akin to nature], at once natural and extra-natural, a kind of ..centaur, half immersed in nature, half transcending it.”

“I am free.. whether I wish to be or not.”

“To be free means to be lacking in constitutive identity.”

“Man is a[n] ..emigrant on a pilgrimage of [becoming], and it is accordingly meaningless to set limits to what he is capable of [becoming].”

'MY HEART IS TROUBLED, MY SPIRIT HAS FAILED ME'

1,

Some commentators have claimed 'Isra-el' means 'God rules.' Nothing could be more false to Jacob's story.

Not God rules, but 'God prevails through trouble, strife, and all that is testing, and wounding.'

God goes through it with us-- this is the gift in the Old Testament.

God completes it, when we cannot go on-- this is the gift in the New Testament. Christ picks up the burden where we drop it, and are crushed under its weight.

The human heart has to fight the way of the divine heart, to be reconciled to it. It is hard for us, and hard on us, in some extremity of hardship where suddenly we are, like Christ did, sweating blood.

David says in the Psalms=

'My heart is troubled,
My spirit has failed me.'

The spirit of the human being that fails is the fire of passion. The trouble in the heart is deep; it undercuts the leaping up of the human spirit, it extinguishes the fire of our passion at source.

What is this trouble? It is not simply psychological. It is the gateway to the deepest situation at the root of the heart; it is the expression on a more conscious level of the dilemma in which the heart is inescapably caught up, in the groundlessness of its being.

2,

All the existential trouble and existential failure which David, and the Jews, went through had an initiatory effect, of 'taking the mind down into the heart', and introducing the person to a host of truthful reactions in the conflict of the human with God. These include terrible griefs and profound angers, and many other things, including forlornness and forsakenness. These contentions with God are honest, and not in the least sinful. They hurt deep down, all the way down, but they are in relation with God, and hence their harsh battling is authentic. William Blake's painting of God violently taking hold of Adam portrays both parties in an agony. God's agony is serene, unshaken and unshakable, because he is committed to the difficult way that risks everything; Adam's agony is apprehensive and afflicted, because he is

torn two ways. He already senses that the journey and battle needed to take him through this primal ambivalence to the end when it is resolved will be long and arduous. Trusting God's hard road and making a stand on it, and acting from it, will be tough, and is not entered upon lightly. Yet, despite the inherent resistance, there is also an innate urge, a wanting and willing to 'have a go', no matter what. Only at the finish of the whole story can the agony of Adam attain the serenity of the agony of God.

Reforging the link in our fiery spirit to the Fire of the Spirit of God is 'problematic', takes time, has many confusions and much pained incomprehension along the way. Facing our short cuts, weaknesses, stumblings and falls, is vital, if we are to change in heart. The Spirit is not only inspiring us, but instructing us.

This means allowing the Spirit to seize hold of us, and shake us fiercely..

The heart's struggle with God, in the deeps, is not to be feared as blasphemy, rebellion, disobedience.. When sincere, not game playing, it is not sinful. Sinfulness arises when we flee this contention with God, to have an easier, lazier, less intense and less fierce, existence. This is where the distortion in passion arises. Opposition to God is truthful, because of all the things that the heart must bear and endure to follow the way of God. This is why the passion that does indeed respond to God's call, and wrestles in the intense and ferocious embrace of divine and human, is both wounded and burdened in its very foundation; thus the linguistic root for passion in Greek is to suffer a wound that is fated, and inescapable, whilst in Hebrew the linguistic root for passion is to carry a load that is also something put upon us, rather than something we choose. Who would choose such a deep pain, who would choose such a heavy weight?

The trouble and failure that is fruitful to the spiritual path is the wrestling with the 'passibility' of the heart-- its passion can go either way, it can be deepened or remain more shallow, it can rise to the challenge set by the world or sink into the doldrums. The passible, the malleable, the changeable, the influenceable, cannot be transcended in any supposed spiritual condition that is invulnerable and inviolate. If passion as such is replaced by dispassion, then the heart in its entirety is thrown away.

At the root of all the trouble and failure, there is a strange heartbreak. To embrace this heartbreak toward God, and thus toward the world and the whole of one's life, is actually the point of break-through, though it feels like the finality of break-down. It is experienced as despair, the victory of despair about the whole 'venture' of heart and passion between God and humanity.

3,

Hardest to go through are the times when God's Spirit abandons us, for this reveals to us what would be the ultimate, and absolute, hell in the heart, and deadness of passion, if we were really and truly to opt for an irrevocable No to God's way. We say a lot of 'no's to God on the path, some childish

tantrums where we throw all our toys out of the pram and hope God will solicitously return them to us with a pat on the head [sometimes he does], some much more seriously adult objections which, if they are honest, God respects, but some very dishonest evasions of the whole problem which fuels sin, deceit, error, destruction. Thus sometimes God will really withdraw the Spirit from us at depth, and leave us to our own devices. Without Spirit, the furnace of hell and the pit of death bite into us, and we get a foretaste of what it would be like if our lesser heart triumphed over our greater heart, and all Spirit were absent from the depth. Without Spirit there, the depth becomes hellish and deadening in some radical way that is, in fact, terrifying to experience. The nothingness in our base, at our mysterious origin, becomes an emptiness awful in some manner we normally do not experience. This is because the Spirit usually fills the abyss beneath the heart, even when we are betraying what enables us to stand on that groundless ground. It is therefore a qualitative shock of a wholly different order when, 'for a little while' as the Old Testament puts it, the Spirit genuinely abandons us, leaving us to our own choices.

Hosea [5, 9-6, 6] is but one of many places in the Old Testament where God withdraws from the human depths 'for a season' [though for those in this condition, it feels forever]= "Yes, I am going to return to my dwelling place until they confess their guilt and seek my face; they will search for me in their misery."

Fundamentalists, who glory in the idea of 'reward and punishment' because of assuming only they will get the reward while everyone else gets the punishment, have distorted this 'punishing moment' in its existential meaning. We are allowed, even blessed, to experience 'what would happen' if we persist in our determination to eject the Spirit from our depths, because of hoping not to have any depths; God does not let us pursue this road of 'our way' until it ends in the furnace of hell and the pit of deadness, but intervenes before that finality can be reached, giving us a dose of where we are headed in the future right now, in an effort to induce in us a 'turning over of a new leaf' in heart.

But 'abandonment by God', before the end is reached in our pursuit of our own blindness, self-love, and self-will, is the blow of the Daemonic we need to wake up from the sleep in which we are merrily and lemming-like jumping off the cliff.

Hosea continues in Yahweh's hot displeasure with Israel, which is in reality a form of passionate love=

"What am I to do with you, Judah?
This love of yours is like a morning cloud,
Like the dew that quickly disappears.
This is why I have torn them to pieces by the prophets,
Why I slaughtered them with the words from my mouth,
Since what I want is love, not priestly offerings,
Knowledge of God, not priestly sacrifices."

God is saying to all of humanity, to each and all of us, 'I want your heart, I want your passion.'

We matter to God. What happens to us, each and all, matters to God. We question this unendingly, but we ignore the real question= does anyone or anything matter to us? Who or what matters to us such that we can honestly pledge that our fate is bound to their fate, their tragedy is our tragedy?

There is at least one place in the Old Testament where this period of abandonment lasts 'three days', a clear prefigurement of the time involved in Christ undergoing the Cross, the Descent into Hell, and the Resurrection. We are three days in the tomb, under the wrath of God. But it is not eternal, because it drives us into a 'misery' where we 'search for God.' This is tough love, no messing about. It forces us to get real, take seriously the drama and conflict of our deeper heart, and change in heart to free the passion that wants to live, and act, from a 'clean' heart, a 'pure' heart, a 'true' heart.

The deepest that our troubles and failures can take us is to the point where we are no longer centred upon our own existential pain, but mysteriously, through the Spirit, enter the existential pain of all humanity in the tragedy of the human condition. Until this happens, we have no neighbour, no brother and no sister. Only when we can embrace the suffering of the common tragedy can we join the fight for the redemption that has the power to change the common destiny.

4,

People who do not admit, or do not know, that they have any contention with God in the heart, which renders their passion ambivalent about its road of action in this world, are living in the pervasive forgetfulness; they are far from any heart, and are perfectly content with that heartlessness.

Yet the Sufi poet speaks for all of us in demanding from God=

"Why do you search for the heart?
For I do not know where it is.
Tell me yourself, what is a heart?
I do not find its trace anywhere."

We cannot remember we have a heart, and so its life of suffering and rapture is foreign to us= its deepest grief in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, and most upright flame for their sake, equally lost to us.

We cannot go to the ultimate fast and straight. It is a slow and roundabout route. We pass through many degrees, and layers, of heart wrestlings and passion mis-firings before we can reach the ultimate. Every time passion fails, and the heart is troubled, this drags us, kicking and screaming, toward a new and different basis for 'living from the heart.' We come, slowly, and yet irrevocably, to an awakening to the heart. Over the course of many

vicissitudes, many ups and downs, ins and outs, finally we realise 'the heart is an unfathomable abyss.'

It seems peculiar, even contradictory, none the less the Jewish example should teach us the decisive lesson.

Stay grounded in the contention with God, as in the contention with other people, and truth emerges; avoid the contention and no truth is revealed. We are left with humanistic panaceas, which never work.

5,

Just as there are many kinds of anxiety, so there are many kinds of depression. However, there is a kind of pervasive depression nowadays which seems to hang, like a wet and 'dampening blanket', over the whole population, or large parts of it. Isaiah [40, 28-31] says that God can "give power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength." Those who know their lack will ask for God's help, and let go what they have to let go in order to cooperate with it; whilst those who think they are self-sufficient do not need any divine aid, and will never ask for it. But so many people in these times seem to match Isaiah's description= "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted", though the remedy actually pervades the malady= "but they who wait for Yahweh shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Faint heartedness produces exhaustion, and weariness, of spirit. Only God's Spirit can renew this condition of the human spirit. "Do not faint at your tribulations but trust in God and he will not fail you."

This depression manifests a blanket resistance, or defense against, the deeps, where all manner of disturbed states, active hurts, long-standing grudges, boil away. The lid is kept on this boiling pot, a veritable cauldron, and so the heat gets turned back on itself. By blanking off the hurts and dramatic struggles deeper in the heart, which are actively sore, we achieve a more tranquil conscious mind, but the result is that in terms of our affective relationship with the world, wherein we affect it and it affects us, there is just a 'lowered' and 'hazy' state of 'blah.' This state is strangely bland, given how potent are the complaints -- griefs and angers, dreads and terrors -- rumbling below its surface. We make a bad trade-off here, for if we refuse to embrace the heart ground on which all kinds of vibrant but challenging things are happening, then we go into a state both low in energy and undifferentiated in theme; a sort of bog drags us down into a confused mush.

Lifelong depression, in certain people, is because their heart deeps are so raw, so on fire with twisted yet still living flame, that to de-press this, to push this down, takes a concerted and unremitting effort. Depression can become the state in which we let go what blocks the Spirit and embrace what embraces the Spirit. That is its healing potential. But in certain people, depression comes and never goes, settles over their 'inner parts' and their entire life in the world like a dank pall. In this case, the person will not

'descend' into the depths, where they will encounter 'what is what' with the heart and its passion; they will not face it, they will not struggle in it, they won't have trust that they can go through it, and something of value emerge on the other side. They remain forever stuck in the potentially fruitful but in actuality fruitless 'between.' No longer acclimatised to the normal, but no longer totally insensitive to the torments of their heart and the battering to their passion, something in them won't jump all the way down into the deeper lodged human dilemma.

Something at the deepest in depression threatens to kill off the lie of our isolate position in existence, and plunge us into a predicament where we are all bound to each other, indebted to each other, betrayed by each other. Depression tells us we cannot return to our old life, but do we want a new life where we are fated to be subject to the fate that subjects all human beings? We can mouth pretty platitudes testifying to human solidarity, but even as we declare this we know we can bail out, we have a rear door to get us free of the common fate. Joining the common destiny means that we surrender any 'individual' get out clause that would 'free' us from the common outcome..

There are many factors in electing to defend ourselves from the depth. But existentially basic is our lack of faith that, once in the narrow straits, there could be any way through. Even more disturbing is the realisation that, if any way through were to open up, it would have to include all of us together, and in doing that, it would bind each of us to the fate of all the rest. We all stand on the same heart ground, and if anyone is excluded, it will fall through for everyone. It only upholds us when we are truly, and profoundly, 'all in this together.'

Thus, our deepest resistance against the deeps is because we do not want to enter the 'story' that governs the heart ground. We want to be free to invent, to concoct by phantasy, a story of a life to our liking.

6,

The teaching of Jewish Tradition= God created because he likes to tell stories.. The story we are really in, really living, living doing, is the story of God's heart coming to the human heart.

This is its severity of realism, yet its bottomless compassion, and immeasurable mercy, for how much this 'story of stories' asks of humanity, and indeed, of God.

God loves our heroism, however faltering. God loves our attempt, however far it gets, and has tenderness for the damage that stops us before we can get going.

In what the world calls depression, but which is spiritually the dark night of the soul and the baking desert of the heart, we lose in the soul all identity and selfhood itself, everything meaningful that we took for granted is swept away on inner tides, and we lose in the heart all conviction in action itself,

everything purposeful that we believed in is burned up in inner flames. There is nowhere to hide from ourself, in subjectivity or objectivity. The meanings that sustained us inwardly and the beliefs that propped us up outwardly are suddenly gone.. They cannot be regained. We have no meaning, we have no purpose. Death brings both the impermanence that devastates the soul, and the fragility that paralyses the heart. Everything is flimsy in being, everything is futile in action.. Yet there is no peace of the grave, but only the unsettling and disquieting questions that cannot be answered. Nothing outside of, or other to, our suffering can help. We are alone in our suffering, as if the world had ceased to exist. It still surrounds us, but it does not connect to us, and we do not connect to it, in any way. There is no respite from the suffering which is all that is left of us. Nothing can reach us, however nourishing and illuminating, however encouraging and wise.

Something has to change within, and deep down, and it cannot be faked. We are lost, entirely, before we can find what is alive and can be found for what is worthy.

We are losing what separates us from the real story, we are losing what undermines us in the real story.

Our falsifying of this story, our loss of the falsification, and regaining of the fated threads of the patchwork of the story still being woven, is the only resolution of depression that lasts.

Even in the throes of its suffering, when it is still in the balance whether its destructive power will end us or end and remake us, there is something oddly 'beneficial' in what seems like a curse. "To fully inhabit our suffering is to uncover our unique presence in this life", as one commentator puts it; yet it is also to uncover the heart-rending presences of all other beings, creatures, persons, in this life. A radical choice arrives= will I continue to try to defend my suffering, even if this adds to the common suffering? Or, will I let my suffering serve the common suffering? Will I surrender 'my separate and ungrounded story' for the common story wherein everyone is damaged, everyone is at fault, everyone is trying..

The common story= keen personal excitement, and a pathos that wraps up everyone.

Let go false gods= let go false stories.. This is what depression 'removes.'

7,

The Jewish Bible is not a scientific explanation of anything-- God, the cosmos, nature, humanity. Nor is it a theological doctrine about those things, still less a metaphysical philosophy concerning them. It is not simply a set of moral precepts, or laws, nor a set of yogas or spiritual disciplines for elevating the rough matter of humanity into a polished spiritual jewel. There may well be flashes of all these here and there, but essentially the Bible is a very existential, and hyper realistic, story. This story is unique, and in some sense

is 'the' story of all the other equally necessary stories, because it is a narrative concerned with [1] God, who he really is in terms of what he is doing with us, and concerned with [2] our struggle to relate with this strange and wonderful mystery. Stories are 'stored' in the soul, like fishes in water; but this story can only be lived, and enacted, by the heart, walking hard ground over an abyss.

The story the Bible unfolds is far from pious, far from respectable, and far from rational. The story is passionate. It lives in intensity, it lives by commitment and engagement. It lives in the gap between promise and fulfilment, and is stretched on the cross at the place where the two roads of the Sacred and of the World inter-sect. This whole story is one of 'difficult times', and protracted strivings which often seem fruitless. Yet the story moves ahead, its journey and battle advances, like a caravan crossing the desert. It is full of tension, and drama; like Flamenco music, it is for life and death. To live, and enact, this story requires trust in the unknown, not certainty in the known. Not security, but insecurity, keeps this story moving ahead.

For the Bible narrates the story of a venture, a risk and a gamble, God takes with humanity, and the world; and this story will not come through the abysses it confronts unless humans give it their all.

The protagonists of this story are not nice and decent folks; they are not 'sensible' as England currently understands that term. They are not prudent. They have none of the Greek Stoic virtues that infiltrated the Greek Orthodox Christian monastic tradition. By sharp contrast, they exemplify William Blake's claim= "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." They are not prudish about sex. They unapologetically love life. They will strive for truth even in strife. They sing and dance their prayers to God, as well as howl and scream at God, like an animal in the throes of death, or like a child in extreme pain who has no way of understanding it, and so has to simply sit down under it, without respite or relief; and occasionally they voice their sorrow with more searching of its depth and thus more understanding of what their situation and its dynamic is, but not with any less pain. These are people whose feet are staked to the ground, and whose hearts are learning to be staked to what is at stake in the world.

Sometimes they are in the true drama in which God, humanity, and the evil spirit, are bound; at other times existence just becomes the soap operas it is for most of us most of the time. But their errors reveal truths; their failures lead on to victories. Gradually arises that love which works through paradox and reversal.

This is what the story of our life should be like for us. Certainly, people rest and recover; they find islands of peace in which to meditate, and contemplate; but the most powerful prayer comes only when they are in deep trouble and face total ruin. The part of us that is always falling away and struggling to return is far closer to ignition than the part of us that is pleasant, charming, well on top of things, thank you very much.

Thus, the trouble and failure in our binding to the divine fire is crucial. In Japan people like the Jewish protagonists of the Old Testament story are called 'wave tossed', like a samurai without a master. There is no external master to contain and restrain the warrior, so he can fall prey to all sorts of error, but it happens 'along the way', and this error does not derail him because he is searching for the inner master -- the Holy Spirit -- and to that search he remains loyal, and by its exactions, he is willingly disciplined.

The wave tossed and fire penetrated men and women of the Biblical story are the 'flawed' people in whom God revealed the truth about the process of redemption.

To be a part of this story -- not to imitate it, because with changed historical circumstances, that is impossible, and not desirable in any case -- requires faith, not creedal faith, but existential faith.

For many people, lifelong depression is preferable, and a price willingly paid, for evading being part of such a story, such a living and such a doing, such an existence.

Lifelong depression is preferable to living on the edge, in the gap, at the crossing of roads= depression is what suffocates faith; faith is what crawls out of the suffocation of depression, like a too solicitous and over protective mother.

The faith which is born of the afflictions and tussles that Daemonic Fate forces upon us has a certain confidence, despite everything remaining in uncertainty, because it has resolved the ambivalence, the conflict, which is deeply lodged, and voted with its feet which heart, and which passion, it prefers to affirm.

Mysticism, vision, enlightenment and awakening, can reveal much that is wonderful to know; but they cannot reveal 'how the story will go', nor more significantly, 'how the story will turn out.'

The story's secrets are hidden; the story's treasures are buried. By living it, by doing it, by risking it without knowing, we bring secrets and treasures to life along the route, like water from the parched ground, like fire from the burned out ashes.

THREE MYSTERIES OF THE CROSS

As in ancient Celtic Shamanism, everything important in Jewish tradition is in 3s. Eros works by 'binary coding', which reflects its focus on the harmonious and balanced articulation of space, but the Daemonic is Trinitarian, in its emphasis on the anguished and pressured advance into time. Space is our Mother, embracing us. Time is our Father, ejecting us to drive us Forward.

Can the Mysteries of the Cross be spoken of as three-fold?

The Cross, Descent into Hell, and the Resurrection, is three-fold in steps. This echoes ancient prophecies.

Hosea, 6, 1-2=

"Yahweh has torn us, to heal us; he has injured us but he will bind us up. He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day."

Job, 5, 18=

"For Yahweh wounds, but he also binds up; he injures but his hands also heal."

Psalms, 71, 20=

"Though you have made me to experience great and sore troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up."

Affliction draws humanity back to God from 'waywardness', yet it also does more= through the deepest of affliction will come the radical change in humanity.

Certainly there are three existential hells. [1] Sheol or Hades= the Pit of Deadening [rotten= putrid, decaying, or decomposed by the process of decay; foul smelling; corrupt; unsound or weak; unsatisfactory or worthless]. [2] Gehenna or Hell= the Furnace of Burning that is, at the same time, not only hot as hell but also cold as ice [truth betrayed, and lied about= merciless, pitiless, raging flames that destroy]. [3] the Fearful Void= the Abyss that is empty.

Do the three Mysteries of the Cross engage these three existential hells in the human heart? That would be too neat. The fallenness of humanity has three tragic dimensions, but they over-lap and inter-penetrate.

Never the less, the Cross has three mysterious Powers—Wisdoms to 'bring to the table.'

[1] Suffering the unbearable wound and lifting the insupportable weight= the Heroism of the Cross.

[2] Accepting the humiliation of the divine at the hands of the human= the Reversal of the Cross.

[3] Paying the unrepayable debt owed to everyone by everyone= the Atoning of the Cross.

[1] The Heroism of the Cross= its Sacrifice, its radical Self-Giving. The Messiah lays down his life for his friends; he takes on the heaviness of our immovable and inconsolable grief, our deep brokenness of heart, to make this irreversible defeat the point where the recovery of our lost heroism begins.

[2] The Reversal of the Cross= its Kenosis, its radical Self-Emptying. The Messiah is the king, yet he is disrespected and humiliated, counted among the criminals and the outcast; the Messiah is the Anointed of God to Bear the Spirit in a new and unique way, yet he is disbelieved and mistrusted, counted among the blasphemers and the non-kosher. The Messiah's bigness is reversed, to reach us where we are, and to reverse our smallness. 'The Dignified became lowly, so that the lowly might regain Dignity.'

[3] The Atoning of the Cross= its Forbearance, its radical Unconditional Love. The Messiah pays for the enemy the same as for the friend, thereby removing from love the cramp of moral conditionality.

Why did Yeshua balk in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Was it because, humanly, he realised the trials he was about to undergo were beyond all human strength? Myfanwy has a different take on it= he did not want to look upon, and have to confront, the really ugly side of our tragedy, the truly small and mean side of our humanity.. It hurt him to have to face this. Such, however, is precisely the radical generosity of the new Messianic Reality he brought to the world, and lived out to the full in the Messianic Heart.

The Cross is equally for the Good Thief who repents and the crucifiers who laugh, mock, and sneer, in their vicious cruelty.

Indeed, the Cross is more loving toward the really loveless people, always the sheer majority of mankind, than to those who know they need the help in the deeps which only the Cross can instigate.

Christ goes on loving= not just the big people, like Peter who falls and falls until finally he weeps, but also the small people, the shallow living in a fool's paradise, the nasty sadists, the silly rationalists who want the absurdity of existence reduced to formulae they can grasp and trumpet in their head, the liberals who tolerate everything only because they are indifferent to it, and on and on, a cast of thousands..

Even the hideous language used by the first followers to speak about atoning, caught in a legalistic trap, is a concession not to those stronger ones who try to love and fail, but to those weaker ones who never were able to even make a start with human love, much less welcoming the divine-human love revealed in Yeshua the Christ.

Even the petty, the mean spirited, are embraced by the sacrifice, the self-emptying, the forbearance, of the Cross. Those who think themselves far above the Cross, 'spiritually', are the most pathetic, the most wrecked, of all, but the humbling of the Messiah joins the humiliation they are in without knowing it.

The Cross defends nothing.. The Cross fears nothing.. It looks into every heart of every human who has ever lived, who will ever live, who now lives. It looks into depths the person has disavowed, and it speaks to them just the same, whatever the person's mechanisms of defense. The Cross cannot be offended, shocked, insulted. It cannot be disbelieved because the disbelief the Cross accepts, and 'suffers', is real, and the Cross makes no attempt to pretend otherwise, but respects the truth that this is the weight hardest to lift. The stone in the heart that cannot be shifted genuinely breaks the Messiah, but in doing this, its power is broken. Its power to put a 'stop' on our ability to follow God is broken; the power reborn from its dying is the power not to be stopped, but to 'go through.' Only love is stronger than death. Love is subject to the test. Love passes the test. As 'passion' is enacted by Christ, it drags us along, forcibly, it drags us through, violently. A stop is put on 'the' stop; a motion, a dynamic, of going on through arises in its place.

This dynamic might be described, from the outside, as 'confidence', but that is inaccurate. It is the power that arises when, like the heart of the Messiah which holds everything, big and small, we can look at anything and everything without any fear whatever; it lacks defensiveness, and so without anything to defend, it proceeds without hesitation, or let up. It goes straight in. It moves straight on. Nothing stops it. Everything that challenges or puzzles or stretches it, it looks square in the face. It discovers as it proceeds, because unafraid to look at anything and willing to look into everything, it is never threatened.

The shrivelled heart and the large heart both come to this, through Christ's ordeal. It is their ordeal. Even the largest have their shrivelling; even the most shrivelled retain a hint of largeness.

Not confidence, but fearlessness, nothing to defend, and everything of the utmost moment= this is the heart in the process of redemption. Its way in the world differs from any other. It is not just benign, or charitable. It is passionate, dramatic, in bigness -- yet also tender, full of pathos, in smallness.

Whatever the pain involved in Christ having finally to embrace us in our very least -- in our truly ugly smallness, malice, dishonesty, covered by a hollow

inflation as if by assuming a cultural identity of pomp and significance we could deny our underlying nakedness -- it is the over-riding and central power and wisdom of the Cross to believe in humanity.

Christ's Cross has faith in us we have lost in ourselves-- which is the real reason we mock, deride, sneer at, Christ's Cross. Having no faith 'deeper down' in ourselves, we are outraged that the Cross has faith in us.

It comes down, oddly, to this= whether we keep up all the masks of culture that enable us to remain blind to our lack of faith in ourselves, our lack of faith in the human venture going anywhere or becoming anything; or alternatively, let the faith in us -- in each of us personally and in all of us communally -- manifested by the Cross speak to our broken place, our hurting place. Then what we see in the Cross outside us suddenly Reverses to reveal us on the same Cross inside us.

The Messiah enters into the horror of what we have to live with, and God's absence from it.

To that in us which accuses others and ourself= Atonement.

To that in us which tries to get to the top and is terrified of being left at the bottom of the heap= Reversal.

To that in us which abandons others and ourself= Heroism.

It is clear that the Messianic Reality, and the Messianic Spirit, inaugurated by Yeshua the Christ was too dangerous to the 'world order' to go unopposed. If Christianity has had more distortions in its past than Hinduism or Shamanism, this is a testament not only to the failure of Christians but also to the 'heat' of evil opposition brought to bear upon Christianity. Christianity has undergone more devilish distortion because it is far more threatening to the Prince of This World.

Christians have to repent of their poor record, their weak witness, to Christ over the past 2000 years, and in effect, virtually begin again. But it should not be forgotten that often it was the Christians repudiated by their various versions of 'churchianity' that did the most to witness to Christ. For example, as the Pope sold out to Hitler in World War Two, Mother Maria Skobtsova in France, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany, both paid the ultimate price for remaining true= she hid Jews in her monastery in Paris so the Nazis could not take them, and Bonhoeffer spoke out for the Jews in the centre of the Nazi maelstrom, and neither could be persuaded to stop. Both were killed by Authority, whether religious or secular it hardly matters. Both these persons accepted the Cross. So too did many others down centuries. Yet the devil had his way with Christianity too often..

None the less, the issue is what we do now, where we go from here..

One thing about the Mystery of the Cross is always missed. The watershed between the old Christianity, even when beautiful and good, and the Christianity that is coming, which will step up more radically, is hidden in Hell.

The Christianity of the future has a secret wisdom and an unrevealed power hidden still in Hell. The Christianity of the future is radically Cross centred, because it starts in Hell.

From Hell, only from Hell, will the long awaited regeneration of Christianity begin. Only from Hell will the truly Second Covenant Messianic Way get going.

In Hell, only in Hell, are the secret seeds of the future. Plenty of 'old Christians' will not understand this, nor take hold of it in their living. But the 'new Christians' who are coming will discover Christ in Hell, and from that break-through, they will bring out of the deep dark, the deep suffering, of the heart lost in Hell, the new beginning, the second chance.

The defeated, the humiliated, the torn down, the burned up= these will be the seeds of the Messiah's second chance, and Christianity's second coming.

From Hell, where it is all over, the Messianic reality is different= it is only just beginning.

Three religions will battle down through all of time.

Shamanism to hold the Sacred Beginning; Judaism to contest the Existential Middle; Christianity to win the Eschatological End.

Therefore, do not pray to be released from Hell; pray for the divine help to remain in Hell, as long as it takes. You need time to dig up the secret buried in Hell.

It is, after all, the last place to think to look. Even the devil would not look for it there. But it is there. The final secret, the ultimate power and wisdom, is awaiting for us in Hell. That is where the real treasure is buried.

That is a Reversal only the most extreme Heyoka might appreciate..

But for those who cannot be comforted, for those for whom there is no consolation, it is the final good news.

THE CROSSING OF THE ROADS

Passion, whether divine or human= something you accept as a fate that will happen to you, will be done to you, and only from this will your true action be forged.

'My Ways are not your ways, my Thoughts are not your thoughts', God says to us in Isaiah.

God's Way, God's Thought, for 'doing' the world, and history, is not our way, our thought. The invulnerable power and assured wisdom we want for running the world, and history, is to God impotence and folly. We want 'power and wisdom' to eliminate risk and subdue contingency. God's power and wisdom works through the freedom of risk and the open-endedness of contingency. This is impotence and folly to us.

We have a problem.

This is not good versus evil, nor God's purity versus human sin, nor the heavenly versus the earthly.

This is God's Way pitted against our way. God's Way appears to us weak in the world and naive in history. It will not work.

The Cross is therefore the place where God's Way 'crosses' our way, and our way 'crosses' God's Way. Each road is actively intersected by the other, converse road. This is a positive clashing. Both roads can be understood, from their context= how God 'beholds' and 'moves' toward the world and history, from outside it moving into it, differs fundamentally from how we see and act towards the world and history, from within it in movement through it.

God has no 'position' vis a vis the world and history other than the active intervening in relation to it which he chooses in the freedom of love. If you want 'to know where God stands', look at the divine heart's disposition toward where you stand.

We are entirely positioned in the limits of our situation. We fear the limitlessness coming dynamically into the limited to change it, for we want to master the limited by our own way of conquering it. Thus we want to run the limited from within its own terms of reference. We do not want the apple cart overturned.

The Cross, from God's side= the limited overturned by the limitless yet the limitless contained within the limited.

The Cross, from our side= the limited ventured in deep waters and questing for new land on the far shore for no good reason. The waters are too deep, the new land is too far.

An old man accosted by two ladies singing hymns on a tuneless piano in the hospital for the dying, as the old boy warms his hands on a cup of steaming liquid= "religion's all right in its place, but you don't want it with your cup of tea."

The Cross= the Spirit intrudes, with an intention of his own, upon our routines whose agenda is to keep the Spirit out, so as to maintain our own way of doing things.

Insofar as we were created to be Spirit-Bearing in our foundation, which is similar in fathomlessness to God, so our insistence on founding our power and wisdom on power over, and certainty about, the world and history, means we found our depth on our capacity to overpower and dominate the limited realm in which we are placed. We do not want religion with our tea -- or with anything else.

By trying to tame the world and history, we tame ourselves. It is we who are impotent and foolish, lost in trackless wastes. This is 'progress.'

We are free to try out every vicissitude of our way, including our way of fixing, improving, even transcending, our situation.

There cannot be any compromise between God's Way and our way. That God allows us our way is obvious. We cannot come to God's Way through force or by coercion, nor by magic and the intimidation of majesty.

We have to come to realise our way does not work, as an end in itself, and therefore it is God's Way at work in our way that is our real foundation.

The Cross= a contention between God and humanity, fairly fought out, over what power and what wisdom is powerful enough and wise enough to rectify the world and history.

The Cross= a contention between God and humanity over the power and wisdom that can redeem the world and history, against the impotence and folly which regards itself 'the only way to proceed and to think.' This is, in reality, betraying and destroying the very ship on stormy seas it purports to be repairing as it sails.

Repairing the vessel we all sail in, and hold in common, is indeed necessary, but our manner of doing it is, little by little, imperceptively yet inevitably, sinking the ship for everyone.

The Cross 'stops the rot.'

The Cross is 'against the run of play.'

God's Way is the way of heart.

The Cross= the limitless not working against the limited, but the limitless working within the confines of the limited, yet not confined by the limited.

Passion= the limitless as the engine of the limited, transfiguring it and everything it touches.

'SAVIOUR-ISM' AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO REDEMPTION

The Loss of Redemption among Jews and Christians

PRELUDE

The terms 'Salvation' and 'Redemption' are used repeatedly in the Jewish Bible. Salvation, given its role as the more clear-cut kind of divine help, occurs more frequently. Redemption, given its unique and special role as the most radical and fundamental divine intervention that the Messiah is 'anointed' to perform, occurs less frequently. Though both terms in Hebrew arise very early on, and have exceedingly primitive etymological root meanings, not only does Salvation occur more often and Redemption occur less often, but also, Salvation undergoes less metamorphosis over time, its spiritual implications always pretty obvious in the primal physical action of saving, whilst Redemption undergoes more evolution down the ages, the spiritual undertone latent in the primal physical action of redeeming only gradually crystallising. It is not surprising that Redemption is deployed more numerous in the Post Exilic Isaiah than in any other prophet, for it is this prophet who is given by God to declare the meaning of Redemption that differs so markedly from Salvation in the Four Slave Songs. Moreover, this prophet is the only scriptural source in the Jewish Bible for the Messiah's Descent into Hell= the key to what makes the divine power of redeeming so different to the divine power of saving. Finally, it is this prophet who attributes divinity, in some sense, to the Messiah, making the Redeemer divine-human.

All this is different, and odd. The Jewish Bible is adamant that only God 'saves', but whilst it is also God who 'redeems', this power of redeeming is extended from the divine to the human in the strange figure of the Messiah as the 'Suffering Servant' of God.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Salvation is almost invariably confidently named. Redemption, by contrast, is now and again not named, rather, it is described by equivalent terms. This happens all the time in the Christian Bible; for example Paul gives an account of redeeming in the three-fold process of [1] 'calling' [summons to the human heart by God], then [2] 'justification' [vindication of the heart in humanity gambled upon by the heart in God], and finally [3] 'glorification' [the honouring of the victory of the heart of God in the human heart]. Yet this non naming of Redemption also happens in the Jewish Bible. Both Jews and Christians, whatever their disagreements of interpretation, know more or less what they mean when speaking of Salvation. By contrast, both Jews and Christians struggle to articulate Redemption= its meaning comes more slowly, over time, like brief lightning flashes that come and go in a numinous divine darkness. Redemption is the ultimate secret of divine wisdom and divine power that the Jews were chosen to carry, as a heavy burden, and to suffer for, as a savage wound. They wrestle with it; since they are the people upon whom it was first inflicted, why

wouldn't it take a long time to come into clearer awareness? After all, the Jews virtually ignored The Book of Job until the Holocaust forced them to 'think again' about such matters as innocent suffering, the triumph of the wicked and the defeat of the righteous, in this world. Less understandable, and more worthy of rebuke, is that Christians, even after the Messiah has arrived, remain confused about the difference between Salvation and Redemption. That confusion has had serious consequences in Christian history.

The truth is, both Jews and Christians are historically confused about Salvation and Redemption, and this is down primarily to reasons to do with the pace, and 'economica', of divine revelation= the way God must give more accessible things before more difficult things -- though it seems that God likes to prefigure the greatest and deepest things initially, then hide them away during a time when simpler and more intelligible structures are erected on their mysterious foundation, only to uncover the buried implicit level later on, which revises everything seemingly settled, and agreed upon, throwing the whole edifice into newness and dynamic change.. Instability and lability take over, preventing the constant and static from dominating the spiritual landscape. This means, however, that religious people are always being wrong footed by God, and have to play catch-up. In the un-creative times when the static preserves everything, religious people think they know who they are, and what God wants from them. In the creative times when the dynamic shifts everything, religious people no longer have an identity, and no longer can anticipate what God will do. Their truer personhood comes alive only in chasing God's footsteps, and during that hunt God draws near to them, for in ceasing to know 'about' God, they come to directly experience God, or as Job puts it, 'to see for myself.'

The paradox is, Redemption is the older and primal spiritual reality, pointed at in The Lamb Slain From The Foundation of the World [Revelations, 13, 8; 1 Peter, 1, 18-20; 1 Corinthians, 2, 7-10]. But as a concession to human weakness, God allows Salvation to seem to have the priority, such that Redemption appears to 'nest' in Salvation, like a younger bird growing up in the shelter of the older bird. In reality, Redemption is prefigured in the story of Job, the oldest of all texts in the Jewish Bible; Redemption underlies the First Covenant with Abraham, and flows into the contending with God of Jacob. However, Redemption is submerged during the long captivity in Egypt. This is why the Law, as a 'formalised' and restricted Salvation, is instituted in the wake of Egypt, and Redemption is recovered, arduously and slowly, in David and the prophets, after the time of Moses. There is only one redeeming moment in the entire story of Moses; anyone who recalls this incident knows what Redemption is and how fundamentally it differs from Salvation. Yet, it is not true to call Moses [1391-1271 BC], as a later revisionist party in Judaism did [600-400 BC] -- the Mosaic party, or the Deuteronomists [as one scholar calls them] -- "the father of prophets." The very name Moses is a variant on 'saviour', and thus both as the instrument of his people's deliverance from Egypt, which was their liberation to serve God, and as Law-Giver, there is not much in Moses to connect him to Redemption. His connection is to Salvation.

There are also secondary and unhelpful reasons, to do with politics and historical circumstances, why the complicated partnership between Salvation and Redemption has been distorted, resulting in the confusion of their divinely given converse roles. This confusion began in Post Exile Judaism, and continued into early Christianity.

1,

What happened to the Jews after the Exile to Babylon?

From the time of the building of the Second Temple [500 BC] down to the time of Yeshua [30 AD] something strange seems to have happened among the Jews. Judaism polarised, or split, into bigger and smaller streams.

The smaller stream 'officially' took over Judaism, pushing the bigger stream to the margins. This happens all too often in the history of religions, but it happened to the Jews at a particular time and in a particular way.

Many scholars have commented upon this 'parting of the ways' in Jewish religious consciousness, but few have studied it as intensively as Margaret Barker in a score of heavily researched books. The story goes like this. During the reign of King Josiah [641-609 BC], written materials containing an early version of the contents of Deuteronomy were discovered. They dated from no earlier than 700 BC. However, after the return from Babylon, and during the rebuilding of the Temple, these writings were attributed to Moses, as if he had added them to the Ten Commandments [Deuteronomy, 31, 9; 31, 24-26]. This is clearly false. Moses [1391-1271 BC] was not the source for the multitudes of 'laws' in the newly found documents. But Margaret Barker shows that what she calls a 'Mosaic party' within Judaism used this 'legend' about the Mosaic origin of these relatively recent texts to push Judaism toward a much narrower religion, founded upon a vast and intricate web of Law. Indeed, these Law-oriented Jews did far worse. They 'redacted' the Jewish Scriptures -- an ugly word for an ugly deed of cutting, adding to, revising, the original text -- in order to play up the Law and play down the direct experience of God which in earlier times had been the decisive feature of both the prophetic fire and the priestly light..

These hagiographers of the Mosaic Law had given up on the direct experience of God, either as the Fire of God's Spirit burning the prophet's heart, or as the Light of God's Face shining in the Temple upon the soul of all who gathered in that locale of the Sacred. This means that the newly revamped religion of Law had given up on not only the dynamics of Redemption, but also had reduced the 'presence' of God to mere words in a text. This is a cataclysmic contraction of the beauty and meaning of Salvation..

Mere ordinances of outer behaviour replace the tumultuous engine of the heart and the contemplative eyes of the soul. The mind is left high and dry. It ceases to ponder the heart's depth, and becomes unable to gain sight into the soul's innerness. The mind is reduced to thinking about rules and regulations

governing behaviour. Such a mind becomes a legal accountant, keeping score, counting pluses in the positive column and minuses in the negative column, and generally is wholly confined to the shallow and the external. The very language of this pernicky mind is incapable of poetry, because it has no appreciation of the humanly subtle and the divinely mysterious manifest through metaphor and symbol. Law-obsessed consciousness is stupid, humanly and divinely. It has no awareness of, or concern for, the burdens humanity carries in existence, and it has no respect for the otherness of divinity: it tries to reduce divinity to a formula. Therefore human life, under the control of divinity, is lived under the domination of a formula.

The paradox, ambiguity, contradiction, absurdity, of human existence is safely but blindly ignored; the messiness of human inter-relating is safely but untruthfully denied. The ordinances of the Law are dealt with like a positivist scientist deals with facts and figures. You measure, you calculate, but you do not understand what is right in front of you.

But what happens in this new 'Mosaic' regime is even worse than that loss of all mental capacity for the astuteness and nuancing necessary to wisdom.

The Law -- which should be only a yoke of discipline, a means to an end -- becomes an end in itself. The Law becomes all we know of God, and so it is reduced to the status of a tin pot 'god', before which everyone must bow-- or else. This is what opens the door to the Law becoming Satanic Accusation, the devil's best weapon. Tempt us into sin, then condemn us, legally and judgementally, for breaking the Law. Case closed..

Clearly, the Law also becomes a weapon of social power for an elite of those upholding it to use against the ordinary people governed by it. The religious elite claim to know the Law better than anyone -- it would take four life times to study all its multiple strictures -- and therefore claim the unique right to apply it in human affairs. Somehow, the Law invariably bites more harshly on the populace than on the elite.

Indeed, when the Law is used in such an inhuman and ungodly way, its very 'rightness', its very 'correctness', its very 'kosherness', becomes the very devil, since this allows for a veritable demonic host of abuses, all of which have been evident down the ages. The Law used in this wrong spirit bullies, forces conformity, adopts an authoritarian stance; it trumpets its unilateral power through intimidation, and threat= 'the Law is the only god, so bend your knee to god, or god will punish you.' Any unethical, unmerciful, unkind, inhuman, deeds can be justified under the cloak of the Law, because its self-appointed guardians can lie to themselves and others about the evil they do, claiming they are merely the instrument of enforcing the Law against all those who defy its claim to legitimacy, and rebel against its commands. Thus, the Law can be used not only to cow people into submission, but also to rationalise the moral and physical murder of people who do not agree that the Law is the only god, and this god must be obeyed, or dire results will follow.

The Pharisees, with whom Yeshua was constantly at war in the New Testament, are the heirs of the Mosaic party which high-jacked mainstream Judaism 500 years earlier. It was this Law-following mentality that, for example, objected to Yeshua healing people on the Sabbath. It is important to realise that two cultures of Law, religious [Jewish] and secular [Roman], converged to crucify the Messiah.

The false 'elevation' of the religious Law to the status of 'the only god' is very dangerous, and far reaching in effects. The 500 years in which the 'Deuteronomy faction' tended to take over Judaism were marked by the near total disappearance of prophecy, and another questionable sign, the rise of political peace and economic prosperity.

Yet this is also the time when the secret wisdom of Redemption came out of hiding in the dark deeps of God. Though the more primitive meanings of redeeming are to be found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, it is in Isaiah and the Psalms that the more advanced and profound mysteries of redeeming are indicated. Thus, the tradition of David continued to develop and come to maturity. It was the Davidic stream of Jewish tradition that produced Yeshua, and all those Jews who experienced him as the Mashiach.

However, when the Satanic Accuser takes over the Law, it then seems that to seek the way of saving or struggle with the way of redeeming are increasingly misunderstood, and lost. The Davidic stream flowed on, but more underground.

The prophets revealed, before the Babylonian Exile, that the First Covenant had ended, and that God would give to the Jews a Second Covenant, the Covenant of the Messiah coming to redeem the world.

A worrying thought obtrudes= were the Mosaic Jews trying to revive the Old Covenant, out of lack of faith in the coming of the New Covenant? This would make the stream of Judaism given over to the new and 'reconfigured' Mosaic Law also the Judaism 'conservatively' trying to go back to the First Covenant.

The story gets more twisted.

In effect, this conservatism tries to prove the 'legitimacy' of the Law by tracing it back to the primal beginnings. 'At the start, the Law ruled, and everybody bowed their heads.' This is a Satanic Lie. In the beginning, God was accessible, and directly encountered. There was no Law. The Law appears later, as a sign of a falling away. Though it might be 'good' that the falling away is intervened on, and stopped, it is also 'bad' that the Law is ever necessary.

The 'Tao Te Ching' of Lao Tzu gets such logic of inversion= when the Tao was lost, you get fraternity, when fraternity is lost, you get rules and regulations, and so on it goes.

"When the true Way falls into disuse, there is benevolence and rectitude;

when cleverness emerges, the great pretence begins.”

Freud's myth of a primal horde ruled over by a mean and brutal patriarch whom they murder is really about the understandable human ambivalence towards the coming of the Law. On one level, we bend our heads to the Lawful Figure of Authority. On another level, we dream of killing him off. Thus do 'super-ego versus id' enter their unending opposition.

The Law is a 'curse' -- as Paul said -- that will only be eradicated when there is neither super ego nor id. You cannot get rid of one; both go, or neither go. The super-ego people are dishonest about their rebellious urges toward Authority; the id people are dishonest about their guilt toward Authority.

2,

What is the true role of the Law?

The Law was given to the Jews after Egyptian Exile, to remind them of the religion they had lost. The Law was falsified after Babylonian Exile, again in the aftermath of losing their religion. The Law is a reminder to people who are without religion, people whose organic and intuitive roots in religion no longer function. The Law is only brought in when our immediate connection to God is sundered..

It is important that in the time of Moses, the Law is 'constrained' by the Temple. The Law confronts us with the hurtful reality that we have become disconnected from God, yet the Temple discloses to us, and shows us in immediate experience, that we can regain connection, because in the Temple we encounter the 'presence' of God, as Moses did at the Burning Bush. Isaiah, 63, 9= ".his presence saved them."

The First Temple, unlike the Second, conveyed the fullness of Salvation as God's presence. It therefore portrayed the Law as a necessary discipline, helping people in their everyday life to reconnect to God. The real reconnection, however, was more than keeping the commandments, it was the contemplation of and living in God's actual illuminative and enlivening presence. The more we reconnect with the living God, the less do we need any curbing; we can trust our spontaneous reaction.

Though the Law contains positive commands to do this, as well as negative commands not to do that, there is a more subtle sense in which the Law is 'essentially' negative, not positive, since its focus remains firmly fixed on the brokenness of our link to God. It is such distance from God which leads us into transgression. Consequently, despite the Law telling us to love God and love neighbour, the Law has no power to spark the transformation in us necessary to trust love in our being and living. The Law trenchantly, and unflinchingly, delivers the unflattering news that we have lost God, and in that situation, there is a road back to God, and a road going further away from God.. Still, the Law is not a 'god', and in itself, it cannot 'cross the gap.'

In short, the Law tells us our interior roots are still uprooted from God. In this situation of needing re-connection to God, we may know what it is better to do, to draw close to God, yet the pressure from within is such we are propelled into doing what we know is worse in terms of putting ourselves outside God. The Law does not let us off the hook of knowing we are 'not there yet.' For people sunk in sin, and perfectly content with it, the Law is a severe wake up call.

The Temple ensures the dialectic between outer discipline and inner awareness. The Temple is needed to temper the harshness of the Law, making it serve human transformation in 'the inner parts.' Therefore, the Temple puts the Law in its proper place by making it plain we can be reconnected to God, for in the Temple we come back into the presence of God. That makes us hopeful, and provides medicines that actually heal our divine estrangement. The God of Law, even when the Law does not itself become a tin pot god, a non-compassionate and strict dictator, is the God we have lost. The God of the Temple is the God we encounter, and thus is the God we can regain. The ethos of the Temple stops the Law from becoming an absolute, holding human nature in chains out of an inherent pessimism about its chances of regaining God. The Temple reveals the God who is already near, and yearns for our return more than we, in our crippled state, can yearn for returning. This God is a magnet, drawing us closer.

Thanks to the Temple, Salvation becomes ontological; it is not just ethical regeneration, it is the regeneration of our entire being and life. Paul captures this when he refers to Christ's Salvation rendering us 'dead to sin', and thus able to 'walk in newness of life' [Romans, 6, 4].

The Law without the Temple loses Salvation, distorts its spirit, cramps its Eros.

A Hassidic story captures the Temple attitude.

A father says to his son who has wandered far off, return to me. The son says, I cannot. So the father replies, come as far as you can, and I will meet you there.

Come as far as you can= God will go the rest of the way, making up the lack.

Only the Temple, with the Law as one of its practices, but never the deciding one, can deliver the message of the Hassidic story.

The Law without the Temple= the start of the road to perdition, the beginning of the Law taken over by Satan the Accuser.

3,

Salvation, focused on the Temple and the priest, and Redemption, focused on the World and the king, are both underplayed, and truncated, under the revisionist Mosaic regime.

The Law without the Temple can exercise only the power to condemn. From this comes puritanism, moralism, judgementalism, legalism, conservatism, authoritarianism, fundamentalism= the patriarchal road of Satanic Law.

The Temple does not condemn. It sometimes calls to account and rebukes, but in the ultimate, it helps and heals. As many in the Christian East have pointed out, the Temple is a hospital for the ailing.

The Messianic Kingship stemming from David and reaching its climax in the Reversal Messiah of the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, inverts the Law, not only by its own humility and suffering, serving rather than lording it over, but also by the universality of its outreach to the entirety of humanity. By redeeming the 'hell' in each and all, making hell the gate to the redeemed condition, the clashing of heaven versus hell ends.

The conclusion seems inevitable. The Mosaic Law cramped the Salvation of the Temple. Equally, the Mosaic Law repudiated the fullness of Redemption for the World. It could only have been the Mosaic revisionists who ignored the inner restoration attained through the paradox of descending to and passing through hell, preferring a 'Redeemer' not Reversed, not suffering for the suffering of all humanity, not humiliated for the humiliation of all humanity; rather, a triumphant, all-conquering Redeemer who frees the Jews from outer chains of oppression, but leaves the real 'bondage', the inner chains of hellishness, intact.

The bogus Redemption limited to Israel, narrow and external, was opposed to the true Redemption, universal and deep, brought by Yeshua the Messiah. These were two competing hypotheses over what redeeming would accomplish.

The ordinary Jews were closer to the bigger Judaism, while their religious leaders were -- with honourable exceptions -- closer to the smaller Judaism. The people did not know whether to defer to their leaders, or believe the evidence of their own souls, their own hearts, confronted by the soul of God, the heart of God, luminously alive, and burning warmly, in the strange man confronting them. The man whom David foresaw; a man is coming whose heart is deep= Yeshua of Nazareth.

4,

What happened to early Christianity was that it became uncertain over whether it should continue, or break from, Judaism.

This is also a complicated story, and an unhappy one..

By the first century AD, Redemption had become eschatological for Christians. Redemption will not be finished 'finally' until the Second Coming of Christ [Luke, 21, 28; Romans, 8, 23; Ephesians, 4, 30]. Peter says God is not

'slack' in his help for us, but 'long-suffering' towards us [2 Peter, 3, 9], giving us the time needed to 'work out our salvation in fear and trembling.'

For the early Christians, then, the deliverance of the Jews from Exile was regarded as the foreshadowing in history of the Messianic deed of deliverance by which history would be brought to a victorious end, after an indeterminate span of time. Only Yahweh knows 'how long it will take.'

A commentator points out that it was probably due to the nationalistic and political interpretation that became attached to the Jewish expectation of the Messiah that caused the first wave of Christians to rarely call Yeshua 'Redeemer' in the Greek of the New Testament [Greek= lytrotes]. They translated the Hebrew 'Mashiach' into the Greek 'Christ', but reacting against the limits of Messianic Judaism at that time, they seem to have almost slipped back into regarding the Christ as only a Saviour.

This is a mixed picture of wheat and tares jumbled up. It needs to be unravelled step by step.

[1] A simple statistic points at the extent of the ambiguity gripping the first Christians. Whereas in the Jewish Bible Salvation and cognate terms, compared with Redemption and cognate terms, occur in a ratio of 75% to 25%, in the Christian Bible the two groups of terms, saving and redeeming, occur in a ratio of 88% to 12% [according to John Cruden's 18th Century 'Biblical Concordance']. Of course, there is no pressure to be overly impressed by numbers, because the quality of something that happens is not always indicated by the frequency with which it happens. Something that happens once can be more meaningful than something that repeats and repeats..

None the less, the disparity between the Jewish and Christian ratios is disturbing. Why is the bias in favour of Salvation over Redemption so much worse in the Christian Bible vis a vis the Jewish Bible? For the Jews, Salvation is already at work, whilst Redemption is coming; that might be why Salvation words occur more frequently than Redemption words. For the Christians, Redemption has arrived, so it might be thought that Redemption words ought to rise in frequency relative to Salvation words. The opposite is the case.

The ratio of Salvation to Redemption of almost 9 to 1 for the Christian New Testament is shocking. Some kind of bias is at work, rendering Yeshua as merely a new and improved Saviour, not the long awaited Messiah who will redeem all of time in this world, from the first to the last, 'olam to olam.'

[2] The truth is, early Christianity had to break from Mosaic Judaism, but should have continued with Davidic Judaism, taking the latter further even as it blocked the former. Whilst it is certainly fair to assert that the "grace" of Salvation and the 'truth' of Redemption brought by Yeshua the Mashiach differ markedly from the Law of Moses, especially as exaggerated by the later

Deuteronomists, such grace and such truth was already present in earlier Judaism, the Judaism of David.

But the statistics suggest that to avoid the cramped and pseudo Redemption espoused by the then current Mosaic Judaism, the early Christians made Yeshua mainly a Saviour, assimilating redemptive features to the uniqueness of his Salvation. This means the 'Messianic' becomes Salvational, not Redemptive. The Messiah is first a Saviour, then secondarily a Redeemer. Or, much worse, the redemptive features are a sort of afterthought added on to the primary salvational features.

It is the other way round, despite the fact that Yeshua was a Saviour before he became a Redeemer, in the chronology of time [Mathew, 1, 20-23; Luke, 19, 8-10]. We should understand, not by the mind alone, but in the soul and in the heart, that Yeshua came to redeem everyone and everything, over time, in time, for all time, and by virtue of that universal Redemption, removed the conditionality on Salvation and made it universal as well.

The early Christians got horse and cart backwards. We can learn from their mistake, but we cannot slavishly follow them in it because they came before us in time. Time corrects the inevitable errors in every tradition. What Mosaic Jew today keeps the ordinances in the Law that require him to stone women who commit adultery? Yeshua countered that Satanic piece of the Law with, 'let he who is without sin cast the first stone.'

There is something new about Christ's Salvation, as any quick perusal of the 4 Gospels will show. His miracles, his healings, his teachings, are all Salvation in its more generous 'ultimate' mode. Still, Yeshua is downright dismissive to the woman of Canaan whose request for healing he first refuses because she is not a Jew, but among the pagan believers against whom Israel had contended so long. This is Mosaic Judaism in action! When she insists, he reverses his prior refusal, granting her desire for her daughter's healing, and praising her faith which has enabled this miracle to happen. Such an incident intimates the post-Redemption universal Salvation, as distinct from the pre-Redemption conditional Salvation.

But there are further bad outcomes of the early Christian over-estimation of Salvation and under-estimation of Redemption.

[3] This might suggest to Christians that they can afford to be primarily concerned with their own Salvation, whilst treating the Redemption of the world as a secondary matter. Grudgingly they give away, or give up, something precious to 'ransom' those in bondage, but there is a tendency to regard this as merely the 'cost' of Salvation. Salvation has no cost. That is its whole point. It is free, overflowing, unmeasured. Redemption does have a cost, yet it should not be regarded as the price of being saved; it needs to be understood as the extremity love will go to for those who are in hell, and cannot get out. Our blood is needed to kindle the world's sparks. We cannot give blood except as the sovereign deed of the heart, in its supreme passion, the passion like Christ's once he ceased being a Saviour, and became

Isaiah's Reversed King and Redeemer. The man of deep passion entered the end game, where humans fear to go, and made the real 'last stand' there and then.

Our fire of love needs to burn so vividly, and to be so moved by the poignance and pathos of the human condition in its terrible tragedy, that we would gladly dive in to the mystery, and die a million times, to redeem one person stuck where we are all stuck.

Christ did not like= hypocritical religious leaders, who burden their followers with heavy religious demands they wear lightly; the crypto bourgeois for whom nothing else was sacred except money; the luke-warm sitting on the fence..

All of these stances block Redemption more than they obscure Salvation.

It virtually reaches the point where the religion calling itself 'Christianity', Messiah-ism, has no Messiah!

Christians, if followers of the Messianic, are mainly concerned with being redeemed and redeeming. This puts saving into a different perspective. The question who is, or who will be, saved, becomes totally irrelevant. When the Christian Way is being redeemed and redeeming, then our own 'saving' is of little or no concern. Like anyone else, we prefer Eros to the Daemonic if given a choice; the wine of joy is good and the bitter dregs of the wine of blood are harder. But the Daemonic gives us no such choice, it stabs us with the fate everyone avoids, and yet this very knife to the heart reignites our dormant passion. For passion, the cup of sacrifice is more moving, more urgent, more intense, more motivating, than the cup of goodness. If we are touched by Redemption, we are changed, and become deeper and more fiery, and it is this we give away, and give to, our brother and sister in need of it.

Redemption stands with people, and dies for people, because of not accepting any single one of them to be lost. This is supreme love. It is not a grudging duty. It is the fervour with which every heart 'laid hands on' by God's heart burns.

When we can offer good things, to save people, we do so, unreservedly and unstintingly. Salvation is the cup we drink with other people. We celebrate life together. Equally, when we must 'lay down our life', making sacrifice to redeem the dark and suffering depths of existence where our brothers and sisters are under ultimate threat, we do that, gladly and willingly.

Salvation= we are all on our way to a Wedding.

Redemption= we are all in a Journey and Battle, and no one knows if we will arrive, or win through.

Many Christians, like everyone else, will remain children of Light. They respect the Fire, and thank it, but they cannot enter it, burn with it, enact its calling.

Some Christians, like very few people anywhere else, will become children of Fire. In them you will see now what will enflame everyone at the end. Do not call these Christians 'martyrs' and consign them to the past. They are more than martyrs. They are kings and warriors of the Reversed Messiah. They are the lovers of humanity.

Christianity will continue to lose existential credibility until it grasps that its calling is to end not the blasphemy against God, but to end the blasphemy against humanity. That blasphemy will cost to end. The true Christians of the real Redemption are thus perfectly clear to others. To shed my blood, for a fellow human, is the very faith in humanity that God holds.

[4] It boils down to something basic. Christianity must be, basically, Christ Crucified. Everything that matters flows from the Cross.

St Paul, Galatians, 2, 16; 19-21= "A man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ, ..because by works of the Law shall no one be vindicated.. For I through the Law died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God [the Messiah], who loved me and gave himself for me. ..for if vindication were through the Law, then Christ died to no purpose."

This points to the worst of all disasters affecting Christianity at its start, and still haunting Christians today, in these turbulent and tormented times. This is worse than putting Salvation 'higher on the agenda' than Redemption, or assimilating the dynamics of the latter into the former. That manoeuvre already fails to do justice to redeeming. Much of the peculiar, and particular, meaning of redeeming gets diluted. However, there is a worse error which distorts the very Cross of Christ.

[a] The yearning for life after death.

Both in the West and in the East of Christianity, albeit in different ways, Christians have contrived to shrink the 'good news' of the Messiah Reversed, Christ's Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, making this three-step journey and battle in the depths of existence merely a confirmation of the possibility of an 'eternal' life in heaven after death on earth. For far too many Christians, this scenario is all that Christianity is. 'Tikkun olam' is jettisoned. Christ's 'special' Salvation becomes viewed as guaranteeing eternal life, outside the world.

However, this very non-Jewish emphasis on 'the next life', which cares little for 'this life', has to be set in context. At the time of Yeshua, it seems Judaism was uncertain as to whether there was any continuation of the human spirit, soul, heart, mind, after physical death. Some Jews felt that the line in Scripture about Yahweh as 'the God of the living' should have been sufficient to reassure people that death is not extinction. Was this attitude very widespread among the majority of Jews?

Similarly, the gods and goddesses of Greece provided no guarantee of human survival of, or continuation after, death. They represent the highest humanity can aspire to culturally. They are not spiritual in nature. They cannot deliver genuine immortality. Fame in human culture -- mere mortals remembering forever the glorious and gifted name of Achilles -- is a limited immortality, for death destroys cultures as well as peoples.

Plato was in no doubt that there was a realm of Eternity beyond the transitory, and constantly degrading, world of time. Yet, who could be certain of reaching the exalted realm after death? The criteria of entry were doubtless far from clear to the mass of common people in Greece..

Thus, the perennial human worry about 'what happens after death' seems to have been exacerbated at the time of Yeshua. In this situation, two things about his bodily Resurrection from actual death are noteworthy.

--First, in the climate of uncertainty where people speculate this, or speculate that, this event is spectacularly decisive. The grave is not the end. O Death, where is thy sting?

--Second, whereas the pagan immortality -- whatever it means or does not mean -- is aristocratic, confined to the culturally prominent, this rebirth is not confined to 'the rich and famous', but extended to everybody, and therefore welcomes the ordinary people. That 'inclusion' of the culturally, politically, economically, 'lowly' is very persuasive! Christ's whole mission, but especially his rising again from death back into life, appeals mightily to the 'common man' of that era.

The same might be argued for Judaism, though in terms of the ordinary religious Jew vis a vis the hierarchy of religious leaders. There is something genuinely democratic in Yeshua's Salvation. It reaches ordinary life, and can be understood by ordinary people. His parables are brilliant because they take principles that religious leaders are apt to fossilize, and try to own by wrapping them in a mystique, and give them back to the people really living them, for in the parables religious issues are fully incarnate in 'real life.'

There is, then, something attractive in Salvation 'extending' from new aliveness in the here and now [Jewish] to new eternal life thereafter [Christian]..

But there is also something very dangerous, and skewed.

The real question is, can everyone 'relocate' to the realm of eternal life after death? If there are any exclusions, creating a duality of included versus excluded, then the new focus on eternity is itself sucked back into the old Jewish conditional Salvation. Is that really such an improvement in the human condition?

The idea of a few people being eternally saved while the rest of humanity are eternally thrown away is obscene. For, who could be at peace and enjoy eternity whilst other people are prevented from entering it?

Two very different issues are conflated. That people survive death, in some way, or are raised from death back into life, in some manner, is a different matter to the question of the redemption of the entire world process from beginning to end.

In reality, the latter secures the former. If redeeming this world fails, then the 'retreat' to heaven is a fall-back position, a sign of defeat. In that case, Satan wins the bet he made with God in the Book of Job. Only if 'God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven', has God prevailed in the existential gamble he has taken with humanity. Regarding heaven as the 'fail-safe position' for the failure of heaven to win the earth casts God as the largest 'loser' ever.

[b] The Platonic Eternity is not heaven.

Early Christians seem to have unwittingly adopted Plato's dematerialised, and disembodied, Eternity as their model of the Jewish 'heaven'; this in itself is a huge mistake, because in the Jewish Bible the heavenly has very different connotations. It is not a better 'space', outside time. It is the Fire of God's passion that dwells in, and abides through, time. Greek 'Eternity' is not the Jewish 'Everlasting.' The former is spatial, the latter is temporal. The Jewish Everlasting means victory in time. It has no implication of escape to a better place. Places are in time. The Paradise lost at the beginning of time will only be resuscitated at the end of time, as the Sacred Garden within the Holy City.

The point is, Plato's Eternity is frightened of, and hostile to, time. It wants to see, to contemplate, to feel and bathe in, the beauty and felicity of the Infinite Fullness for a timeless Eternity without beginning or end, without vicissitudes, without losses, without degeneration, without any change but always statically the same, undiminished. The Platonic Higher Realm is the ultimate 'safe haven' proof against the depredations of time.

The Platonic Eternity, forever at rest and 'timeless', is not the Jewish heaven in any sense, none the less it is where countless Christians, then and now, want to go. They will meet any conditionality to get there.

[c] The Cross is not the condition of entry to Eternity.

This seeking of the Platonic Eternity -- rather than acceptance of and going with the will of heaven toward the earth, which is to ignite it in Holy Fire -- is made worse when further non-Messianic, even anti-Messianic, beliefs are woven in.

By putting a condition on Salvation, restricting who can and cannot be saved, the answer is provided to the question of how a person is to secure their ticket to Eternity. They accept Christ as their Saviour. Given his new Salvation has the power to transport us to Eternity, then if we do not accept it,

we will not go to Eternity. The old Jewish Hell will claim us forever instead. Or, perhaps we will end up in the grey and ghostly half-life of the Greek Hades.

This doctrine of 'accepting Christ as your Saviour, in order to get in to heaven', has more subtle and more crude versions.

In the East, "accepting Christ as your Saviour" comes to mean 'communing with him.' He is not a mediator, or messenger, of the Light of God. He is that Light incarnate in human form, as the name Yeshua proclaims. Thus to commune with the Light is to enter its Eternal Life. That starts in this world, and goes into the next world. This emphasis is mystical. Resting in the nearness of God, it also generates a humane ethos. Everyone, somehow, will be saved in the end, thanks to the kindness of God..

Mathew, 4, 16-17= "The people who sat in darkness saw great light. And to them who sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

In the West, "accepting Christ as your Saviour" comes to take on a much more Satanic and threatening edge. The old Jewish dualistic conditionality of Salvation is back with a vengeance, since only the 'saved' get to go to eternal heaven, whilst the 'non saved' end up in eternal hell. This final division of sheep and goats is not mourned, but trumpeted triumphantly. This emphasis is moral, and at its worst, legal. Arising from the distance of God, it also generates a fearful and cold ethos. Only some, not all, will be saved, due to the strictness of God..

Western commentator= "Those who will not receive the salvation he had provided for them, whether Jews or Gentiles, must necessarily perish; for this plain reason, there is but one remedy, and they refuse to apply it."

Each stance can point to places in the Christian Bible to support their understanding [Acts, 4, 12; Mark 10, 23-27].

Sometimes Yeshua voices the older pre-Messiah conditionality of Salvation, sometimes Yeshua voices the newer post-Messiah universality of Salvation. But that is because both are true, as what obtains before and after Redemption.

Thus, both these stances are making the same mistake.

The Cross does not buy for us our ticket into Eternity, whether this 'purchase' is seen generously, as in the East, or seen severely, as in the West.

Though the East is closer to the post-Messiah universal Salvation, and the West is closer to the pre-Messiah conditional Salvation, neither understands that this contradiction is resolved only by Redemption.

Christianity is not 'Saviourism.'

The Cross is not the gate to heaven. It is doing something far more stupendous than raising the earth 'up', it is bringing heaven 'down.'

[d] The Cross is the defeat that wins victory.

The Cross is the Messianic Mystery in which heaven is made subject to hell, in order to change hell, such that heaven is only reborn from hell.

The core of Messiah-ism is not about being saved 'from' this world into the next world. Its core is the redeeming of this world 'bought' by the sacrifice of the Redeemer. His sacrifice reaches down to the mysterious foundation of the world, to change that foundation, from the very bottom up.

The Cross is not the free pass into heaven.

The Cross is the costly key for unlocking hell.

Any wish to be saved from this world's rigours is a lack of faith in God, in God's Redeemer, in God's Redemption.

Saviourism is a doctrine of world disgust, of fear and loathing for existence, of a shrivelled soul and a cowardly heart.

It totally distorts Christ's Cross.

[5] Summation.

The Redeemer is active when it is understood that in him, God has taken the initiative to act mercifully, vulnerably, passionately, on behalf of those who are powerless to help themselves. The Redeemer came for those many who cannot be saved, and are therefore forsaken, abandoned, bereft, beyond help.

When people are expected to help themselves, in some fashion, however limited, and condemned for not responding, and thus remaining outside the help, it is Salvation that is operative.

Christ Jesus came to overturn the limitation of Salvation, by making it secondary to the primacy and limitlessness of Redemption.

The Cross has no condition attached to it. It is unconditional.

The Holy Saturday ceremony on Friday evening of Passion Week=

"O Christ, as both God and man, thou has revealed thy hidden secrets to those in hell who cry: there is none holy but thee.."

God's secret wisdom is hidden in hell. Once redeemed by the Cross, hell becomes the 'dark gate' leading to the New Land of Heart.

5,

Though Yeshua is not often called the Redeemer in the Greek of the Christian Bible, there are indications he is understood as such..

For one thing, though rare compared with salvational terminology, the few instances of redemptive terminology are striking. The activity of Yeshua as the Christ is described in 'redemptive' terms as the paying of a ransom in order to deliver people from their condition of enslavement; the ransom paid by Yeshua is his death on the Cross [Mathew, 20, 28; Mark, 10, 45; 1 Timothy, 2,6]. Therefore, the Redeemer pays for the redeemed with his blood [Ephesians, 1, 7]. The tragically deep human alienation from God has been overcome through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ [Romans, 4, 25]; hence, Christ has 'reconciled' God and humanity [2 Corinthians, 5, 17-21]. In fact, Paul uses the term 'deliverance' in its redemptive sense in several places [Romans, 3, 24; Romans, 8, 23; 1 Corinthians, 1, 30; Ephesians, 1, 14; Ephesians, 4, 30].

What priority Redemption maintains in contrast to Salvation, and the creeping blight of Saviourism as the worst of all falsifications of Christianity, must remain a concern.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that, even if the Greek terms for redeeming are absent, other images and other words are deployed to invoke the reality and power of Redemption. This is what offsets the statistics which would otherwise be so disturbing.

What are the alternate expressions and symbols for Redemption in the Christian Bible? They are familiar to Christians, and so can be briefly alluded to, rather than quoted in full. They fall into themes.

[1] Yeshua explicitly identifies himself with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah [Mark, 8, 31; Mark, 9, 31; Mark, 10, 33-34]. Even dying on the Cross, he utters with almost his last breath the words of David in the Psalms that indicate the hell of abandonment, to declare this is the agony he has entered. Yeshua's repeated insistence he has come to serve, not to be served, to minister to, not to be ministered to, manifests the Reversed King and Redeemer [Mathew, 8, 17; Mathew, 12, 18; Acts, 4, 27; Acts, 4, 30; Romans, 15, 21; 1 Peter, 2, 22-25]. Yeshua explicitly declares that his mission includes the service of self-sacrifice, and that he will give his life as a 'ransom' for many [Mark, 10, 45]. He voices the central paradox of redeeming= 'the first will be last, and the last will be first.'

[2] Yeshua performs deeds of Salvation which are recognizable from Jewish tradition, and depicts Salvation in familiar Jewish ways= [a] a light for revelation to the Gentiles [Luke, 2, 30-32]; [b] a transition from death to life [John, 5, 24]; [c] peace with God [Romans, 5, 1]; [d] a gift of grace through faith [Ephesians, 2, 8-9]. None the less, even during the initial salvational phase of his calling, redemptive themes are alluded to in his fiery denunciation of Jewish leaders espousing the 'blind' and 'deaf' Mosaic

Judaism, and acting in the main from lust for power, prestige and privilege, rendering their leadership heartless and hypocritical. Indeed, if we look at the people whom Christ attacks, we will see they are the high and mighty who oppress, and cheat, the poor. Redemption will end the division of human society into the powerful few and the powerless many. Not only does Yeshua exhort the rich to give much of their money to the poor [Mark, 10, 17-22; Luke, 19, 8-10] -- which is the generosity of Salvation extended into radical sharing among the community -- but also by the Reversal logic of Redemption, the poor and modest, and dispossessed, are valued, even as the wealthy and arrogant, sitting at the top table, are denounced [Acts, 9, 36; Acts, 10, 4; Acts, 10, 31; Acts, 24, 17]. Christ never manifests anger toward the ordinary human lot wherein we struggle with sin, and stumble under the weight of tragedy. It is the Mosaic Law that 'works the way of wrath', according to Paul. The Cross ends any anger of God toward humanity [Romans, 5, 6-10]. In the Cross, Yahweh accepts humanity's anger and despair towards God. The Cross is a heart to heart cry. So radical is the outreach of the Cross, God accepts even to be blasphemed for the sake of removing the Satanic blasphemy against the human.

[3] Yeshua brings 'not peace but a sword.' This is the sword of righteousness that demands truth in the inner parts from each and thus creates justice between all in their dealings one with another. Such righteousness is not attained by following the Law. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested" [Romans, 3, 21]. Indeed, the Redeemer brings both righteousness and wisdom= "God has made you members of Christ Jesus, and by God's doing he has become our wisdom and our righteousness, our holiness and our freedom" [1 Corinthians, 1, 30]. To link righteousness and wisdom is paradoxical. It creates the binding of fundamental inner change and fundamental outer change, a revolution in 'how the world works' that is at the same time a revolution in 'how the heart works.' The two mutually reinforce each other= political change, with no inner change, is not redemptive; inner change, with no political change, is not redemptive. The key to the human condition, within and without, is the redeeming of the human heart at its abysmal foundation. This is why Christ Jesus is the building block the Jews rejected, preferring not Isaiah's Slave of Yahweh, but a worldly conqueror like Cyrus who establishes good by overpowering evil. Despite being rejected, Yeshua's Reversal is the real foundation stone of Redemption.

[4] The righteousness brought by Redemption therefore operates through faith [Romans, 1, 16-17]. No one is justified, or vindicated, simply by keeping within the Law [Romans, 4, 22-25]. The 'lawful' are not the righteous, the virtuous, the upright. In Paul's understanding, the Law was only 'added' after Egypt because of the people's transgressions; it was meant as a 'schoolmaster.' But after Babylon, the Law became the supreme 'authority' in Judaism -- which could only be interpreted by Levite priests -- and this meant the way of faith, both in salvational activity, and in redemptive activity, was forgotten. Abraham came out of a safe and secure place to become a nomadic wanderer into the peril of the unknown. He followed the way of faith in Redemption, wrestling with its existential turbulence and paradox; he had

no Law whose instructions girded his every coming and going.. Abraham trusted God, wherever God prompted him to go, whatever God prompted him to do [Romans, 4, 18-25].

[5] It is through the Holy Spirit that we recognise, trust, love, the Redeemer sacrificed and humiliated on the Cross [Romans, 5, 8]. Since the Holy Spirit empowers the Redeemer, the Ruach plays a major role in redeeming, initiating us into the Messianic Mystery, and drawing us onward as we go through its dynamic process [Acts, 8, 14-17]. Thus, "the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption" [Ephesians, 4, 30]. The Holy Spirit took Yeshua down into hell, and raised him up from hell, and does the same with those who are, in Paul's words, 'crucified with Christ and resurrected with Christ', joining his death and joining his rebirth from death into life. Thus did John the Baptist differentiate his own baptism, for Salvation, from Yeshua's baptism, for Redemption= "As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Messiah, John answered them all, I baptise you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, ..he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire" [Luke, 3, 15-17].

[6] Yeshua identifies himself with the Davidic, not the Mosaic, kind of Good Shepherd, for this Messianic king dies for his sheep, indeed, is stripped of his power and glory for their sake [John, 10].

[7] At the Passover before his death on the Cross, which in Christian tradition became known as The Last Supper, Yeshua explicitly changes the 'daily bread' and cup of wine of Salvation into a bread and wine of Redemption, for he tells the disciples that the bread is now his body 'broken' for them, and the wine is now his blood 'spilled' for them. Whereas before the Redeemer has come the bread and wine are the sacraments of Eros, the Way of Light, after the Cross, the bread that is the broken body, and the wine that is the spilled blood, become participations in the Daemonic, the Way of Fire. They do not merely 'remind' us of the Fire; they baptise us into the Fire, so that its meaning, its energy, its potency, goes into us, for what we have to do. The Messianic Temple, the Third Temple, readies us for the place in the world where the two roads cross, the Golgotha in the world that leads straight into the hell beneath.

[8] Failures of individual righteousness, in their karmic consequences for collective injustice, are borne, paid for, and forgiven, by the Cross [Ephesians, 1, 7; Colossians, 1, 14]. There is no 'propitiation' in such atoning, but there is a realism in regard to the unbearable burdens people place on each other by their inability to love and be loved. This weight crushing everyone, of betraying and being betrayed, is lifted in redeeming, so all people can live together. Not fear driven propitiating, but the love which 'bears the brother', is the heart of forgiving -- rather than judging -- our brothers and sisters.

[9] The redeeming of any given person, and of all persons, will not be complete until the Second Coming of Christ at the time of the End [Luke, 21, 28; Romans, 8, 23; Ephesians, 4, 30].

[10] Christian tradition -- very strongly in the East -- has honoured the 'abysmal agonies' of David in the Psalms, which are clearly not salvational, but markedly redemptive.

Redemption is God's reply to David's 'deep crying to deep.' There is no other reply, because this is the deep answer to the human cry; God enters the human plight, and achieves the liberation of humanity from bondage in that abyss through the faithfulness, suffering, death, descent into hell, and resurrection from death and hell, of the Messiah.

Yeshua proclaims, 'God saves.' Mashiach, or Christ, means= God's Fire suffers to redeem the suffering of humanity in which the spark in the heart's abyss has all but gone out, leaving the world a dead crust of ashes beneath which a faint flickering of flame still lingers.

Christ Jesus came into the world 'to kindle fire', and his yearning was that it should be burning already in his time. His patience, and long suffering, is that it will take a long time to ignite. The time of Redemption is in God's hands; not even the Messiah knows it.

In a more mysterious sense, the End should always be at hand, so that we can experience the urgency to take our last stand to tip the balance.

6,

If Saviourism is to be purged from every Christian tradition, in whatever variant East or West, broad and beautiful or mean and ugly, something else must be understood.

It must be realised that the 'payment' the Messiah makes is not to a wrathful authoritarian judge, a dictator patriarchal god, nor is it to Satan the Accuser, whose Lie about God is the first and last adversary of the human venture. All kinds of dark and deadly twists have arisen in the West out of a fearful attitude toward the cost paid by the Redeemer.

There is no remedy if the East eliminates all cost, so there is no blood to blood suffering, just light to light joy.

Cost is existential. The heart understands. For, it is the heart that refuses the price, yet in witnessing the Messiah's heart taking it on, is moved to change.

7,

In response to the delving of Nicodemus, Salvation is described enigmatically as a new birth; a spiritual rebirth from above is necessary to enter the 'kingdom of heaven' [John, 3, 1-11]. Its perspective is very different, hard to grasp, from a human point of view, because it is the participation in a new creation [Romans, 5, 16-17]. The 'new heaven and the new earth'..

Nothing is more tantalisingly near yet remote than the many parables Yeshua tells about the 'kingdom of heaven.' The phrase is certainly open to abuse by Saviourism. In context, it means many things, some salvational, some redemptive.

Dealing with evil, finally, opens many possibilities previously crippled, or stopped. Redemption will bring a fullness of Salvation currently beyond imagination. We cannot imagine, and no Bible can put into mere words, what final feast God has prepared for everyone who has been wounded and redeemed by God's heart, never fully revealed in its grief and flame until the End.

We will all look back, and be glad it was hard, and pained, and an offence to us in wanting a straightforward saving from difficulty. The roundabout route proved more heroic and more profound. There were many casualties on the way. Redemption carried them, paid for them, all.

8,

Recently the Chief Rabbi of England stated that 'reading' the Scriptures always implies 'interpreting' them. There is no such animal as a 'literal' reading of the Jewish Bible or the Christian Bible.

The distortion of Scripture operates by reading some already explicit doctrine 'in' to the text. By contrast, to read in the Spirit is to be guided to read 'out' from the meaning implicit in the text in order to crystallise something illuminating or wise. This can be dramatic. Sometimes it will happen that, though familiar, a text comes alive and gets under our shallow comprehension, and hits us in the chest. These are the words that provoke sudden enlightenment, or instant combustion.

There are two main ways to read the Jewish and Christian Scriptures for any follower of Christ Jesus.

[1] One way is to read them in the Light, and this occurs in the Temple. The Temple is an experiential, immersed, embodied, meeting with the Light of God; in its sacred precincts the Light is at home. This is why the Temple is a place specially blessed to interpret the Scriptures in which that Light has 'spoken.' The Temple tradition has chosen from Scripture its key meaningful portions, and placed these in the sacred ceremonies. Over an entire liturgical year, all texts that have life in them, and are not just cultural accretions like barnacles on a ship's hull, get read aloud to the people gathered together. The way these readings are assembled, their shape and limit, and when they are called upon, constitutes the Temple's tradition of interpretation. The readings are chanted in the Temple for a good reason= so as to engage not just the cognitive and abstract mind nor the surging emotions, rather to address nous, soul and heart, at a more underlying level. Then we begin to 'see' and to 'hear' in the texts meanings otherwise missed.

If people want to study the Bible on their own, individually or in small groups, they should be guided by the liturgical framework within which Scripture has been placed. Just as the Law, ripped out of the motherly Temple, becomes an evil patriarchy, so too does Scripture deprived of its situating in the Temple lose its sacredness and become yet another weapon in the extensive armoury of Satanic Accusation.

It remains among the many jobs of the priest to pass on the teachings of the Scriptures as understood through the common, handed-on, tradition.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity continues the ethos of the First Jewish Temple, in regard not only to Law, but also Scripture. This has been lost in much of Western Christianity where the church space is white-washed to resemble more a court of law, or an academic hall, or even if not white-washed, resembles the over-impressive palace of a hierarchic 'lord' far above his people.. A sacred space will always be respectful, not casual, yet intimate. It emboldens closeness to God, and trust in Mystery.

[2] The other way of proceeding is to read the Jewish and Christian Bibles in the Fire, and this occurs when we let the Cross of Christ guide us to Scriptures, and allow its pillar of flame to search them and unearth what they 'really' intend.. This is a bold way of proceeding. It puts the Cross before any Scriptures, and it becomes the only key to their locked in condition.

This is what Paul did. He makes errors, as he admits, because he is still in the long drawn out travail of throwing off the heritage of the Deuteronomist-Mosaic, Law-dominant Judaism from which he came. Yet the deepest meanings of the Cross, and all that is mysteriously connected with it, are shot into Paul through direct confrontation, like flaming arrows, straight and true. "I preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and folly to the Greeks" [1 Corinthians, 1, 23]. Stumbling block= obstacle; the Cross is not sufficiently morally forceful towards the severity of 'this world.' Folly= nonsense; the Cross is irrelevant to climbing the ladder to the exaltedness of the 'other world.'

Paul was not 'gathered together' with the people of the Messiah. He was outside. He stood alone. He was even persecuting the Cross of Christ. Yet, once he met Christ Crucified and Risen, personally, this event scarred him, marked him, not just converting him, but turned him upside down and inside out. From that point onward, he 'knew' the truth of Redemption, and he needed no Scriptures to tell him. Indeed, in the wake of meeting the Christ 'in the Spirit', Paul reconsidered all his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Jewish Bible, and began to read out from these texts a new meaning he had never found before.

The superficial knowledge of Scripture evidenced by those who endlessly quote texts without any understanding of them should never be thought to take priority over the unmediated encounter with the Cross enflamed in the Spirit. This immediate confrontation with the Cross is prophetic.

[3] The priestly and prophetic stand in necessary tension. The prophetic will cause changes in tradition. The priestly will hold out for keeping the people together, showing how even revolutionary leaps forward should take everyone along.. The Light must not quench the Fire; the Fire must not sweep away the Light.

The Scriptures are useful, only in context. They must be handled by the Light or through the Fire.

Outside these two ways, 'personal interpretation' of Scriptures is, as Peter warns, not to be pursued. Nor should the priesthood become a powerful elite who do not share their supposed expert and arcane knowledge of Scriptural ordinances with the general populace, except to keep them in their place.

You cannot encompass God, you cannot put all of God on a page. You can only write what he tells you to write.

You need to be prayerful, and alert, and living the life.

9,

There is confusion between Salvation and Redemption in Judaism, different to that in Christianity. Judaism also has its version of Saviourism, different to Christian Saviourism. Both distort the Messiah, his nature, his work, his achievement, but in almost opposite ways..

[1] Christian Saviourism assimilates Redemption into Salvation by making the Cross the 'condition' of Salvation. Jewish Saviourism, because it has no Cross, assimilates Redemption into Salvation in a cost free way that renders it quasi magical, rather than existentially realistic.

This Jewish version of the expected Messiah focuses upon the ontological salvational outcomes, and neglects the existential redemptive dynamics needed to attain them. The Messiah is merely the instrument for 'guaranteeing' the Salvation that will bring to the Jews both physical and political security, on the one hand, and sacred and divine glories, on the other hand. The Jews will be made safe and whole, in their homeland, and thus, as they have not been permitted to do for centuries, they will prosper and flower, not just materially but also spiritually. Israel will come into her fullness, and this will be 'a light on the hill', a beacon of holiness, for all the world. No more will the surrounding foreign peoples attack, and oppress, Israel; on the contrary, they will admire and be led by Israel. There will be peace in the world.

Hence, there is no Redemption such as is starkly indicated by the Cross of Christ, and various Jewish Biblical texts in Isaiah, the Psalms, and the Book of Job. The Messiah is akin to a Cyrus liberator with the difference that his political liberation brings, almost miraculously, all the wonders of Salvation for ever more. In effect, there is neither Redeemer nor Redemption in this

scenario. The Messiah is not a King and Redeemer, in the strong and deep sense; he is, by sharp contrast, a combination King and Saviour.

It is the King-Saviour who will -- similarly to the earliest connotation of the word for saving -- provide a 'stronghold of salvation' for Israel, since under his Messianic rulership, Israel will be protected, happy, healthy, joyfully basking in the splendour of God [Isaiah, 46, 13].

The focus is on the Salvational transformation of a 'remnant' of Israel once out of Exile, and able to return Home. The texts in Isaiah, and other prophets, where Yahweh solaces the Jews, telling them they have not been forgotten, not been cast adrift, because he will remember his old promises, and not give up on them, but will regenerate them for his holy purpose [Isaiah, 43, 5-7], do not necessarily reinforce the viewpoint in which the Saviour-King is portrayed as the Messiah. For these texts can be read more humanely, like a father comforting children who have gone through punishing times -- both innocently and self-destructively -- that he has by no means washed his hands of them. He still hopes big things from them, and he will stick with them, to help them get there in the end.

None of this compassionate reassurance by Yahweh of the Jews, who have been captives for hundreds of years, tossed from pillar to post, battered by foreign hands, really supports the interpretation of the Messiah as Israel's King-Saviour. It is humanly understandable that they should look forward to everything which this particular view of the Messiah can deliver. Such 'deliverance' would end their seemingly endless woes and hardships.. Still, 'man proposes and God disposes.' The King-Saviour Messianic Deliverer, the Messiah of Jewish Saviourism, is still awaited! What the Jews wanted from their escape from Exile and going Home has as yet not been granted by God. It therefore cannot have been the 'true' reading of Isaiah's texts to anticipate such a Salvation brought by such a King. The only way round this is to postpone the coming of the Messiah, indefinitely. We can go on believing all this is still coming, for Israel, and through Israel to the world, though no one knows when..

This is where Jewish Saviourism, misconstrued as 'Messianic', rests today, two and a half millennia later. Far from anything getting much better once the Jews were back home again, soon the Roman Empire took over from Alexander, and things only got far worse. The Jews were moving toward a third national catastrophe..

The Post Exile comforting reassurances from Yahweh to the Jews are true, but their time scale is what Jewish Saviourism has so spectacularly not taken into consideration. Why is Salvation postponed so far into the future? This is what we must accept because a very tough and gritty Redemption must precede in time any wonderful and vivid Salvation. The Jewish King-Saviour under-estimates, and misrepresents, who the Redeemer is, and what the Redeemer does.

[2] There is another factor probably at work in the developing of Jewish Saviourism after the return from Babylon in 500 BC. The Deuteronomist-Mosaic party in Judaism may well have contributed to the depiction of the King-Saviour as the Messiah through their tendency to over elevate Moses as the single most important religious 'leader' in the whole of Judaism, not only 'father of all prophets' -- this ignores Job, Jacob, Abraham, before Moses, whose entire lives of existential risk were prophetic of the Redeemer -- but also 'teacher of all teachers.'

Hence, it is likely that the King-Saviour was in some respects more or less directly modelled on not so much Cyrus as Moses, despite the fact there is nothing redemptive about leaving Egypt, for neither Moses nor any of the Jews pay a cost to get free. If any cost is paid, it is Yahweh's sacrifice of the Egyptians who are also held in his love. Isaiah, 43, 3-4= "For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life."

This is the stream of Judaism that teaches 'about' God but has ceased to commune with, and participate in, God. Any influence it exerted in shaping Jewish Saviourism is bound to have been doleful.

[3] Whether understandable human hopes, or the political machinations of a revisionist patriarchal cabal in Judaism, had more to do with shaping the Saviour-King who would miraculously 'save' Israel forever, is hard to decide. Never the less, there would seem to have been another factor at work in maintaining Jewish Saviourism.

This teaching about the Messiah is perhaps Judaism's response to the claim that Yeshua is the Christ, and his Cross is what demonstrates the truth of that claim. Post Christian Judaism prefers a 'Messiah' who is not Reversed, but who is 'victorious' in the 'restoration' of Israel. Clearly such a Mashiach had not yet arrived in 30 AD, nor any time soon after, and therefore it became inevitable that the Jews would dismiss Yeshua as the Mashiach.

Insisting on the expectation of the King-Saviour as the Messiah [as could be read from, for example, Jeremiah, 23, 5] seems the response of much -- though not all -- of Judaism to the Cross of Christ, in its abject failure either to bring Salvation to the Jews who returned from the Babylonian Exile, or to prevent another diaspora of the Jews in 70 AD when their revolt against Rome failed, and they were cast to the four winds..

[4] Saviourism in Christianity was politically driven by misunderstanding of Judaism. Saviourism in Judaism seems driven by reaction to the claim that the Messiah had arrived. Given the political and Godly Salvation wanted by Judaism, Yeshua's Cross was 'not good enough'; it did not measure up.

The Messianic impulse, in this form of Judaism, becomes about progressively making the world better, not giving up on the world but doing all that each and

every one of us can to improve the human lot, which might induce the King-Saviour to come. This is no bad thing..

A Hasidic Zaddik writing a letter to a student left bitter in the wake of successfully defending their PhD thesis=

“I trust you know the basic principle of our sages.. that the essential thing is the deed, that is to say the practical result. Similarly, in your case, whether you have taken the right course or not will depend on how you utilise your degree; if you do so in the direction of the good and the holy, and use it to illuminate your environment-- it will prove that it was the right course. On the other hand, if your qualifications and capacities will not be utilised [in that way], or utilised in the opposite direction, then the inevitable conclusion, ..would have to be that it was not the right course. For a person must not be a passive observer in his environment and society, not to mention [that he should not become] a negative factor; he has a duty to his society to be a positive and active agent to improve his environment. And everyone has the capacity to do so, at least to some degree.”

Similarly, a modern Hasidic commentator= “..every good deed we do hastens the Redemption and ends the Exile that much faster. Let’s get to work!”

A Biblical scholar= “Yahweh is.. involved in all areas of life, and so doing the right thing as a result of trusting [in God] is part of Salvation. Salvation begins with trusting in his words which leads to right action. ..To be ‘saved’ in Greek Hellenism is to be released from this evil world. [In sharp distinction, Jewish] Salvation is not leaving this world but becoming actively involved in changing what is wrong and sustaining what is right. ‘Peace’ in Greek thought is to escape the pressures of life. ‘Peace’ in [Jewish] thought is to ..take part in the ‘completion’ of what is ..righteous.”

The Christians who listen to Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount, about radical generosity and sharing the good things [Luke, 3, 10-11], can make common cause with the Jews still waiting for the King-Saviour. Yet, the 'Mosaic Messiah -- a contradiction in terms -- does not lock horns with the 'hidden God', the hidden father Yahweh, whose final mysteries are disclosed on the Cross.

On this last point, the Christians of the Redeemer are at odds with the Saviourism of Christians and the Saviourism of the Jews. Undoubtedly, the Saviourism of Jews is healthier, and more benign, than some slants on Saviourism among the Christians. None the less, where the latter falsify the Cross, the former ignore the Cross.

There is no Redeemer, there is no Redemption, without the Cross.

The Jewish Saviour-King is -- as many commentators have noticed -- more akin to the Second Coming of Christ in his true Glory, his fidelity to and manifestation of Yahweh's hidden fatherly heart plainly on display.

10,

The Jews fail to properly differentiate Salvation and Redemption, just like the Christians.

Salvation without Redemption= you escape the evil things in the world, because somehow they are magically swept away by the inrush of good things, but you leave evil's challenge to God in relation to humanity unanswered. The devil says to God in the Book of Job, 'take salvational contentment and fulfilment away from humanity, put them in the arena of test, and they will reject God.' It is in the arena of test that Redemption wins an authentic victory by accepting that evil is allowed the freedom to 'check out' the human heart.

If Redemption is eschatological, and apocalyptic, as in prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of John, then Salvation cannot come before Redemption has done its work and finished its task. Redemption, if victorious over an indeterminate span of time, paves the way for Salvation at the End.

Yet it does more than that. It makes possible a Salvation post-evil, wherein the heart of humanity has been tested and confirmed. If Salvation comes too soon, before the testing has had time to reach any climax, then the heart of humanity is untried when it enters Salvation. God wants us to enter Salvation not from Innocence, but from Experience, in William Blake's contrast. Obviously, we get glimmers and tastes of Salvation all along the route of time, from Beginning through Middle to End. But if Salvation comes prematurely, it stops what Redemption is testing and proving= the deep and hidden things of God and the deep and hidden things of humanity. It is these deep and hidden things of the heart, divine and human, with which God counters Satan's sneering judgement.

If the Mashiach, anointed by God, is King and Redeemer, then that he also brings a final Salvation poses no problem, for once you have gone deep, you then can go anywhere, high and broad, near and far.. However, if the Mashiach is simply King and Saviour, then this eliminates any need for a Redeemer. If the Messianic King is so potent as to 'instantly' deliver Salvation, then we can dispense with a Redeemer who pays with his own blood to free humanity in slavery to the devil. Such a Salvation just snatches us away from evil, without ever overcoming it in a fair fight, where its point is taken on, to expose its Lie.

If imposed too soon, saving rescues us from a negative situation but in doing exactly that, it blocks what the Redeemer must undergo and come through, in time, for all of time. If we can be saved immediately, then there is no time for our redeeming to work through all it must go through..

The vulnerability of God defeats the invulnerability of the devil, in Redemption. If Salvation 'saves' us from that vulnerability, by protecting us, by shielding us, by bringing us to refuge, then Redemption cannot happen.

This cuts against not just Saviourism in Judaism, but anyone and everyone, including Hinduism and Buddhism, who want Salvation without cost, without sacrifice of blood. The Cross also says, 'my strength is revealed in vulnerability.'

11,

Given the vulnerability masked by Salvation but exposed by Redemption, then it is not surprising that the most telling Scriptural basis for the clear difference of Salvation and Redemption, apart from the 4 Slave Songs of Isaiah, comes from the Book of Job, and the Psalms.

David often registers his amazement that Salvation, as the Jews experienced it so beautifully in the First Temple, is simply not enough to overcome the existential and abysmal deeps into which he is constantly thrown by the action of his heart. He is in the arena of test, and Salvation cannot help him, cannot reach him, cannot dent his ongoing and unrelieved tribulation. God has with-held Salvation, he feels, and he does not understand why. Why this deep dark, deep pain, abysmal tragedy?

Psalms, 69, 1-3; 14-15; 17= "Save me, God! The water is already up to my neck! I am sinking in the deepest swamp, there is no foothold; I have stepped into deep water and the waves are washing over me. Worn out with calling, my throat is hoarse, my eyes are strained, looking for my God. ..Pull me out of this swamp; let me sink no further, let me escape those that hate me, save me from deep water! Do not let the waves wash over me, do not let the deep swallow me, or the Pit close its mouth on me. ..do not hide your face from your servant."

No Salvation can miraculously, nor magically, reach into this existential abyss. Only Redemption goes there. David, in the next utterance [Psalms, 69, 18], realises this= "quick, I am in trouble, answer me, come to my side, redeem me." God cannot drag David up and out. God has to come to his side to redeem him. David is broken in heart, he has found no consolation, "they gave me poison to eat instead, when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink" [Psalms, 69, 20-21].

This last line prophetically anticipates Christ on the Cross. Indeed, the only reply to David's tragic existential condition is the Messiah Reversed= Christ Crucified. David prays that Yahweh will vent his fury on these enemies, but God is silent, and does not intervene to rescue David from all that torments him. He remains 'in' it, and he is in way over his head.

David pleads, "by your saving power, God, lift me up!" [Psalms, 69, 29]. Again, there is no Salvation out of the deeps. There is no remedy for the deeps other than the Redemption which must embrace their full abysmal profundity.

Psalms, 88, 1-2; 5-10= "O Yahweh, God of my Salvation, I call for help all day, I weep to you all night. ..for my life is on the brink of Sheol, I am

numbered among those who go down to the Pit, a man bereft of strength: a man alone, down among the dead, ..among those you have forgotten, those deprived of your protecting hand. You have plunged me down to the Pit, to its darkest, deepest place, ..drowned beneath your waves. ..in prison and unable to escape, my eyes are worn out with suffering. ..can ghosts rise up to praise you? Who talks of your love.. in the place of perdition? ..But I am here, calling for your help.. why do you reject me?"

This is Daemonic= "I have borne your terrors, now I am exhausted" [Psalms, 88, 15].

David gradually understands= "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles" [Psalms, 25, 22].

Really, we are redeemed 'through' our troubles..

12,

The wish for Salvation as a way to avoid Redemption becomes not only humanly escapist, but also evil, because it is the intent of the devil to tempt the Redeemer away from paying the cost of assuming humanity's existential fate.

Psalm 91 is the paradigm example of this danger of Salvation being twisted to evil ends. David describes Yahweh's saving as a refuge away from and fortress against all the exactions and horrors of existence; you will not be caught in the snares of nasty people, you need not fear the terrors of the night and the arrow in the day, plagues will not sicken you, battles in which thousands are fallen will not kill you, and angels will even guard you lest your foot is dashed against a stone= hence, 'no evil will befall you.' But this total Salvation belongs to the Parousia; none of this is possible prior to Redemption, and all of it is only possible after Redemption.

It is of the utmost significance that the devil quotes from Psalm 91 when tempting Yeshua in the wilderness.. In fact, all 3 of the devil's temptations to Christ, on different levels, try to tempt him to be a King-Saviour of miraculous 'power over' the world, and therefore are tempting him away from his real calling, to be the Suffering Servant, the King-Redeemer, who freely submits himself to being in the 'power of' the world. The devil urges Yeshua= turn stones to bread; rule over all the kingdoms of the earth [which are in the devil's gift because he is 'prince of this world']; jump off the roof of the Jerusalem Temple, and let the angels soften your fall= "And [the devil].. set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, if you are the Son of God [the Messiah], throw yourself down from here, for it is written, Yahweh will give his angels charge over you, to keep you, and in their hands they will bear you up, lest at any moment you bruise your foot against a stone" [Luke, 4, 9-12].

The devil reads Psalm 91 as really referring to the Messiah, whom God will not abandon, whatever Yahweh puts him through. If so, Yeshua is in no doubt

this portrait of divine protection belongs to the future time after Redemption has won. Yeshua is equally robust with Peter who, in wanting to 'spare' the Messiah his sufferings, is unwittingly supporting the devil's scheming in Luke, 4, 1-13; thus Peter is refused with, 'get thee behind me Satan.'

That Yeshua is not the miraculous Messiah, but the long-suffering, passion-bearing Messiah, is declared soon after his spiritual battle with the devil in the wilderness.

He returns home, to Nazareth, and goes into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stands up to read. He opens the Jewish Bible, and speaks the words of a passage from Isaiah concerning who the Messiah is and what the Messiah will do= "The Spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because he has appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" [Luke, 4, 18]. Then Yeshua closed the book, and after sitting down, concluded, 'today this Scripture is fulfilled.'

Yeshua's temptation by the devil echoes all the way back to something in the story of the loss of Paradise by Adam and Eve. God reveals that Eve's soul and the Luciferian cunning of the mythical serpent will be at war; her offspring will trample on the head of the serpent, his offspring will bite their heel [Genesis, 3, 15]. This anticipates Mary giving birth to Yeshua the Messiah.

This is the earliest text in the Jewish Bible promising the coming Messiah, who cannot save anybody from anything, but will redeem everyone through everything, and it demonstrates two things.

First, that the promise of the Messianic Redemption is given through-out Scripture in different terms, in different images and symbols. The Hebrew word 'Mashiach' is not always used, nor need it be. 'We get the message.'

Second, that the promise of the Messianic Redemption occurs as early as the loss of Paradise, and the entry into the arena of test. Even before we enter the ordeal, Redemption through it -- not Salvation from it -- is declared.

It is from the Cross of Christ that all such reading back and reading forward comes.. It is primarily from the Cross of Christ that the Redeemer, and his redeeming, is revealed to the world. This puts Salvation into its proper, secondary setting.

Thus, the Messiah is not mainly a Saviour, rather, he is primarily a Redeemer, for the arrival of the Messiah is the sign that Redemption is coming.

It is this world, *olam hazeh*, which will be redeemed. The world to come, *olam haba*, will not be heaven without earth. It will be the earth redeemed, so that it has been saved to become a transfigured spiritual and material unity, and this will inaugurate the Messianic Age, a time without end..

13,

The irony of history.

The Jews used the word 'Redeemer', but their Messianic King was a Saviour who would bring good and get rid of evil, above to below, miraculously; a bloodless, quick, saving. This Salvation ends time..

The Christians used the word 'Saviour', but their Messianic King was a Redeemer who would subject good to evil, to undermine it, below to above, realistically; a sacrificial, patient, redeeming. This Redemption takes time..

This is why Salvation in the complete majestic sense [Isaiah, 35, 1-6; 10] is put 'on hold' by God. The Messianic Saviour the Jews yearned for and still await would bring time to its finish, precipitously, impatiently, prematurely. The Messianic Redeemer will not allow time to end because redeeming is long drawn out in time, and it is time that is being redeemed. "This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it" [Ephesians, 5, 16].

Yahweh will grant the Redeemer and humanity the time needed for Redemption to do its work-- though this will not go on forever. Time will run out..

The Day of Trouble will come violently. The Day of Redemption will be revealed starkly.

The Jewish Messianic Saviour eliminates all need for Redemption in time. The Christian Messianic Redeemer brings Salvation only after Redemption is victorious in time.

Jewish Messianic= heaven comes to earth.

Christian Messianic= heaven goes to the realms of hell, to win the earth from hell, and marry the earth with heaven.

The Post Exilic Jewish belief in a remnant of Israel returned to and restored in their promised land, so as to be saved and to spread that saving beyond their borders, still supports Zionism down to this very moment.

The supreme irony is how protracted has been the existential Cross on which the Jews have always been crucified, day in and day out, year in and year out.. No wonder they demand Salvation, and want it delivered as a miraculous sign. Crucifixion they know only too well.. Who needs it? Why would they accept a Messiah crucified like they were, bearing their tortures, seemingly not saved from them, but dumped right into them, such that redeeming is the coming good of precisely all that trouble.

For some Jews, understandably, enough is enough..

On TV recently, a Jewish woman, asked about all the holocausts her people had suffered, replied=

"They tried to kill us. They failed. Let's eat."

Yet, it was among Jews going through the trouble, unable to be saved from its arena of test, that the hope in the Messianic Redeemer was born. So it was for Abraham, Jacob, David, the true Messianic stream in Judaism because they accepted the trouble as God's deep and hidden purpose.

14,

The Jews exemplify in one people, in one very human heart, two contrasting hypotheses in regard to its inexplicable sufferings in existence.

On the one hand, as with David wishing he could fly above the storm like a dove, there is the demand for Salvation instantly to escape, to avoid, to be delivered from, the sufferings in time.

On the other hand, as Yeshua voiced in the Garden of Gethsemane when he wanted the cup of bitter wine and the bread of sorrow to pass him by, yet accepted his time had come to embrace the Daemonic Fate from Yahweh, 'thy will be done.'

We all struggle with the heart in this way, though not as openly, not as turbulently, not as truthfully, as the Jews. Therein lies their holiness.

They display honestly what is usually denied in the rest of humanity.

The struggle they had with the suffering Messiah is the struggle we all have, if we are able to admit it.

15,

There is a final irony.

The real contrast is not between Jews versus Christians. That is misleading.. A fool's errand.

No, the real contrast is between two different groups of people who are just as discernibly different today as they were 'back then.'

[1] In one group are the Jewish and Christian followers of the Reversed Messiah, the King-Redeemer.

[2] In the other group are the Jewish and Christian followers of Saviourism.

There is a difference within each group, but it is not as large as the difference between the groups.

[1] In the group of the followers of the Messianic Redeemer, there are Jews who believe he has not yet come and Christians who believe he has come. So powerful is the Redemptive Spirit, however, these Jews and Christians have a host of unexpected affinities.

[2] In the group of the followers of the Messianic Saviour, there are Jews who await this miracle for the present world and Christians who claim the miracle has arrived but concerns mainly the next world. Wanting to be saved, and not having the stomach and faith for being redeemed, makes strange bed fellows who have some differences and a lot of similarities.

The Jews and Christians who trust the mystery and poetry of Redemption differ markedly from the Jews and Christians who espouse the dogma and theology of Salvation.

16,

Yahweh will redeem the Jews as a people, to make them a name, by 'great and terrible things' [1 Chronicles, 17, 21].

Nehemiah, 1, 10= "They are your.. people whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand."

Psalms, 31, 5= "Into your hand I commit my spirit, you have ransomed me, O Yahweh, God of truth."

The Left Hand of the Daemonic= not grace, but truth.

The Messiah anointed by God is a Redeemer= "on him the Spirit of Yahweh rests, a Spirit of wisdom and insight, a Spirit of counsel and power, a Spirit of knowledge and the respect of Yahweh" [Isaiah, 11, 2].

Mathew, 2, 4-6= "Herod demanded of the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah should be born, and they answered, in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus is it declared by the prophet." Micah, 5, 2= "As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathiah, insignificant among the clans of Judah, from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past. His goings forth are from long ago [olam], from the days of the everlasting [olam]." Psalms, 111, 9= "He has sent redemption to his people, he has promised his covenant forever [olam]. Holy and awesome is his name [everlasting God]."

Paul, 1 Corinthians, 1, 7= "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages."

Redeeming will bring the heart to direct knowing of God.

Isaiah, 11, 9= "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the world will be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seabed."

Job, 19, 21; 25-27= "Have pity on me, O you who are my friends, for the hand of God has touched me.. ..I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. I will see him for myself."

HUMILITY

One of several ways in which the Jewish preoccupation with 'Salvation without Redemption' exceeds the Christian versions of the same bias is pointed out by Martin Buber ['The Way of Man', 1965]. He also throws into a different perspective what humility really is. It is not kowtowing to authority, nor bending the knee to a superior threat. It is a mystery of love that 'does not consider itself.'

Given our very finitude, living as a specific personhood in a particular body, it is hard not to place our self at the centre of our existence.. Whether this tendency to make the self the defining criterion, the key limit, determining 'how far we go' in our actions, is merely biological or is a consequence of primordially falling out of God's energies, it is a very old tendency, and ingrained. It sets an especially potent restriction on our loving, whether in Eros or in the Daemonic. Humility overcomes this. In humility, my self is no longer set at the very centre of my existence, thus concern with its survival or not, its fulfilment or not, its defense or not, its station and privilege or not, its respect and honour or not, no longer matters, and hence ceases to be an impediment to action that is extreme in its self-giving or self-sacrifice. Humility makes it possible to love, for real, and all the way..

Martin Buber [pp 26-27] has an interesting take on the lack of humility expressed in religious aspirations that, unbeknownst to the aspirant, stem from pride, not humility=

"One of the main points in which Christianity differs from Judaism is that it makes each man's salvation his highest aim. Judaism regards each man's soul as a serving member of God's Creation which, by man's work, is to become the Kingdom of God; thus no soul has its object in itself, in its own salvation. True, each is to know itself, purify itself, but not for its own sake--neither for the sake of its temporal happiness nor for that of its eternal bliss--but for the sake of the work which it is destined to perform upon the world.

The pursuit of one's own salvation is ..regarded merely as the sublimest form of self-intending [and] self-intending is what Hasidism rejects most emphatically, and quite especially in the case of the man who has found and developed his own self [to the peak and fullness of what it can become]. ..It is written= 'Now Korah took.' What did he take? He wanted to take himself--therefore, nothing he did could be of any worth. This is why [tradition] contrasted the eternal Korah with.. the 'humble man', whose doings are not aimed at himself. [Hasidism] thus sees.. the history of mankind on its road to redemption as a process involving two kinds of men, the proud who, if sometimes in the sublimest form, think of themselves, and the humble, who in all matters think of the world. Only when pride subjects itself to humility can it be redeemed.

..A man who does not think of himself is given all the keys."

Salvation is contradictory in this respect. It seeks to restore the 'human design' to its primal God-designed form, in body, soul, and spirit, as one person, and sets this whole with other whole persons in a world that is also a holistic composite. 'Becoming what we all really are, uniquely and together', by throwing off the harmful and distorting effects of evil, is the aim of Jewish Salvation. However, this very aim is easily confused with what Buber calls religious 'self-intending.' The cure= to love the neighbour as if they were the self. This is to see yourself as one among many.

Buber further clarifies the real Ex-stasis of Eros [pp 27-28]=

"..[the Zaddik] Mendel of Kotzk, once said to his congregation= 'What, after all, do I demand of you? Only three things= not to look furtively outside yourselves, not to look furtively into others, and not to aim at yourselves.' That is to say= firstly, everyone should preserve and hallow his own soul in its own particularity and in its own place, and not envy the particularity and place of others; secondly, everyone should respect the secret in the soul of his fellow human being, and not, with brazen curiosity, intrude upon it and take advantage of it; and thirdly, everyone, in his relationship to the world, should be careful not to set himself as his aim."

These three things protect the Way of Salvation, by discerning the difference between humility and the pride which assumes a religious disguise.

The 'new commandment' unique to Yeshua, and not anywhere stated in the Jewish Bible, is 'love your enemy.' This points to an action of love, in the Daemonic, not possible without humility.

For it is too radical in self-giving, in self-emptying, in self-risking, to co-exist with any form, or degree, of self-intending. The language used to describe the absence of this impediment to love – the language of 'obedience' – is no longer helpful, because it reeks of power relations between a superior and an inferior, a master and a slave. It is nothing like that.

It is love at its most God-like.

The popular image of a feasting banquet going on up in heaven, whilst here below hell creeps ever closer to the heart of the world, is simply obscene.

It is beyond heresy. It is sinful to an extreme, it is a manifestation of the very evil that must be overcome if the world is ever to taste redemption. Feasting on bliss while your brothers and sisters taste only the bitter root of existence is not heavenly; it is hellish. If such hell is in your heart, it would not matter what 'place' you were finally situated. If hell is in your heart, you are in hell.

The longing for heaven, and the willingness to sacrifice nothing for the sake of redeeming the world; indeed, the desire for heaven that is happy to sacrifice the world to hell-- such is the ultimate in self-intending. This is nothing to do with Christ. It is the Anti-Christ.

WHAT IS COMING?

1,

The Second Covenant -- which will reach its climax in the Second Coming of the Mashiach – has hardly yet begun, despite being announced as imminent by Jeremiah and other Jewish prophets as far back as the Exile to Babylon in 600 BC.

---On the worst case scenario, Christians have not made any start with the Second Covenant. This means the history of 'Christendom' is utterly shaming for all sincere followers of Christ. It is as if the Messiah has not come, given that his followers do not manifest what he brings to profoundly change them. This means, either he did not bring it, or he brought it and his followers have not taken it up.

---On the best case scenario, though in the main no real start on the Second Covenant has been made by Christians, never the less, despite all their glaring failures of omission and commission, the seeds for this new direction have been laid in the past 2000 years. Indeed, it might even be argued that without this painfully slow, and largely unseen, laying of the foundations, the leap forward into the new and radically Spirit-dynamised ethos of the Second Covenant would not be possible. In the Second Covenant, churches and even the bible, are prophesised to disappear but possibly this requires a prior time when churches and bibles were necessary.. Only by virtue of having had a far more explicit structuring of religious life, and for a long time, can we go beyond these kind of things into a more personal, and spiritual, relation to the Spirit of God. Perhaps, the New Age inaugurated by the Messiah will come about through a dialectic, a kind of ongoing 'conversation', between more explicit churchly 'form' and a rising and more implicit spiritual 'formlessness.' Many 'people of Spirit' not churchy, and opposed sternly to anything smacking of 'churchianity', will be a counter weight to the various manifestations of tradition. Yet tradition can be a life giving stream, if purged of its false accretions, and therefore it may well be that tradition will remain necessary as the dialectic counter-point to the new rising of people living in the Spirit, and receiving from this new life in the Spirit their inspiration and guidance from the deeps that underlie all things. Each stand-point can critique the danger of the other when it becomes too extreme, or fails to hit its mark; but the dialogue between them might be lively, and life enhancing.

Perhaps both standpoints about the Christian past are true, in different ways..

--Certainly, the history of Christendom is pretty much a debacle, its crimes against Christ and humanity too numerous to recount. At the core of all this carnage is the fundamental misunderstanding of what Christ did with, did for, and did through, humanity. The 'religion' of Christendom has lost its way because it has fallen into the primary heresy of the blasphemy against humanity. Christ valued humanity more than any other spiritual leader ever had or ever will, but his followers have contrived to negate this valuing which

leads to long-suffering of human failure and faith that humanity will come again, will get out of the dirt and stand again.. Giving up on humanity, in the name of God, is the point of the story of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoyevsky's last novel, 'The Brothers Karamazov.' Every sector of Christendom, East and West, has its own Grand Inquisitor, its own Anti-Christ, running things..

--Yet, perhaps there is another side to the dire historical record. As Christ is persecuted by the Grand Inquisitor when he returns, perhaps the real followers of Yeshua the Mashiach down the centuries have been persecuted by the Anti-Christ running each and every one of the churches; and by the stand made and sacrifice given of these handful of followers, something needful and significant has been attained in tradition 'against the run of play.' The religion of the Anti-Christ -- the demonic religion of ignorance, hate, indifference, escape -- has been countered by the bright flickering of a few flames that no dark and dank can put out. It might still be the case that seeds have been planted, that foundations have been laid.. But even if that is so, it does not alter the fact that much of the super structure and apparatus, as well as the attitudes and ethos, of tradition is contrary to Christ, and as Christ is 'born' in people through the power and efficacy of the Spirit, so all that accumulated trash will be swept away. What remains of past tradition will be relatively little, a central core, whilst much will have to go..

This much reduced, central lineaments, of tradition will be what enters creatively into a dialectical conversation with the ongoing rebirth of humanity by virtue of the deed and example of the Messianic King but only through, and in, the power of the Messianic Spirit. The new Spirit given to the Messiah to enable him to do what he had to do will be given to those who love the Messiah to enable them to follow in his footsteps and go where he went and do what he did-- in their own way, in their own place, in their own time.

2,

None of us knows anything for sure, but a guess can be hazarded..

In the coming time of the changing of humanity by the Spirit -- the time of the growing Second Covenant -- the vast difference between the truly religious and the pseudo religious treating the given religion just as a club, some badge of identity, will become clearer in any particular religion, and this will facilitate joining hands across different religions.

This joining hands at the prompting of the Spirit in people's depths will be far more widespread and more inclusive than just the three main divisions of Christianity [Orthodox; Roman Catholic; Protestant]. It will cross over the three streams of Christianity, uniting them in a loose confederation of people moved by the Spirit in the same way, but it will include other religions as well in the spiritual comradeship, non-Christian ones, and moreover, it will include the ostensibly non and anti-religious who repudiate the club but are in the same Spirit..

The core they will all converge on -- different Christians, different religions, different peoples of no religion -- will be the redemptive process towards the world..

They will see it differently, describe it very differently, but in action they will converge. Their concern will be action.

No one will believe in any external authority, nor claims to external authority, any more. When people are authoritative in being and action-- that will persuade. You will only know the tree by its fruits. All other claims to authority, expertise, privilege, will be blown away, like yesterday's newspapers on the wind.

"I take communion every Sunday" [so does the devil lurking inside people whose conversion to Christ is far from complete]; "I know the Bible backwards and can quote from it at the drop of a hat" [the devil knows the Bible better than any human and can come up with a quote for any occasion, putting words that are not understood in the heart to the service of evil]; "I belong to the original tradition, the only one that has been properly validated by divine authority" [and your daddy is also the biggest and best daddy in the whole world]; "I keep the law, unlike other weaker humans" [St Paul had something vital to say about the honest impossibility of keeping the law; and Christ in the parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee warns against the self-deception involved in thinking we can keep the law unequivocally and are therefore morally superior to other struggling and stumbling people]. All these, and similar, 'religious claims' will fade away, because they cut no ice; they are no witness for any change in the heart, they manifest no indwelling of the Spirit in the heart, but instead convey mutton dressed up as lamb= unacknowledged sin, and regressive childishness, dressed up as kosher religion.

There will therefore be a new, and very far reaching, 'mixing' together of peoples and traditions.

The Spirit will cross religious boundaries, and sweep away the sense people now have, in any tradition, that they own a 'patch' of religious turf. We are at most stewards of precious things given us long ago by the generosity of Spirit; we own none of this. It is not 'ours', as opposed to 'theirs.' If the Spirit wants to mix up the jewels in any given tradition with the differing jewels in another tradition, and the jewels in no tradition other than the tears and strivings of beleaguered humanity, in order to make a new necklace for everyone to wear, then it is not for anyone in any of these traditions to say this cannot be allowed! The Spirit makes a patchwork quilt out of very different elements; they hold together, in the Spirit, a genuine and organic coalition of varied 'positions.' If 'private property is theft', then this is even more true of religion than of economics.

The main theme, for which much that is 'good' yet gets in the way must be jettisoned [like good writing you reject in a novel, because it obscures the

thrust], will become, more and more, 'tikkun olam', as the Jews called it. The rectification of the world, the redeeming of history, in the world.

People will unite around this, from many different vantage points, and they will know it is too important to quarrel over.

3,

Given such a future, then Vladimir Soloviev's tale about the End Time is very unconvincing, depicting nothing Spirit-inspired but just more of the old kind of manoeuvring for [anti Christlike] power by the churches. The future will retain an essence of the 'point' of tradition, but it will fundamentally depotentate the churches, taking away any claim they ever made, or will continue to try to make, to unchallenged authority, sacrosanct power, indispensable kosherness.

We should remain content to stay with the symbols in Ezekiel, Daniel, John of Patmos, and not try to imagine them too literally. I once had a visionary/mystical dream of the night when the world ends. It was nothing like, in feel or story, Soloviev's account..

Soloviev's imagining of the End Time can be critiqued for several reasons.

First, he advocates the old nonsense that the Protestants are from Paul, the Orthodox are from John, and the Roman Catholics are from Peter. It is pure cliché the Roman Catholics are the tradition of Peter. They are not! Both Protestants and Roman Catholics are rooted in a much truncated version of St Paul, in different ways [the Roman Catholics are really given over to a version of the old Roman Law of Empire, and as a result tend to hugely overestimate the role of morality, like a Judaism with only Moses and no David, thus an insistence on rules and regulation, yet without any Messianic faith in a changed human heart in the end]. It is true Orthodoxy is rooted in John the Theologian [more or less, though this too is an over simplification].

But no Christianity, East or West, has tried Peter! That accounts for the absence of 'Jewish' passion in Christian history.. No one is farther away from Peter than the 'Roman' Catholics.. Their every instinct is 'anti' the passionate Peter.

Second, Soloviev's tale still projects a great role for the three churches even near The End, despite the fact that the Jewish prophecies from 600 BC suggest something very different. Churches fade away, even bibles fade away, according to the prophetic announcements, because the Spirit will have brought God into the human heart. Thus, at the climax of all time no one will still care about Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, as 'jurisdictions' any more. No one will be cowed by them anymore.. Some of their role in regard to the Sacred will no doubt continue, and some of the authentic treasures they have preserved in tradition will be very freely shared among everyone, but a lot of the status, and clout, surrounding their previous gravitas will fade away.. Thank God!

4,

The future belongs to the human heart..

Soloviev's tale puts far too much importance on the Temple, the Sacred; the change that is coming is that the current obsession with Temple/Sacred will lapse, and shift to a greater emphasis on World/Holy, and Wilderness/the Mysterious, the Blowing where he wills, of Spirit.

If priest and monk belong to the Temple, consider the different figures who will arise to bring Christianity more to the World= King, Warrior, Holy Fool, Heyoka or Reversal Person, Existential Sage, and Tramp or Broken Down Bum. In the Wilderness is the Prophet, but also prophetic artists and other wayward ones who can be said to belong to and exemplify the Wild. Too much error and destructive poison has accumulated round priest and monk. Their role will decline, as the roles of these Daemonic figures of passion will increase and increase..

Thus by the End Time, the Christian landscape will be very different, and the whole notion that Protestants will still be led by a churchy person, Roman Catholics by their churchy person, Orthodox by their churchy person -- whether these figures are called moderator, pope, patriarch, it makes no odds -- is off target by a long chalk.

It will not be anything like that, not remotely like that.

The Greek word which Christ uses in the Gospels when he asks Peter to take care of his 'church' is not that English term at all. The Greek word means, not church, but 'fellowship'; or just 'my fellows' -- those who are brothers, comrades, allies, friends, to Christ.. This is a 'band of brothers/sisters', not a church. It has little organization, no hierarchies of power, only elder and younger brothers, and can form and reform in response to shifting and fluid situations..

This is simply nothing like Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox, traditions as we know them today, and knew them in the past. It is nothing like any 'church' in the historical sense.. It is doubtful Yeshua wanted the churches, and their traditions, to evolve as we created them. But like Yahweh with the Jews, he had to tolerate our almost endless mis-understandings because our hearts were 'hardened.'

In the future, an un-hardening of many hearts occurs, but this causes a polarization in which many other people also re-harden their hearts. Thus a polarization of true and false stands in existence arises, and a clashing is inevitable. What form the future battle between 'un-hardened hearts versus re-hardened hearts' will take, no one knows, and biblically this is spoken of only in poetic metaphors and symbolic images whose allusions are elusive, and could be unpacked in a lot of different historical ways. We will have to see..

In this sense, Soloviev wasted his time trying to factually incarnate 'what will happen.' The Biblical symbols tell us symbolically how it will play out, but that could be incarnated historically in numerous different scenarios. His scenario is particularly non-persuasive, but the actual point is that there is nothing achieved by imaging any one scenario against any other scenario. We do not know, and cannot know, the precise scenario.

As it is still open ended, with all to play for, the specific scenario is not fixed yet.

What scenario specifically unfolds will depend on how well things go, for all humanity, between now and The End. We don't know this because it has not been chosen by humanity yet. God does not 'fix' a scenario before we choose and suffer and struggle.. We, in response to God, will determine the exact scenario of the future.

So, it is seriously misguided to come up with any precise historical scenario of how things End.

And if you want to add another symbolic myth, why add to the Biblical canon of symbolic myth about the Apocalypse? Isn't it good enough?

For so many reasons, Soloviev's tale of the Anti-Christ at the End Time is very poor. We have already had plenty of Anti-Christ, and will have to contend against plenty more, before the last roll of the dice.

The churches are like an ivy that attaches to the Tree of Life, and smothers it; they need severe pruning, severe pulling back, severe purging of all the falsity to let the authentic pearls shine through-- and the future will deliver this, among many other, necessary changes.

Big change, change of heart, is coming to humanity.

THE BEGINNING WILL RETURN IN THE END

Last Things [Eschatology] and First Things

1,

Dostoyevsky explores the Paradise before the Fall in 'The Dream of a Ridiculous Man.'

Like the ancient Shamanic and Christian Celts, Dostoyevsky believed that evil is not inherent to the world qua world. Thus there was a time when humanity was innocent, and there was neither human sin in the world, nor the powerful presence of the real evil which infiltrates and augments human sin. [This is why evil always is, for Dostoyevsky, 'psychological and metaphysical', never just the one or the other, but always both operating in tandem.]

The First Time, the Golden Age, the Earthly Paradise, was a state in which humanity was connected to God, nature, one another, and took delight and found meaning in that ever reconfiguring connection. God was 'melted into' that connecting, so a lot of the time, there was no need for a 'God' because the living God was in the life of things, tacitly known by them.. In our being and doing. In our meetings with everything. Manifest in us, manifest in them, such that all things held up an image of God one to another. For us, the bird shows God. For the bird, we show God. On-going epiphanies of God abound! People were happy! They knew in their experience the pervasiveness of God because God was alive in their life, present in their 'just living.' But when the 'evening' came, God became a more focal, conscious Other, and they knew God I--Thou, and they walked with God 'in the cool of the evening', and spoke with God. But when the day came, God again melted into things. Humans knew God unconsciously. It was more akin to being immersed in water, rather than on dry land.

In the Beginning, there was no need for education, morality, science. People experienced the inherent goodness of everything, because God's goodness in-dwelt it, breathed through its breathing, flowed through its flowing, danced through its dancing. Humans, and indeed all other creatures and things, shared this goodness naturally, without compulsion. They 'knew' the meaning of life from being alive.

"For with you is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light." [Psalms, 36, 9]

"In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all humanity." [Job, 12, 10]

"For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him." [Luke, 20, 38]

Speaking with the Areopagites in Athens, St Paul pointed to the memorial they had left to 'the Unknown God'= "He is not far from each of us. For in him

we live and move and have our existence, as even ..your own poets have said. 'For we too are his children, our lineage is from him'." [Acts, 17, 27-28]

The Jews called this Paradisiacal state of living, being, acting, 'the Natural Covenant.' God is mediated through nature, and through everything 'natural.'

Thus, the creation, when first created, when fresh as dew, is 'inherently' Good and Beautiful, Marvellous and Magical, Joyful and Contented, just as it is.. No improvement needed.. No striving necessary.. Primal Consciousness picks up, is aware of, registers, 'remembers', this Primal Good Start to everything. The Aboriginals of Australia look back to this state of affairs as the Dream Time.

It continues today= "The Source and End of all life is somehow – mysteriously and silently – working in and through us, above and beneath us, for the wellbeing of all creation, including our small part in it." [John Chryssavgis, review of EF Davis, 'Scripture, Culture, Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible', 2009]

Innocence reminds us that the Beginning is Sacred, and the Beginning has not been exterminated by evil, but remains there, urging us on..

Only when Innocence is lost must people be reminded of what once was their life simply by virtue of being the creation of the Creator= "...that you may love Yahweh your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For Yahweh is your life." [Deuteronomy, 30, 2] Or= "You do not honour the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways." [Daniel, 5, 23]

The Paradise of the Beginning is not Holiness. Holiness only comes after the Fall, after the existential arena of choice and test is taken on, and gone through, to the other side..

The End Time -- where Holiness either dislodges evil, and overcomes its overcoming of the world -- or fails, and allows evil to wipe out 'The Sacred Origins' -- must not just be about 'the End' but must include 'the Beginning' returned from its loss long ago.. In some manner, both the Holy City of the End, and the Sacred Garden of the Beginning, must contribute to what happens in the Apocalypse, the Ending of this world.

The co-inherence, the conjoint co-operative work, of Sacred Paradise and Holy City, of innate Innocence and hard won Holiness, of nature and human creativity, will in some way figure in the Apocalypse End Time.

Thus, there is an invisible thread connecting Indigenous Spirituality and the Jewish and Christian Temple. This commonality is the task of remembering the Sacred Origins, the Beginning when we experienced directly "the splendour in the grass." But this remembering of God's First Gift, God's First Thought, depends crucially on keeping all humans together as one people. If Sobornost is failed, then the Creator--creation communing of the First Time is forfeit. Human holding together is the complement, the necessary adjunct, of

the Miracle of Creation still shining bright, though we can no longer see it-- yet we get brief visionary flashes, we feel it, we still intuit it.. We know it is there, it is not our flimsy dream, our imaginary construction. It is not a split-off part of consciousness projected 'out there.'

The First Dawn keeps breaking through.

THE 'FALL' IN TAOISM= The Great Pretense Begins

The Jews who borrowed from Babylonian myths [circa 500 BC], in order to nuance the specifically Jewish story of the loss of Paradise by Adam and Eve, had in mind, quite consciously, a 'real' historical transition, an actual watershed in all human life on this planet.

Thus, the loss of Paradise was, for the Jews, the loss of the hunter-gathering, nomadic life, and the turn to the crop growing-farming, settled, life. Out of this loss of direct contact with divine presence and divine energy in the Sacred Beginning comes both slack liberal Matriarchy and vicious conservative Patriarchy.

Lao Tzu, in the 'Tao Te Ching', has a different way of putting the Fall.

It is perhaps somewhat parallel with the Hindu-Buddhist descent into 'the great ignorance', but has its own unique flavour. It highlights the tremendous human hypocrisy involved in the ever increasing falling away from 'getting it direct from the horse's mouth.'

18

When the great Way falls into disuse
there is benevolence and rectitude;
When cleverness emerges
there is great hypocrisy.

When there is no peace within the family,
filial devotion and piety arise.
When the country is confused and in chaos,
loyal ministers appear.

38

A truly good man is not aware of his goodness,
and therefore has virtue. A man of the lowest virtue
never strays from virtue and that is why he is without virtue.

A truly good man does nothing,
yet leaves nothing undone.
A foolish man is always doing,
yet much is left undone.

A man of the highest rectitude acts, but from ulterior motive.
A man most conversant in the rites acts, but when no one responds,
rolls up his sleeve and resorts to persuasion by force.

Hence when the Way was lost there was virtue;
when virtue was lost there was benevolence;

when benevolence was lost there was rectitude;
when rectitude was lost there were the rites.

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith
and the beginning of disorder;
foreknowledge is the flowery embellishment of the Way
and the beginning of folly.

Hence the man of large mind abides in the real,
and not in what is on the surface,
in the fruit, not in the flower.

Therefore accept the one, and reject the other.

An alternative translation=

When the Way is lost, there is goodness;
when goodness is lost, there is kindness;
when kindness is lost, there is morality;
when morality is lost, there is ritual.

And similarly=

3

Not exalting the gifted prevents quarrelling
Not collecting treasures prevents stealing
Not seeing desirable things prevents confusion of the heart.

The wise therefore rule by emptying hearts and stuffing bellies,
by weakening ambitions and strengthening bones.
If people lack knowledge and desire
then intellectuals will not try to interfere.
If nothing is done, then all will be well.

And=

8

Highest good is like water.
Because water excels in
benefiting the myriad creatures
without contending with them,
and settles where none would like to be,
it comes close to the Way.

HAIKU POETRY= The Future of Eros

1,

A 'cult of beauty' informed much Japanese poetry. "A love of sheer beauty had been given.. a Japanese complexion as early as the 8th century A.D. with the Man'yoshu, a collection of poems characterized by deep feeling, sensibility, and colourful imagery" [Tom Lowenstein and Victoria James, 'Haiku Inspirations', 2013, p 46].

"Profound love of the varied and dramatic Japanese landscape, allied to sensitivity to the vividly changing seasons, had been important to Japanese people at least since the 6th to the 8th century A.D." [p 10].

So far, so Eros..

Shinto is the origin for this; Shinto, the Japanese form of Shamanism, celebrated the strangeness, power, and beauty, of nature.

Buddhism entered Japan in 500 A.D., and brought "the doctrine that life is characterized by the impermanence of all worldly things.." [p 11]. "While Buddhism in India had suggested that beauty, [due to] its impermanence, was of little importance, Japanese Buddhists, in particular those who practiced Zen, developed an appreciation for the way in which beauty and transience co-existed, and deployed images such as dewdrops and cherry blossom to imply that things are beautiful 'because' they were impermanent. The term *aware* [sadness] was used often in art and poetry, and the tradition of 'mono no aware' [the sadness of things] described the way in which life was tinged with a constant sorrow that was also aesthetically delicious" [p 11].

"Many haiku poets were Buddhists, and many of their poems contain poignant visions of dewdrop-like transience in the 'ukiye' [the floating world] -- a frequently used term for our fragile, dreamlike social and natural environment" [pp 11-12]. It is God who is absolutely real, whilst this world is non-substantial, dream-like, flowing not fixed..

'Yugen' means a suggestion of the unseen, of what lies beneath the surface. Thus Yugen "is an overtone that does not appear in words" [Chomeri, 1200 A.D.]. Evening sky in autumn= no colour, no voice, "but still you find tears welling up in your eyes. It is what lies behind that enchants you" [ibid].

Basho= do not impose yourself, your ideas, emotions, desires, on the object, but contemplate it such that its 'essence' ['kyo'] emerges. This contemplation is to see the object as God sees it. It is also to love the object as God loves it= to venerate the object as God's, not your own to exploit, and throw away, as you vainly and foolishly choose..

Predominant subjects of haiku= nature; the passing of time; the four seasons; the sadness of transience; but also= everyday human events.

Haiku poems touch on religious, social, historical, and cultural themes -- but the touch is light. Moreover, it is natural occurrences and processes that often serve as the metaphor for revealing the essence of human events [what is really going on]. Nature is a mirror reflecting us back to ourselves.

Virtues revered in court in the classical period between 800 and 1200 A.D.= sincerity, sadness, courtly manners. High born people had to be connoisseurs and practitioners of the arts. Aristocrats= the 'good people.' The masses= the 'mere people.'

Over a luminous robe of beaten silk,
a lady's hair
hanging

One of life's exquisite delights, this sight, according to a woman courtier.

A solitary and melancholic poetic mood was cultivated. The Japanese term 'Sabi' alludes to "the solitary contemplative condition in which poetry is written" [p 49]. A lonely mood, feeling, or atmosphere, is implied.

Basho [1664-1714] sought out places expressing Sabi. Yet paradoxically, Sabi could lead to, or be combined easily with, the most ecstatic joy. The Chinese Zen poet Hanshan [circa 700-800 A.D.] "abandoned society to 'sing madly in the mountains.' His 'madness' was really spiritual joy, and Basho similarly described his own departure on a journey as "ecstasy in the moonlight" [p 49]. Mountains in Chinese Buddhism had always signified spiritual exaltation, bringing a vast panorama. Spaciousness is key to Eros= its welcoming of anything and everything, its 'making room' for ever more riders in its carriage.

Basho's poetry expresses a grasp of things as they are in nature, uninterrupted by human interference. Basho embraces the joys and sorrows of the brief span of human life; he also "considers his own humanity and questions the nature of the 'wind-swept spirit' that inhabits his body. At times, he compares himself to the plants and animals with whom he shares the world" [p 58].

Basho's last and arguably best book is the record, in prose narrative and haiku poems, of an epic journey [1689]= 'The Narrow Road To The Deep North.'

Buson [1715-1783] was a haiku poet and painter. He used the 'nanga' style that Zen monks brought from China in 1300 A.D. Nanga= free, intuitive brush strokes, intended to capture the spirit of a subject rather than represent it literally. 'Capture the spirit'= portray the essence.

Buson's haiku displays a massive appreciation of the wonder and mystery of nature [again, a Shinto quality]. Like other Zen painters, he deployed an

unfashionable 'poverty' in his bare, non-symmetrical, and 'imperfect' representations.

Closely related to haiku was the older tradition of 'ink painting', sumi-e [960 A.D. in China; 1338 A.D. in Japan]. As with the haiku emphasis on the 'wordless line' or what is unsaid, so in this black ink painting the spaces left white convey more than what is said.

4 strokes in sumi-e=

- 1, sturdy yet elegant [= bamboo]
- 2, elegant yet retiring [= rare orchid]
- 3, contemplative [= chrysanthemum appears in late autumn, just before winter]
- 4, flowers that drop before they wither [= plum tree blossoms in winter].

A whale plunges mightily
tail rising
a feather.

Issa [1762-1826] is known as 'the gentle rebel.' He loved this world. Joyful poems emerged from huge losses in his life= he outlived his parents, his two wives, all his children. Another homeless wanderer.. 'Homelessness' evoked metaphysical grandeur in some of his poems, but he is remembered as loving the very ordinary things of human life. He had an attachment to the everyday. [His name means 'cup of tea.']

He dressed in a very unkempt manner, and at times his poetry was considered 'rough' by Japanese standards.

Here comes a bush warbler!
wiping his dirty feet
on the plum blossom.

Eros embraces 'clean and dirty'= the lotus in the mud.

Shiki [1867-1902] created the 'haiku revival' in modern Japan. He thought traditional haiku too formalized. He recommended a retaining of the haiku essence, but a freeing of its form. A new body for an old soul..

He called haiku poetry 'shasei', sketch from life. Describing life just as it is, without too much reverence for the old forms or artificially twisting the poem's structure and content, would produce the best haiku [p 71]. He said= "forget grammatical rules.. write to please yourself." He valued 'spontaneity' above all else. He founded the Nihon School, which emphasised 'naturalistic, realistic writing.' He was not a Buddhist, and was tired of religion.

To ears
fatigued by preachers
the cuckoo.

2,

Most commentators see the main influences upon haiku poetry as Shinto and Buddhism.

Shinto= "The Way of the Spirits." The Japanese term 'kami' is mistranslated as 'gods', but it refers to the 'spirits' who indwell places in nature, like rocks, trees, waters, mountains.. Shrines to such spirit beings are always sited in places of natural beauty. The spirits inhabiting nature create nature's beauty, whether calm or savage. This is not a Buddhist doctrine.

Shinto ceremonies are tied to natural cycles and stages in human life= the two are inter-connected. As in the Lakota Sacred Circle, the four seasons of nature are also four steps on the human path to spiritual maturity. Shinto devotions= to attain purity and health. Buddhist devotions= to secure good karma, or 'merit', which will determine one's future reincarnations.

Shinto regards nature as 'Sacred', and certain places are markedly Sacred. Sacred means, in English root, 'set aside for God.' Thus to see nature as Sacred is to see God in nature, and to see divine energies indwelling natural essences. It is an incarnational vision. For, if God is embodied in nature, then it is not as ephemeral, not as transient, as Buddha claimed. There is something insubstantial in matter, something psychically fluid and un-fixed, but it exists not as an end in itself which rises and falls and finally will pass away, but this very 'flux' at the root of matter and all natural things is for a different purpose. It is 'user friendly' to God, and thus its rationale is to be a flimsy membrane penetrable by divine energy and divine activity.

The Buddhist vision and the Shamanic vision coexist= both are true. The world is not thing-like, not the machine our ego wants it to be so as to manipulate it for selfish ends, but this no-thingness at the root of material nature exists for the indwelling, the embodiment, of divine forces, presences, processes, gifts.

Shinto Sacredness is the more primary truth; Buddhist impermanence is the secondary truth which needs to be set in proper context as nestled in the Sacred. The Sacred needs Impermanence; yet if you separate Impermanence from its root in the Sacred, then it is open to endless misinterpretation. Matter is 'saved' for indwelling by the divine, and that is why it and all its fruits are Sacred. This is what Shamanism knows. Buddhism does not know it..

Shinto also honours an Eros composed of a primal father and primal mother who are married. Eros includes and depends upon a Sacred Marriage. Thus, both the cosmos, nature, and life on earth, and human life, dance to the Eros music of Sacred Marriage. Again, Shamanism knows that Marriage is Sacred, on all levels, yet Buddhism does not know it.

Shinto had priests but no monks traditionally [this may have changed now]. Buddhism has priests and monks. Actually, wherever Eros appears, the figure of the priest and the figure of the monk emerge. The priest represents the positive meaning of Eros as love and abundance shared among all the people, whilst the monk, and his ascetic spirit, represents the willing acceptance of the loss and 'curbing' in Eros needed not only to deliver us from the false goodness we seek, a phantasy and corrupted Eros, but to drive us to greater sophistication with even the true goodness of Eros. Priest= rich clothing of Eros, its fertility and fructifying. Monk= impoverished rags of Eros that bring us closer to its naked core. Eros needs both monk and priest, to signify its loss and gain, its necessary polarity of fasting and feasting. We fast from devouring, and jettison polite eating, so as to grow capable of the real and full feasting.

Eros is the 'sweet and sour.'

The priest without the monk= the danger is that priests are the first to sell out to the bourgeois life, the first to talk Sacredness whilst succumbing to materialism; without the Zen stick, or the Desert simplicity, the priests become too comfortable, too lazy, too 'easy' about handling the material realities of this world. No longer the keeper of the Sacred, the priest becomes a money maker and a power broker serving the evil forces running the world.

The monk without the priest= the danger is that monks get stuck in fasting, as an end in itself, and do not realise it is only a necessary station on the way to feasting. Monks then start taking immense pride in their feat of hard, uphill climbing in 'self-restraint', and look with contempt upon the weakness of lesser humans.. This turns Luciferian, rapidly. Moreover, such monks lose the Sacred and make too much of the spiritual as a replacement, or alternative. Pure spirit, freed of matter, becomes an anti-incarnational, dis-embodied, creed which they fall into, almost by default. Buddhist monks are drawn towards this error if they fail to realize that -- not despite but because of its Impermanence -- material life is Sacred. Consequently, if you meet a monk, do not let him start bragging about all he has given up to ascend the mountain of self-mastery, rather, ask him if he can enter the Sacred Feast. Ask him to sing you the song, and perform the dance, of Eros Reborn. If he is as stilted as ever, then give him a wide berth; he is still lost like everyone else, despite his rigorous yogas, disciplines, practices.

Priest and Monk together= Sacred and Spiritual conjoined, each putting corrections upon the other. Eros= the Good Red Road, from south [summer=flowering] to north [winter=declining] of 'Making Sacred' and 'Spiritual Understanding.' This is the narrow road to the deep north.

When Buddhism began to exert influence on Japan, the spirits indwelling nature became regarded as bodhisattvas, the buddhas of ultimate mercy who, instead of entering nirvana and leaving behind the wheel of birth and reincarnation, chose to return to the world of deluded cravings in order to enlighten those stuck there. This is the generosity of Eros= not content with

being saved oneself, one gives away the benefits of salvation in order to return to the realm of the unsaved and make an impact in saving others.

3,

The term 'meditation' is *dhyana* in Sanskrit, *ch'an* in Chinese, and *zen* in Japanese. Ch'an originated in China in 500 A.D. via the Indian monk Bodhidharma [450-530 A.D.]. He sat in a cave for 9 years meditating. [The 'cave' is the symbol for the feminine mystery in physical and psychic matter that enables it to be indwelt by Spirit; the Messiah was born not in a stable, but in a cave.]

Bodhidharma belonged to the more generous, broader, northern Mahayana tradition, not to the stricter southern tradition. He taught that everyone possesses the 'Buddha nature.' We think we have fallen out of the Way of Eros, but we remain a part of it even when we are like 'the fish, surrounded by water, crying piteously from thirst.' Enlightenment is thus like a return to what really is and never ceased to be, for us. In a subtle sense, we remained in the light even when our eyes were closed and hence all we saw was darkness..

Buddhism arrived in Japan around 500 A.D. Zen arrived in Japan 500 years further on, late in 1100 A.D., brought from China by the famous monk Dogen. It was, interestingly, initially taken up mainly in the north eastern part of the country. North= Loss in Eros. East= Rebirth after Loss, in Eros.

Lowenstein offers the usual account of the 2 schools of Zen, the Rinzai School, which uses koans and was standardized by the Zen painter Haikun in the 1700s A.D., and the Soto School, Dogen's outfit that taught 'zazen', or 'just sitting.'

Lowenstein= Meditation in general, and wrestling with koans in particular, is designed to lead the mind beyond rational, or 'discursive', thought and thereby release it into an intuitive and direct knowing without the interference of ego.

Lowenstein= disappointment, or discontent, ceases when we renounce our desire for worldly happiness and our dependence on the notion of selfhood.

Dogen's master Hongzhi advised him to sit "in silent introspection without confusion from inner thoughts of grasping.." In 'The Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma', Dogen suggests to the monks that they meditate alone, "resting as with the floating clouds or running water" -- these changes in nature signifying the impermanence of all things.. This is like Hinduism= do not try to make the Relative into the Absolute. We try to 'absolutize' what is only relatively real, and thus life makes us restless and discontented, disappointed and frustrated, caught in a misery that is inconsolable. Dogen is saying, like the Buddha, let this life be relatively real, do not try to make it into something which it cannot be. It cannot satisfy our grasping attachment that requires it to be something it is not, something graspable that would make us

safe and secure in the holding on to it, something graspable that would guarantee we can slate our deranged appetites.

Freud is not so far from Buddha. Freud's 'wish fulfillment phantasy' is near 'delusive craving.' Freud is teaching that 'wishing', the anti-realistic kind of desire, unconsciously drives the conscious mind, such that the mind's expectations, assumptions, agendas, are generated and dominated by the phantasy scenarios that wishing demands in order to be 'fulfilled.' The conscious does not realize it is being 'run' by the unconscious, until cracks appear in the pavement [in the form of neurotic symptoms, or other eruptions from beneath the brittle crust of conscious control].

Put it more simply. In the grip of wishing, we invent or concoct a phantasy world, coloured, textured, shaped, by what the wishing demands from the world. Thus do we live in unreality.

Buddhism, with more philosophical acumen inherited from Hinduism, puts the same Freudian point more spiritually, in terms of delusive cravings 'confusing' the mind, taking it over, and thereby dictating the conscious mind's way of proceeding. We believe this conscious proceeding is objective, but it is not; we see the world as fixed, and graspable, as separate from us -- an I--It, not an I--Thou -- because of the 'grasping' inherent to our desire. When the soul-mind axis is changed at root, then the world that is apprehended by virtue of soul and mind changes at root. William Blake speaks of cleansing the doors of perception, so that what appears finite and corrupt is seen as infinite and holy.

Dogen advised his monks not to waste the brief time we have on earth= "You can see that moments pass without stopping, and that all is transient. Use each fleeting moment." He goes on to say, don't waste the brief human life pursuing the trinity of ego aims= renown, money, pleasure. Interestingly, Freud's definition of what the ego seeks from the world is identical to Dogen's= fame, wealth, being loved by attractive women. In more sober monastic lingo, this is the vain narcissism, the avaricious greed, and the lustful devouring, of the fallen erotic energy in humanity. This erotic energy is entirely 'for itself', or caught up in self-love, which kills the ex-stasis in the soul and mind; such erotic thirst [1] is seeking glory for itself, [2] is mean and ungenerous in accumulating for itself; [3] it is exploitative in seeking pleasure for itself, using and throwing away what it consumes.

A different categorization in Buddhism, as in Eastern Christianity, puts greed and lust together, since both are appetitive, and makes 'hate' the third aspect of eros, for hate arises when our greed or lust is blocked by situations beyond our control, or rivals appear who threaten to prevent our greed or lust from being gratified, because by grabbing what we are after, they deprive us of getting it. Thus we revile them and indeed ill-wish them. We would prefer it if they did not exist, because they interfere in our possessing of what we insist upon 'having.' The more exclusive our possession of this desired object, the better. If it does not want to be possessed, we grant it no right to a life apart

from us= we would like to kill it. Even if we do not act on that 'aversive' dislike, resentment simmers..

Dogen insists= "Now is the time to save your head from a scorching fire." The fire is the desirous attachment that consumes whatever it latches on to, whilst the saving is to get the head out of the fire, where it can regain its 'right mind' toward the world. In stricter versions of Buddhism, the fire is not transformed into a true attachment of loving the world, because the attachment is unrealistic inherently, and cannot be 'made good'; thus, the fire of attachment burns out, replaced by dispassion= the cool, calm, tranquil, non-attachment.

4,

In Japanese Zen this is not so straightforward, whatever the explicit teaching of classical Buddhism might say..

Japanese haiku poets, who were implicitly Shinto even as they were explicitly Buddhist, identified the sadness all around them, in nature, as well as in human life, and did not attribute this sorrowing of all things, this poignancy of all things, just to 'the error of grasping attachment to the world.' They saw this sorrow in nature, and in the human world, in the passing of time. Basho's "sorrow is shared by birds and fish, who also lament the passing of the spring season" [p 95].

Buddhist impermanence is one way of interpreting the Way of Eros in this world, always functioning through a spring and a winter. But there are other reasons for this.. Spring and Winter are, in Shamanism, as in Messianic Jewish Christianity, a secret way of Renewal, pointing to a fully natural and genuinely material Rebirth after matter has flowered and withered.

It is hard for creatures and for humans to lose the summer fruits and journey on the narrow road to the deep north, where all fruit is finally lost, yet the north is 'deep' because it is the turning point, the matrix of change in things, for from its dying comes the east of everything Reborn.

In time, as time is now, Eros must flower and decline, explode raucously, like Qaw'wali music, and then depart, like a sad requiem. This is the Way of Eros, in this world, for now.. 'The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

But in Shamanism, as in Messianic Jewish Christianity, there is a hint of a mystery that this polarity, this oscillation of opposites, will come to an end, because it prepares for something unexpected and new. "I make all things new." Not the two, the rising and the falling away; the three= the birth, the dying, and the Rebirth.

Buddha said, facing his own death and reacting to the grief of his disciples= "All phenomena are subject to decay." But hidden from the Buddha in the light that came to him, secretly tucked away in a pregnant dark, was the further and final reality of Eros.

The Daemonic significance of Christ's resurrection= those who are dead with Christ's passion will live again in his regenerated passion. But the resurrection has Eros significance as well.

The resurrected life is also the Eros that makes the creation always and forever new, that renews embodiment after death has sundered soul from body. This is the Eros that reinvigorates incarnation, bringing soul alive in matter, and animating matter in soul, and making both the vehicle of spirit= spirit married to matter.

The final Rebirth that is coming was not disclosed to Buddha. It is tacit in Shamanism, and becomes evident only after Messianic Jewish Christianity when all of nature and humanity is resurrected with Christ.

This is why the Jews and the Shamanic Celts started their sacred year in the darkness of winter, and therefore made the journey through time a movement from death to life. Not a journey from spring to winter, youth to old age, but the journey from winter to spring, old age to youth. We have a brief taste of our everlasting youth when young, then get old and stale, like everything, yet we are moving from oldness to a renewal of newness.

In this final end of time, when the Messianic Age will have resurrected nature and matter in a transfigured state such as Christ revealed on Mount Tabor and lived after his bodily resurrection, we will have our flowering, and we will bear fruit, 'fruit that will last.'

Buddha brought us back into Eros. The Messiah, dead and resurrected, takes us forward into the future of Eros.

THE REAL MEANING OF EASTER JOY

The Eros side of the resurrection, its joy, is not due to any promise of going to heaven after death, or the human spirit somehow surviving bodily death.

The 'death' overcome by Christ's resurrection is the *separation* of soul from body, their division, which kills the body yet also 'puts the soul on ice', consigning the soul to Hades, a half-life, a shadowy life, a 'continuing' in some sense but a continuing that is without life; just a pale, spectral mere [bare] subsisting. Such is the 'ghostly' realm of the Greek Hades, which is very similar to the Jewish Sheol..

Consequently, the resurrection's 'joy in life' is not the happiness of going to heaven, which would just maintain the 'un-natural' separating of soul from body, but is, rather, the rejoicing of the soul re-incarnate in the body, the celebrating of the soul fully embodied. This is the final transfigured Eros, 'the new heaven and the new earth', because heaven and earth are married, creating a 'heavenly earth.'

A different kind of materiality, a different kind of body, will rise from life's last withering on the vine, yet the material substance, the bodily form, will not be 'shed.' The future brings the incarnate Eros.

That new eschatological condition of Eros, brought about only by the suffering passion of the Daemonic in Redemption, is therefore the 'death' of the Cross that leads to a 'born again' life in the New, finally fulfilled, Messianic Age= a life more alive, more joyously ecstatic, more abundantly overflowing, more creatively fructified and fruitful, than any previously..

This is the Holy City and Sacred Garden that will be humanity's enduring through all the ages upon ages, without end, olam to olam.

This is why Yeshua the Mashiach is both "the king of the rulers of the earth" and "the first born of the dead" [Revelations, 1, 4-5].. Many will follow, for everything will pass through the door his kingship opened.

THE FAIRY TALE ENDING= Heroism and Magic

1,

Heroism, as traditionally presented in drama, might be thought to have no connection with anything akin to a fairy-tale, as the existentialism of the former is nothing like the magic of the latter. But there is a vital connection between the existential and the magical in the story of heroism. This is particularly clear in Celtic myths, legends, fairy tales, both Shamanic and Christian. It seems to be the special genius of the Celts to have discerned this peculiar connection.

There is an existential side to the fairy tale ending, alluded to by Andy Harmon= 'against all the odds, the hero comes through-- if he pays the price'; and that price is always sacrifice of some kind, on some level. God helps people where they are, and so whatever a person can do, much or little, that is their 'all.' For the heart making it, sacrifice is always beyond measure.

However, there is a more magical secret to the fairy tale ending. This is hinted at in the legends that reveal the origins of the fey realm. The hint can only be repeated= there came a point in time when the gods and goddesses fought the humans, and the humans won, inaugurating the age of the heroes. The gods and goddesses had to retreat; they became 'small', reduced in power and influence, yet went on living in the wild forest glades, and in the human psyche. The psyche in humans is in touch with a psychic substratum in everything. This secret became the fey domain.

In Celtic stories, there are not two but three roads in this existence. [1] There is the heroic road, the so-called straight and narrow, the hard road, walked by a relative few. [2] There is the road to perdition, the so-called crooked and broad road, the easy road, walked by a relative many. [3] There is a third road, mysterious and magical, that does not partake of the harsh clash between love and evil, or truth and the lie, but leads to the fey realm. This is often accessed by a strange path that goes beneath a mound into the underworld; it can be accessed through lakes, or caves, or other underground entry points. The fey realm is always 'underneath' the everyday world of humans, though fey experiences also suddenly intrude at the 'boundaries' of ordinary human convention and comprehension. Fey can certainly invade the human world.

The Celtic fey realm is an aspect of the older Shamanic 'Spirit World', but it is a special aspect not previously disclosed.

The Spirit World has an aspect of Static Quality, because its 'space' is the intersection point of Uncreated and created, and as such is both 'exalted' and 'vast' in its cosmic extent. Cosmic space is Infinity in the finite, Unity in diversity, like the Oriental mandala. However, maybe before but certainly from the Celts onward, the Spirit World also manifests another aspect which is more geared to Dynamic Quality. The fey realm is not simply the cosmic

space of the Great Wheel; it is a hidden part of that space which pertains more to time, the promise of the future lost in the past, the riddle of what will be in the forgotten what once was..

The fey realm is not the stability and continuity of Static Quality, which both transcends and has constancy through time. Rather, it is time frozen in its forward thrust, but waiting for the 'enchanted moment' when time will be liberated to move again. The story of the gods losing to the human heroes is nothing to do with spirituality being replaced by any kind of humanism; rather, it is a postponing to a later time of what the gods offer humanity, until humanity has stood on our own two feet. The age of the gods, when they mentored and were the ideal of humans, must go. This means the humans doing without godly charismas and potencies, in order to take on something very different, and much harder= the pressing necessity is now for humans to become a hero of the heart, a hero of passion, and relying only on the Daemonic God to do this.

In this transition, the gods are not destroyed, but 'put on ice', shelved for a time, made 'smaller' in prominence and role, thus becoming the 'little people.' What they become, and the realm they live in, are both no longer as the gods once were, in being exemplary figures looked up to above the human, on some Mount Olympus high in the sky, almost touching heaven; they are now reduced in size, yet thereby changed in function. Both what they are, and the realm they live in, are 'fey', which means magical. This magicalness belongs more to time than space, it is a mystery of the Daemonic, though it also has roots in Eros. The fey govern nature's growing, its fertility. But they hold out another more mysterious and magical quality.

The fey realm is like a time stopped in its tracks, almost frozen in aspic, a kind of weird 'longevity' or 'elasticity' of time, a time yet a time not passing, an odd time. We sense this time especially at dawn and twilight. It is liminal time, a boundary between two worlds, ordinary clock time and magical time. In magical time, no time passes, or it passes so slowly that a human traveller who 'goes under the hill' might find they have been away for seven human years, yet it felt like only seconds, minutes, hours, in the fey time.

Not surprisingly, the Celtic peoples who used to keenly feel the nearness of this odd spiritual domain tended to interpret it as Paradise, the Blessed Isles in the West, and similar 'Garden of Eden' themes. But the fey realm is not the primal paradise of Eros. It holds dangers that are unique to its odd role in the story of redemption. Thus people who descend into the realm of fey must be careful not to insult its inexplicable rationale. It is a storehouse of psychic wisdom, and gifts, yet its role is not just to dispense any of this 'buried riches.' It is doing something more obscure, and in doing this, it requires its human visitors to be heroic in the world process of existential time; the fey spirits do not welcome hippies, treasure seekers, spiritual joy riders, Luciferian souls lusting after spiritual power, the psychotic seeking an 'inner' source of identity as an alternative to the 'outer' source of identity they reject. Though the fey road is not as obviously rigorous as the heroic road, it does require heroic rigour as a precondition of a fruitful entry. Those on the road of perdition will

try to exploit the fey realm, to their own wrong motives and bad objectives, and so the fey road will prove for them only an 'enhancement' that ensnares them more profoundly in evil's deception. As for the merely idly curious, the day trippers, real dangers await; like the sorcerer's apprentice, they will get more than they bargained for.

There is much to say on this, yet it is best left with a veil covering most of it. All that needs to be said is that, though the stories involving the fey people and their realm can end very badly for the unwary and the disrespectful, and the false of intent, for the true in heart the encounter with the magic of fey creates unexpected 'happy endings' where things come to fruition, where all manner of things end well. Some of Shakespeare's later plays move in this direction; it is tempting to believe that the bard had actual first-hand experience of fey, or his final plays would not have been possible in their odd mixture of tragedy and comedy, of distress and happiness. Shakespeare over a long lifetime of writing works through the 'good fight', and human tragedy, to a new place in the heart beyond their exactions and sorrows, and this place is most certainly redemptive, yet as a result, it also becomes magical.

What is going on in this progression, this change process in time?

It is captured in the phrase applied to Arthur, 'the once and future king.' Heroism, as it passes through the good fight, and into redemption, comes to a crowning end provided by the magicalness of fey. This magic is 'added' unexpectedly to the story of heroism. Two things are happening. A kingship defeated in time comes back in time, renewed. The pre redemptive king hits a wall, the post redemptive king blasts through that wall. The king denuded of the gods is finally gifted by them again, but their gift is not to him so much as to everything he has sweated, cried, and bled, for. His sacrifice becomes the seed that goes into the ground, and unlocks something magical that will change the land, and change the world process. The redemptive seed not only frees the captives from hell, it frees something else= fey is the power to transform the land, and the world process, in time. The king's sacrifice is like the kiss that awakens the sleeping beauty; the sleeping beauty is the natural and historical world, everything governed by time, under a kind of curse, unable to be sparked into the change that will bring it all to a creative ending, a final celebration of the investment of God come good over the long run.

Fey is the aspect of nature and the world that is never stuck, but fluid like water in full flow. Without fey, everything is stuck, ticking over in clock time, and blocking out fluidity with a hard shell. Fey melts that hard shell that stops things moving.

'Transformation' is the secret of the fey; the fey is that watery kingdom at the bottom of all things, and linked to the human psyche, that can get things moving again, as they always were meant to move. The heroic deed frees and unlocks this 'time to go', 'time to move', 'time to change'; and once this weird time between past and future is dynamised, it touches ordinary time and radically changes it. This is not Eternity in the Now; it is a promise given to time, lost and preserved in a liminal time, brought back to ordinary time

again in order to wholly recreate it. Clock time becomes not only the time of existential action, and the time of redemption, but the time of possibilities only held in magical time, and distant from real time, becoming realised 'at last.' We waited for the magic for a long time, sensed it, intuited it, imagined it, sang and told stories about it, but knew it was not real; then the magic caught us out, it came for real, and in that precise sense, 'our dream came true.' Ordinary existence suddenly seems the insubstantial dream, and the magic more real. Magical things happen, for real, in the end, to transform everything and everyone.

This is the stupendous meaning of 'they lived happily ever after.' The parallel between this Celtic intimation of time delivering magical transformation in reality is strongly parallel to the promise of Christ's resurrection for all of nature and all of the world. The entire creation is resurrected, becoming the Heavenly Earth, and the New Jerusalem.

None the less, we can have no certainty that redemption will even win through, and thus the magic of transformation, when a spiritual water will flow through the hard crust of things and melt it away, is still far off-- or very near. With the fey, you never know what is up and what is down. Their 'world in reverse' reflects a hidden link to the Reversal of the Cross. Thus as redemption moves ahead, so the fey time beyond time re-enters time, to work a certain magic. Arthur is returning, yet also returning is that transformational power in the creation itself, in the earth, in the world of history.

It can all change, in a twinkling.

As the fairy tales say..

2,

Drama has been linked to Dynamic Quality, and Dynamic Quality linked to the Daemonic.

God spurring on the heart and passion in its heroic and redemptive battle with the world, for the world.

A hard conclusion needs to be pointed at.

Drama shows us that most of the time, we have no heart. This is why we are bored with the time we spend in this world, and why we complain that time is statically immoveable, such that nothing deep ever changes. No wonder people flock to Static Quality with its Stable Pattern of Duration, and eschew the Dynamic Quality that can change things dramatically, but when it is non-operative, leaves everything stuck, as far as heroism is concerned; the world only ever seems to be shifted by evil and the lie. The world keeps going to hell, like a heavy rock sliding down hill, and only the wicked seem to have the muscle to help it roll downward faster and farther.

Drama tells us this situation can change, but only 'if'.. You know the if, as do I. Knowing it means nothing unless we 'do' it.

To change the world requires our sacrifice. This is the sticking point.

The heart pays the price, and this is why there is no other word than 'passion' for the life and action of the heart in and towards the world. Emotion is no use, feeling is no use, to refer to what the heart 'does.'

No heart action= no words concerning the heart can be spoken.

Drama provides a language of storytelling, of narrative, by which we can try to avoid falsifying the heart and its passion, but remain true to its action. A successful dramatic story pre-empts any commentary on drama, and the commentary only reminds us of what we already know, but forget. We are not confused about why drama affects us so deeply, both hurting our conscience and encouraging us at once.

Consequently, any account of the heart passion that contests the world's destiny has to be prophetic; it has to be calling people to a change of heart, and helping them navigate the heart's many and twisted paths. For those who are sharing this journey and battle, there is opportunity for much brotherly exchange. These are exchanges of 'notes in the life', what it is like for you, what it is like for me, in the common human fate. We can help each other keep going. On this road, there is no expert, no guru, no master, only brothers, some elder, some younger, but all up against it, all out of their depth, all suffering and all fighting. Though the Daemonic blow forces each of us to step out of the Great Round, and stand on our own feet over an abyss personal to our uniqueness, nevertheless the Daemonic wound also forges the brotherhood of heroes standing together, like the Knights and Arthur in Camelot.

The heart is not easily searched out. To a large extent, people either get it when the heart is spoken of, or they do not. Many people, perhaps most people, have no clue what the heart is from their own experience, and thus resent it being spoken of-- as if someone were trying to have a laugh at their expense, or put something over on them, even trick them. This is foolish though understandable.

It is hard to search out the heart. Entry to the heart has to be earned by acting from the heart. Even then, that is just an entry, and the deeper searching out remains very hard on all human beings. Almost nothing is harder, except the most passionate heart action itself. People lie about the heart, and avoid any searching of it, day in, day out, year in, year out. Children start with an innocent heart, an unformed and untried heart, yet a heart willing to have a go, but it is soon kicked out of them by parents, and indeed all the adults they meet. In the fallen world, in the process of 'worldliness', everything is organised, set up, systematised, to block out heart, in the name of the right procedure, the correct protocol, the best practice. It is all an elaborate architecture of nuances added to evasions added to lies, and it is fiercely

defended by people as the proper way to do things. No heart allowed, because we have all this other apparatus instead.

Getting to the heart, and coming from the heart, are thus rare and so difficult it is almost beyond recall.

The heart is only searched out with insurmountable difficulty. It helps to get closer to the ground, for only if we are close to the ground can we search the depths.

The depth plunges down, in the end, into an abyss. This is the unfathomable and groundless ground which alone can give the raw ground of existence, upon which we spill our sweat, tears, and blood, its solidity. Then the killing ground becomes the common ground, and what divided us deeply becomes what we are reconciled to, and gather round. In the end, there is only one heart, one passion, that upholds all, and allows all to stand together.

REFLECTIONS UPON LEAVING AMERICA= Joyce Carol Oates On The 'Daemonic'

For some people who cannot -- or more deep down towards the heart 'will not' -- change, only a big disaster, a cataclysmic disaster, will move them out of their refusal to move. This is true of individual persons, as well as large communities of persons like an entire nation.

Today is our last day in the USA, after nearly 4 months -- that felt more like 4 years. I am glad to go. My childhood intuition of what is wrong in America was on target, but needed amplifying..

When we run from suffering in our own life, we end up putting a double dose on other people.. This is what America has done.

Any person who says yes to suffering, and does not deny it or flee it as most [99.9%] humans do, is taking up the heart burden, the killing weight, which everyone has put down.. To bear suffering, in the hands of the Daemonic, is to do something passionately loving for all mankind..

Last week the wife and I saw on TV [pbs] in a motel in Joshua Tree desert, an interview with a prolific American novelist called Joyce Carol Oates. This novel was called 'The Accursed.' It critiques, exposes, explores, so-called "decent people", often in positions of prestige and privilege, whose conscience fails. She says in her novel that such people are 'conscientious but without conscience.' They know the injustice and other faults in the social-political-economic system, but will not act to repair these failings.

The interviewer was a black man, so he was roused by this description of the failure of 'respectable' white people, and kept asking why basically 'nice' people are so often unable to act for the good in the world. Oates gave some decent answers, if predictable; she said things like= it is due to cowardice; fear of losing safety and comfort [fear of sacrifice]; 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is [too] weak.' She also said, to my surprise, something more true of America specifically, referring to the tradition in America of not speaking out, of always covering over the harsher truths about America with [rhetorical] exaggeration and [vain] idealism..

Then she started talking about 'the Daemonic'!

The interviewer did not understand this word; he knew it was not 'demonic' but it was not 'angelic' either.. [Neither 'evil' nor 'good' as normally understood= so what can it be?]

Oates insisted on using the word, and pronounced it= not *die-monic*, as in C.G. Jung, Rollo May, and others, but more Greek, *day-monic*, though her voice slightly trembled and went a little hoarse, as if she too feared the very

word, much less the reality. Her use of the term in the story of the novel hit upon, not the only but certainly, one of the core themes of the 'Daemonic.'

So, when pushed to say what she meant by this strange term, in the context of her novel, she replied that by Daemonic she meant 'supernatural eruptions' that 'punish' human situations 'when those situations are unjust and the moral actors concerned lie about it.' This was striking. It is entirely accurate to the Daemonic in its main mission of opposing the spiritual lie, since its wound/spark in passion is to arouse and drive, 'energize', passion's living and dying for truth-- not abstract truth, but the storied, concrete, existential truth of who did what to whom..

The woman came over as obviously a liberal, so disinclined to rely on anything explicitly religious, but 'supernatural eruption to punish liars, especially those in positions of wealth and power', because 'their lying prevents justice coming to human affairs', is certainly the action of the Daemonic Father Yahweh according to the Jewish Bible.

Sitting Bull= "Americans are great liars."

Alexis de Tocqueville= the United States was able "to exterminate the [Red] Indian race.. without violating a single great principle of morality.." ['Democracy in America', vol. 2, p 355].

Adam Smith= the "vile maxim of the masters of mankind: ..all for ourselves, and nothing for other people" ['The Wealth of Nations', book 3, p 444].

D.H. Lawrence= "The American soul is hard, isolate, it has not melted." Eros cannot touch this soul. It is fearful of intimacy, prurient and puritanical at once. The American soul= armoured.

Freud departing America and speaking to a young acolyte= "This country of yours: I am suspicious of it. Be careful. It brings out the worst in people-- crudeness, ambition, savagery. There is too much money. I see the prudery for which your country is famous, but it is brittle. It will shatter in the whirlwind of gratification being called forth. America, I fear, is a mistake. A gigantic mistake, to be sure, but still a mistake" ['The Interpretation of Murder', Jed Rubenfeld, 2006, p 515].

The heart in America= brutality and sentimentality. These two are heads and tails of the same coin. The Daemonic cannot ignite this heart. The American heart= merciless.

False soul= wealthy, comfortable, indifferent to the thirst in other souls for the 'good life' that is never slaked.

False heart= powerful, aggrandised, dishonourable towards the hunger in other hearts to be worthy of respect that is never fed.

America= the Tower Over The Pit.

The Tower= the soulless and heartless few.

The Pit= the many sorrowing in soul and suffering in heart.

The few have gained the Tower at the expense of the many whom they have put into the Pit.

The lying of the few about what they have done, in establishing a situation of endemic impoverishment for the many, is the crime against God at the core of America. It gives the lie to the myth of 'American Exceptionalism.' America is exceptional in never calling a spade a spade, in never acknowledging truthfully the famished soul and the dishonoured heart that 'rules' the roost, and always has done from the very start of the madness. Under the oppression, the thrown away people are silent. They collude with the lie of their oppressors about them= they did not seize the dream, they did not succeed, they deserve their lowly and desolate condition. It is entirely their own fault..

American Exceptionalism is a new, and phoney, 'messianic' religion, thieving from the Jews their unique status as the chosen. America is not, and never was, the New Jerusalem. Even William Blake was fooled by this false idol.

The bravest people did not go to America from the 'Old World.' The greediest people went to the 'New World.' The brave people stayed and fought the good fight in their ancient, divided societies. England removed slavery, without bloodshed, through the efforts of Christians in 1825. America's record on slavery, and racism, is far worse. So it is with everything Americans pride themselves on= all the democratic features briefly on display in early America were soon more evident in other countries..

The only Exceptionalism of America= the great lying. The denial, the pretence, the hypocrisy, in America outstrips the equivalent everywhere else.

In America, the Tower is bigger, brighter, more glittering.

In America, the Pit is vaster, deeper, more grieving.

The few have disavowed their own grief, to rise above the many. They too are paying for the pursuit of trash as if it were golden. But they have the luxury of compensations for the unfaced thirst of the soul and the unaccepted hunger of the heart. The many have no such consolations. In America, when you hit bottom, both religion and worldliness conspire to condemn you for your inability to realise the American Dream.

The Tower will be fatally struck, overthrown by lightning from the Daemonic God.

The Pit will give up its dead.

The Lie will lose its ornate clothing and angry denials.

When the Tower falls, the Pit will reveal the 'covered up' Truth.

This is what is coming to America, the supernatural punishments from nature and from history, sent by the Daemonic God.

America is not 'Vanity Fair'; America is Vanity Ugly= in Hebrew, what is 'vain' refers to 'mist', something transitory and insubstantial.

The American Dream is the mist that has deceived, bedazzled, enchanted, the modern era.

It is clearing, it will clear, even in America itself.

The rest of the world will see America for the pinched soul and puny heart it is before Americans see it. Yet they will see..

The Dawning of the Messianic will be a cold wind driving away the last of this mist of the miasma of lying.

THE AMERICAN JESUS IS SUPERMAN

Nothing could be further removed from Isaiah's Suffering Servant -- the Reversal Man, the 'Man of Constant Sorrows', the 'Uncomely Man' Humiliated and Rejected -- than the American Jesus.

In fact, the American Jesus is really Superman-- the Superman without any Cross.

And Superman is really the Jewish misinterpretation of the Messiah as a Saviour Figure, paying no price, but miraculously and magically putting everything right, making it all better, especially for the Jews but because of them, for the world.

The 'Superman American Jesus' and the 'Jewish Miracle-Working and Magical Saviour' are one and the same, ultimately. Neither is the Redeemer who must pay the supreme price to redeem.

This is the real reason America supports Zionism. It is not simply Middle East *realpolitik*. The injustice of the neo-Jewish religion of American Exceptionalism [America as the new 'Chosen People' whose Imperialism is to be praised because it will create an Empire which will save the world] fits like a hand into a glove in regard to the injustice of the Israeli State's violent domination of and immoral dealings with the Palestinians. The Palestinians are not angels.. But that is not the point. As supposedly very different from all other nations, the Jews are called to deal justly among themselves and to deal justly with the world.

The Holocaust does not give the Jews a 'get out of jail free' card.. Survive, yes. But become just another dishonourable and cruel betrayer of all standing in the heart, like your persecutors, no.

THE FUTILITY OF QUARRELSOME RELIGION

Chief Joseph, Nez Perce=

“They will teach us to quarrel about God, as Catholics and Protestants do. We do not want to do that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about the things on earth, but we never quarrel about the Great Spirit. We do not want to learn that.”

The Rabbinical Tradition=

‘If reading the Scriptures causes you to love people more, then you have interpreted them rightly.’

Lakota Tradition=

“Evil does not recognise itself.”

THE BLACK AND RED OF PASSION

1,

Several years ago I dreamed of the passion writings still crystallising..

In the dream, passion was two rocks hard to lift from the ground, a black and a red. They were knee high, one almost bell shaped, the other more rounded, both firmly settled on the baked dust.

The first rock was a deep velvet black, dense and undifferentiated, like that midnight after a sweat lodge with an Oglala friend, when we both looked into the dark sky and felt it was a good night to die. The second rock was red, rent with black wounds like sword cuts, and other scars, yet speckled with gold, and with patches of a rich ochre like the scorched earth out of which the heart was first formed.

The red is born of the black, fire rising from a wound, but the black remains a mysterious power latent in the red. The black is a stillness that cannot be moved, the red will leap into a movement that cannot be stopped.

I know that to finish the passion writings I will have to lift both rocks.

I stand there, staring at the impossible summons.

2,

Brokenness of heart and unbreakableness of spirit are linked= this is the Black and Red.

Brokenness of heart in the tragedy of humanity, and unbreakable spirit in the fight to redeem it, are linked in passion.

Black= "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" [Proverbs, 15, 13].

Red= "Jacob's heart fainted.. but his spirit recovered" [Genesis, 45, 26-27].

The irrationality of the wound that deepens us does not make sense or add up by any light, be it scientifically intellectual, philosophically rational, or apophatically mystical. From any vantage point in Eros, the Daemonic is beyond the pale, and cannot be integrated into the grand Wholeness that harmonises all variation, balances all opposites, and unites all hierarchic levels of complexity. The Daemonic has no symbolic images, and it has no metaphysical names. It is the unknown God for whom the Greeks left a memorial. Indigenous peoples confronted the Daemonic walking abroad on the earth, and gave it a name that signifies no name can be given to it, because what has been confronted is 'wakan'-- strange, odd, unusual, holy, mysterious, dynamic in change and powerful in action, yet upsetting any structured order, from the mechanical to the cosmic.

David prays for Eros, to escape the Daemonic, in Psalm 55=

“My heart is sore pained within me... and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me and have overwhelmed me. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo there would I wander far off.. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest..”

Of all the manoeuvres we could perform in the fearful hands of the Daemonic God, this is the worst. In the Black, there is no Eros to rescue us.

We are in the West, called Wiyohipeyata, because it is where the sun goes down. This is the finishing of things. We started on an edge, stepped off, and are now in a gap, suspended between the loss of the old and the not yet arrival of the new. We are in suspense over whether there will be any rebirth. In the Black, you lose all hope, because ‘the finish of things’ means everything is done. It goes forward, and then it crashes, and then it is done. If you see any light at the end of the tunnel, you are not in the tunnel.

Yet, the fighting spirit that stirs in the Black, even when it is all over, implicates the East, called Wiyohiyampa, because it is where the sun comes up. This is the beginning of things. The new beginning comes first on the air, before any hint of dawn, while the night is still black.

In passion, we travel from the setting sun to the rising sun, West to East. We start in dying, and then we travel to rebirth. This reverses the usual order of things.

Accept the Black, struggle in its depths, and then rise up into the Red. This is passion’s way. This is warrior way. This is heart way. It turns a lot of things upside down, and inside out. It is called, Reversal Way.

In the Black, you are in the hands of this reversal, so ordinary assumptions do not apply. Just when you are sure it is really unravelled beyond recall can be the turning point. What you thought of as victory soon sours; what you thought of as defeat slowly ripens.

Let it be what it has to be. Then it will become what it can become.

3,

Black= depth of heart, passion brought down to the Abyss.
Red= greatness of heart, passion standing up from groundless ground in the Abyss.

If you lose the fight on the rim, it is redeemable in the Abyss.
If you lose the fight in the Abyss, you are lost, forever without any end.

In the struggle with depth, when we are gradually losing, sorrow can soften into self-pity and anger can harden into vengeance.

No heroism can be refound in the grip of the soft and the hard. It corrodes and undermines the heart.

Defeat in the Black takes various 'pathological' forms.

There is neurosis and psychosis-- this is crazy passion.

There is criminality and wickedness-- this is evil passion.

There is Nietzsche's laughable tough guy-- this is indifferent passion.

It may take a long time to connect our suffering to the tragedy of humanity, and it may take a longer time to connect our anger for truth to the fight to redeem that tragedy.

If you lose your way in the testing Black, then the proven Red never arises.

The Black clears away all that is not going to burn with God's fire. It keeps some kindling, some wood, and this is our willingness to let fire go because we do not know true from false. Like the wheat and tares, they were mixed up. By becoming immovable in the Black, we watch the false rise up in our heart yet do not invest in it, and gradually we cool to the false and warm to the true. When it rises, our heart starts to leap, like a dancer whose feet are in motion before they can stand up.

We will not act decisively until our sifting has readied us. We will eschew prematurity, instead we will be patient, forbearing, long-suffering.

This persisting is fortitude, and strengthens the heart. It is the acceptance of what is true, and cannot be changed. Truth is hard. Falsity is easy. Giving way to falsity is easier and induces weakness. As weakness gets a toe hold, we know we are starting to fall.

Black= what it means to have a heart.

Red= what it means to use the heart.

Black= the defeat of the false light of Lucifer.

Red= the defeat of the false fire of Satan.

Will fire be kindled in ashes?

Can this happen?

In the depth, the true Red is won from the deepest Black where it could go either way.

You don't get rid of the passible. You come through the passible. You win through, it is a real victory, and that is why God takes the risk and then rejoices with us when it 'comes good in the end.'

4,

Black= the cry of the heart, the prayer most acceptable to the Daemonic God.
Red= the shout of exultation, as the heart sacrifices itself for God, by loving the world as God loves it.

Black= Abyss.
Red= Fire.

Black= the Deep Mystery
Red= the Great Holiness.

'Blessed are those who mourn', for through their suffering, a different fire of truth is born, one able to contest the world for love.

The passionate are the wounded and the burning ones.

A NEW SLANT ON PASSION

Kierkegaard once described passion as the 'the Infinite in the finite.' This made little sense at the time, probably because the contrast between infinity and finiteness is not one that speaks much to anyone versed in the Jewish approach to these matters. Kierkegaard's way of putting it is decidedly Greek in terms, and maybe also in conception.

Recently, however, something St Paul said hit me in a different way, so different it was as if I had never encountered the passage before. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." As it was read out in church, my understanding did a sort of total volte face. My God, I reacted, this passage is talking about passion. And then, thanks to St Paul, I could appreciate what Kierkegaard meant in his choice of words.

Finite= having bounds or limits.

Not too vast or too minute to be measured.

Neither less nor more than any assignable quantity.

Subject to conditions, as of space, time, matter, and circumstance.

Limited by person, number, tense.

Having a termination. Things that end. Everything has its limit.

Infinite= without limits.

Not limited or circumscribed, especially with respect to time, space, or God.

Exceedingly great in excellence, degree, and capacity.

Boundless.. Limitless.. Immeasurable.

That which is absolute, or perfect.

Boundless space or extent..

The Infinite Being, the Almighty.

Therefore, passion is the Godlike operating within the restrictions of the world, and the limits of the human.

If we rise above our lowly station we will miss God on the way down to it.

We place the superior above the inferior. God places the superior below the inferior.

PASSION IS THE ADULT WE DO NOT BECOME

1,

Many people never outgrow the child= they demand 'primitive merger' with lovers, and life scenarios with 'happy ever after' endings, and the like. Letting the child's consolations die is a major challenge to growing up and becoming an adult.

But what are the adult's consolations? These are more to do with the ego= ambition, triumph, success. This does not demand merger or happy endings, but it too relies on certain crutches= existence must be a puzzle that can be solved by sufficient effort, intelligence, power. The illusion that sustains the adult's ego is 'power over' fate, and therefore the capacity to create one's own destiny out of one's own forcefulness. The child's evasive myths are of one kind, the adult's evasive myths are of a different kind= in either case, existential reality is shut out. If the child must give up dewy eyed romanticism, the adult must give up hard boiled scepticism, or existential reality remains held at a very long arm's length. The child fantasises being in the arms of benign powers, like adoring parents; the adult fantasises the ego as a tough guy, standing alone, capable of blasting through every obstacle, and overcoming every challenge. Sex is the badge of power, as is worldly station= the proof the ego is rampant, unstoppable, all conquering. Letting the adult's consolations die is horrendously difficult, and few people do it. Adults may not need merger and happy endings, but they need predictable order and reliable control, they need measurement of outcomes, they need the definiteness that puts everything in neat and tidy boxes, or they cannot 'play the game.'

Some adults just follow the rules that are pre-set, and some adults play the game to win even if they have to stretch the rules, entailing there are smaller and bigger egos in the world, compliant dogs who kow tow and buccaneering dogs who piss on the turf. But all adults are in the game, and that is also why they stick to the shallows, and evade the deeps= the game is laid out on the surface of reality, and only by remaining relentlessly surface in their perceiving and emoting can adults play the game that dominates their busy days, and vacuous nights. Take the game away, and if anything adults suffer more terribly than children forced by reality to give up their belief in Santa Claus. For, take away the predictable and the controllable, take away the measurement of outcomes, take away the definiteness that puts things in neat and tidy boxes, and there is no more game. This is when the adult 'project' of world mastery through the ego's expansion hits the rocks and sinks.

Shipwreck in the adult is more far-reaching than early disillusionment in the child, because the adult has nowhere else to go, nothing more to hope in. The child can still hope beyond the bleakness that invades their world prematurely, deferring their happiness and fulfilment to some far off adult life, but the adult in ruination has no compensation= they can only run away by regressing to childhood, going backwards, since if they try to continue going

forwards, by looking the future in the face, all they see is a vast and bleak nothing. What disarms the adult ego is the reality that is outside the game, rendering it unplayable= mystery, paradox, ambiguity, takes the surface of reality away, like sweeping a carpet out from under the feet of someone who has naively and confidently assumed their egoic 'progress' is on 'solid ground.' The deeps of existence intrude, invade, undermine= suddenly the existential moment of awakening arrives, and the real growing up into adulthood, through embracing what reality actually is, arrives.

This is the moment when the Daemonic attacks the adult, stripping them of all their protective clothing. Suddenly their naked flesh feels the full force of the cold winds of reality that reveal the true vulnerability of the human being, the true precariousness of being in the world. There is no ground upholding our existence in the world= beneath everything is an abyss. Having previously shut our eyes to it, suddenly all the tissue of distractions, idols, chimeras, used by the adult to sustain blindness are ripped away. The abyss looms up at us, and we are threatened in some numinous manner right in the core of our being= our heart grows faint, our guts turn to water, our visceral self feels queasy from the 'sickness unto death' crawling up from our feet into our legs and arms and hands. Our whole body is shaking imperceptively, gripped by 'fear and trembling.' This is an encounter, not a thought open to interpretation= it is a perception, a feeling, a sensation, a realisation. It is what Kierkegaard called Angst.

When the child has let go of the child's consolations, and when the adult has let go of the adult's consolations, then the genuine realism begins. The adult's enclosed ego [impenetrable, tight boundary] is no less an illusion than the child's expansive self [permeable, loose boundary]. It is simply a different illusion, but letting it go is catastrophic. The fall of the ego in adulthood is a shattering crash. When the sword of 'rational calculation' and 'instrumental control' can no longer slay the dragon of 'it makes no sense' and 'it cannot be solved', then the dragon swallows the ego into its belly, and acid juices consume it. At this point, the adult is in a state where, to borrow the fairy tale metaphor, 'the cupboard is bare.' This is the advent of the adult who is confronted with a severe either/or= find a new way to be an adult, or continue falling into the vacancy.

This is where the real adult emerges after the adult caught in illusion has lost all the egoic props and defences maintaining its 'get up and go.' This is where the passion which is the province of the adult really starts. This is the adult not simply beyond what many know to be the error of childhood but also beyond what few know to be the error of adulthood. Real adults are rare, though the future of the world needs them as it does no one else. Taking responsibility for the world is their hall-mark. Pseudo adults milk the world for all they can get, to satisfy their own narrow ends, and thus are indifferent to the world's existential precariousness, and unwilling to risk their existential vulnerability for its sake.

The Lakota say, "a child is someone who must depend on others, but an adult is someone on whom others can depend."

The pseudo adult is playing the game, whether scrupulously staying within, or craftily bending, the rules. Neither can be depended upon when the existential going gets tough.

Angst severs all the ties to the everyday world that we take for granted, rendering everything in existence uncanny, odd, threatening, as in Munch's painting 'The Scream.' This moment of crisis happens on a bridge over troubled and troubling waters, but the two companions 'pass over' without worrying about it, without concern for it, whilst the protagonist is unable to proceed. He is separated from them because he is stopped in his tracks= something terrible closes in and he is caught half way, not able to go on or go back but paralysed in some numinously dreadful 'in between', and it is more the black below and the red above suddenly screaming at him that evokes his own scream.

2,

Nothing in the modern world is used more as an escape from the moment of existential awakening to real adulthood than the various systems of abstract thought in which people routinely hide from the world, other people, and themselves.

Angst reveals as groundless, baseless, unsupported, the clear-cut upland of abstraction, into which the existing person disappears, and returns him to his real situation in the profound lowland of concreteness, forcing him to acknowledge neither the world nor his own existence in it are upheld by anything mentally or physically tangible that he can get a grip on, define, prove.

Kierkegaard ['The Present Age', 1846]= "our age is essentially one of.. reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose.. Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is really thought which takes his life. He does not die *with* deliberation but *from* deliberation."

This has only become ever more so..

3,

Passion confronts something about the unknown God, and this world poised over an abyss, that our mind does not know, and indeed cannot know. This is what propels passion's action.

In passion there is a drive toward 'discovering what thought cannot think.'

Passion is action, not words; passion is action, not thoughts; passion is action, not feelings; passion is action, not imaginations [thus even William

Blake was wrong to claim "imagination is the real man"]. The 'real man' is passion, and this man is hidden in the heart.

Nietzsche's Superman is the diametric opposite of the hidden man of the heart= the Superman asserts his will, takes what he wants, creates himself, and stands in solitary splendour alone, sneering at the contemptible herd. The power that Nietzsche lusted for and worshipped is precisely not where he sought it. The power of passion to 'go beyond the limit' comes from a mysterious limitlessness, yet passion is at its fiercest not when it defies existential, and human, limitations, but when it 'works within' their restrictions, and suffers their pain, shoulders their burden, pays their cost. Passion does this to bring everyone through to a far shore on the other side of what stops all of humanity in their tracks.

Passion's faith is not 'evidence based' but neither is it 'a creative fabrication.'

Passion makes no decision by itself, on its own; it is called into the existential conundrum. The heart hears the crying of deep to deep.

Some religious people, simply because handed-down tradition has fragments of knowing [Eros], and fragments of prophecy [Daemonic], proceed as if they had 'god' in their back pocket. They believe they have been given a recipe that allows it all to be figured out.

Paul, 1 Corinthians, 13, 9-12= "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Pretending we know more than we can know= this is the child who will not put away childish things. Too much of religion is disfigured by childishness. Too many religious people abuse religion as giving them carte blanche not to grow up.

Accepting the situation where we 'see in part' yet take the chance with what cannot be seen= this is the adult.

Passion faces up to everything which the religiously childish will not face.

4,

Kierkegaard waged war on the West's chief vice= its belief in the superiority of 'intelligence', its arrogance over the machinations of 'intellectual calculation.'

Such intelligence, whether allied with science or spirituality, invariably evades the heart, and thus has no potency in regard to taking on what passion takes on, to do what passion does.

Some of his sharpest barbs were aimed at Hegel, the philosopher whose pretensions to Absolute Knowledge -- his confusion of "the logical with the existential" -- Kierkegaard found preposterous. "If Hegel had written the whole of his *Logic* and in the Preface disclosed the fact that it was only a thought-experiment [in which however at many points he had steered clear of many things], he would have been the greatest thinker who ever lived. As it is, he is merely comic."

Kierkegaard wrote that Hegel was like a man who had built a palace with his mind [the vast Hegelian System] but actually lived in a shanty [existence with its inherent danger, loss, incomprehensibility]. Human existence is a paradox and contradiction.

In fact boredom -- and what later existentialists called alienation -- arises out of an existence where the open-ended adventurousness, earnest seriousness, long-suffering bearing and enduring and persevering, brought by passion is absent. Intellectualism breeds boredom, because it skates over all that passion struggles with and suffers and fights for. Head people become big in belly because lived truth is absent from their existence, they are hollow and empty, thus 'consuming goods' becomes the only activity below the neck. This engenders boredom in the heart, and the heart then needs violence, excitement, recklessness, to tell it that it is still alive. Such boredom is a nameless dissatisfaction, impossible to relieve; indeed in Kierkegaard's account, this pervasive boredom is essentially a spiritual malaise, endemic wherever a purely naturalistic conception of humanity holds sway, and people use amusement, pleasure, hedonic satisfaction, to escape the Angst that can only be exited from by passion.

Just as Socrates gave up reading the scientific works of Anaxagoras because they told him nothing about the fundamental ethical reality of man, so Kierkegaard repudiated the rationalism of his culture, insisting that "the real subject is not the cognitive subject... [but] the ethically existing subject." In this sense, as the philosopher William Barrett has noted, Kierkegaard's motivation was essentially religious, not philosophical. "He never aimed at being a philosopher and all his philosophy was indeed incidental to his main purpose, to show what it means to be a Christian."

The assault on intelligence that has no humility toward the stranger and nobler burden that passion must carry therefore became one of Kierkegaard's main efforts in all of his work, and he jokes that he had to be born with a superb intelligence to puncture the pretensions of intelligence. The Journals= "It was intelligence and nothing else that had to be opposed. Presumably that is why I, who had the job, was armed with an immense intelligence."

But if Kierkegaard was right that "paradox" is "the source of.. passion", then his entire work does vindicate one role for the intelligence exemplified in his own writings= to serve a faith that must travel into existential places where reason cannot go. Faith clashes with reason only when existentially fearful people try to 'unreasonably' push reason beyond its proper scope. Reason

sets a too narrow, and too comfortable, limit on what faith wrestles with existentially, so as to avoid wrestling with it. Faith discovers in experience, as a result of being stretched, buffeted, knocked, there is a mystery beyond existence working within existence to redeem it, from the groundless ground upward and outward.

4,

The destiny of the heart, and passion, is in the hands of the Spirit.

The new age that is coming= the age of the Spirit working in the heart through its passion.

The Spirit is responsible for the story, its vicissitudes, its strickenness and break outs. The outcome is with the Spirit.

Passion is returning.

The fire born of suffering will come.

The time of return is coming. Our time is coming. It will be terrible, and fearful, but wonderful.

Spirit, come.

'CALL NO MAN FATHER'

1,

I discovered what passion is, and what the heart -- its 'organ of fire' -- is, through unwittingly, inadvertently, without choosing it, living out Christ's strange admonition in Mathew 23, 9. It does not matter if we come to this consciously, or unconsciously, if we embrace it willingly or it is, more likely, forced upon us by circumstance.

The secret of Judaism= 'call no man father.' We are called in Judaism to lose the human father, to set aside all religious and secular authority, and really lock horns, in the mystery of our heart, with the Mysterious Heart that drives everything..

The first encounter with this father reveals he is hidden, and must be hunted. This keeps it honest. This keeps everyone journeying, battling, on a rocky road. No one can get too comfortable, lazy, sloppy; no one can give themselves airs, look down on other strugglers, or mistakenly assume they have arrived, or left others far behind. Everyone struggles, everyone falls, everyone suffers, on this hard road.

This tough road allows for elder brothers and younger brothers. Thus it allows a certain kind of leadership, but as Lao Tzu said, leaders should exercise their 'helping hand' like a small fish is cooked= gently. The helping hand is in any case often mutual, with ostensibly weaker helping ostensibly stronger.

The belief in the unilateral potency of certain supposedly advanced persons is unrealistic. No leader stands without the support of the people. There is no point in comparison. There is a point in respect for the authenticity, the authoritativeness, of where a person has got to on the road, when they have really put their money where their mouth is, really striven.

Everyone recognises someone who has, by genuine practicing the walk every day, on difficult ground, reached a certain standing that other people have not yet attained. But this person realises better than their admirers that they too are still precarious, still in trouble, and can fall down and hit the dust at any moment. We need to respect those who really push it, but we need to respect even more the plight we are all in, and thus respect those who cannot try, wrecked by the predicament, even as we respect the capacity to wrestle with it evidenced in certain 'stand up' persons. The weaker is in the stronger, and the stronger is in the weaker.

More ultimately, we are all in the tragedy together. Recognising this is the only basis for the creation of the brotherhood that cannot be broken.

We call no man father because the challenge is to make brothers of all men. We are all brothers and sisters of the only real father. Only God is 'our father.'

2,

But, once we start to call certain men by this numinous name of the unknown, the hunt for the Holy Mystery rapidly degenerates into mere 'patriarchy'. Things are named. Things are pinned down. Religious Systems and Religious Structures, with Religious Definitions and Religious Formulae, arise. Hierarchies of Status and Power arise. The human patriarchs lust for power, to keep everyone in line, under their thumb. Tyranny, authoritarianism, oppression, springs up, and takes over from the real hunt for the hidden father, from the heart, wherein faith means trusting the unknown, taking the next step into the existential uncertainty, traveling further into the universal pain. Once we call human men by the terrible and holy name forbidden to them, 'father', they seek an authority God does not grant them, or anyone else, male or female, old or young. The temple, the synagogue, the church, ceases to be the tent on wheels, moving over challenging but empowering terrain as we track God's footsteps in a trackless desert. Instead, it degenerates into a 'religious organisation' and then becomes, at its lowest rung, just a 'religious club' which is run by authority figures who presume some special 'possession' of the unknown, hidden, God= as if they could dole out the Mystery of God in its blessings and warnings as they personally and humanly see fit, according to their personal and human judgement, which is an idol that comes to stand between God's presence and the people as 'the necessary criterion.' It is no longer God speaking to the people, and moving their innerds directly. No more will God move the people's hearts as, and when, and how, he wants to do so. Now, it is what the 'venerable patriarchs' say that God says which counts. People give up, in the heart, their own hunting for the numinous beast burning bright in the forest of the night. Books of laws are written, and placed like handcuffs upon the fiery poetry of actual encounter with God. It is not allowed! God becomes, as a living presence, an embarrassment to the vast, and ever increasing, Systems, Structures, Prison Houses, of patriarchal regulations, rules, strictures.. These human constructions become objects of superstitious fear, and acquire a magical power. People propitiate them, like false gods. There is no love. 'Obedience' to patriarchal 'mysterium tremendum', with all its pompous trappings, including overblown titles, becomes a way of dodging God.

Kiss the pope's ring or God will abandon you forever!

This patriarchal take-over of the religion dedicated to seeking the only real fatherhood happened to the Jews when they returned from Exile in Babylon [500 BC]. In such patriarchal take-over, we lose the fatherhood of God, and gain human men, and sometimes human women, as pseudo fathers, insisting that their authority has 'supreme gravitas'; these idols of patriarchy stand in for God's fatherhood and render it obscure, even unnecessary. If you have the pope's ring, and can kiss it, what need of your heart venturing into deep waters or venturing into burning fires. You are fine. The pope's ring, and your kissing it, guarantees you are safe and secure. There is no risk. There is no gamble. There is no leap of faith..

Mathew 23 is a two fisted prophetic denunciation of patriarchy in the Jewish religion, but its assessment of the spiritual disease in patriarchy would apply equally to secular as well as religious settings.

It is significant that Christ tells the ordinary people that the Scribes and Pharisees 'occupy the chair of Moses.' They belong to the secondary stream of Judaism represented by Moses [mind oriented], and have lost the primary stream of Judaism represented by David [heart based]. He proceeds to nuance the status of the Law, telling the people to embrace its disciplines and profit from its teachings, but not fall victim to the way in which the patriarchal religious people abuse it. 'Listen to what they say, but do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practice what they preach.' They put heavy burdens on others which they themselves wear lightly. They love to be greeted with respect in the market place and to be called 'Rabbi' by other people. They believe that their high status as figures of authority must be recognised and paid due obeisance by those below who command no authority.

Traditionally, Rabbi referred to someone in a position of religious leadership, a teacher, even a master.

Mathew, 23, 8, in different translations=

[1] "But do not be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, and you are all brothers."

[2] "Don't let anyone call you Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters."

[3] "Do not be called Rabbi, for one is master, even the Messiah, and you are all brothers."

This rules out all hierarchies of power, status, 'esteem', in religion, wherein a higher 'lords it over' a lower. It renders all humans equal as brothers and sisters.

Mathew, 23, 9, in different translations=

[1] "Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven."

[1] "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for one is your father, he who is in heaven."

[2] "You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one father, and he is in heaven."

Mathew, 23, 10, in different translations=

[1] "Do not be called leaders, for one is your leader, that is, the Messiah."

[2] “Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.”

[3] “Nor are you to be called masters, for you have one master, the Messiah.”

Christ’s message in these three verses is unequivocal. The basis for patriarchy is hammered.

Over the whole of Mathew 23, Christ continues lambasting the entire patriarchal ethos, its attitudes and its practices. These persons in religious authority put widows out of their houses, to grab the money; for pretence they pray at excessive length; they engage in religious proselytizing wherein the ‘converted one’ becomes ‘twice the child of hell’ as the converting one; the difficult matters of the Law -- justice, mercy, good faith -- are neglected.

Christ calls these patriarchal authority figures ‘blind guides’ and says their tendency is ‘to strain out gnats and swallow camels’; thus they also ‘make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within they are full of extortion and intemperance.’

Indeed, the patriarchal authority figures are like ‘whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every corruption.’ Christ says to them, ‘in the same way you appear to people from the outside like good, honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.’

Christ even says of these patriarchal authority figures that they are ‘the children of the people who killed the prophets.’ Such people are against the prophetic fire, for it would expose their religious fatherhood as invalid, and indeed, pushed to an extreme, evil. These religious fakes insisting that they are the only kosher ones are called by Christ ‘a generation of vipers’, and he says they seek to kill off not only the inspiration which is prophetic, but also the wisdom of the ancient sages which is existential. They decorate the tombs of holy persons from long ago, but it is merely an empty gesture, a cover up. These phoney religious potentates have taken over the religious terrain, and that is why ‘your house will be left to you desolate.’

Religious leaders are elder brothers or elder sisters who serve the rest of their brothers and sisters, by humbling themselves. Christ also says in Mathew 23, 12, that ‘those who exalt themselves will be brought low’; whereas ‘those who make themselves lowly will be exalted.’ This is the point of Christ washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. Leadership cannot claim ‘authority’ over anyone, it must be under the real authority, like everyone else.

The person of authoritativeness, who eschews authoritarian manouevres, force, bullying, coercion, is nominated by the people to lead them. The leader cannot be appointed from above; they can only emerge from below.

3,

Patriarchy only exists in islands in religion nowadays -- though some of these islands have active volcanos boiling away -- but it has seeped into secular society, where people find different criteria for justifying one person having authority over another. This encourages in those with authority the same sense of elitist entitlement, and moral superiority, and in those without authority the same sense of disenfranchisement and deferring to the 'expert' which means they need not take any responsibility for making their own life and death decisions. Authority inflates those who rule by it, and infantilizes those who allow it to rule them. The former wield 'power over' the many, and the latter are 'in the power of' the few. Authority eliminates 'power with.'

The Jungians have detailed the psycho-pathology of the 'swallowing father' [the father who does the swallowing, and the children who are swallowed], illustrating the dynamics of this oppressive and sterile condition using the ancient Greek myths of Uranus [sky], Uranus' son Cronus [time], and Cronus' son Zeus [chief of the Olympian gods and goddesses]. A certain Saturnine depression in those 'crushed in spirit' by fatherly authority -- operative in certain families, in certain social groups, in certain professions, in certain institutions -- remains widespread in the modern world ['Fathers and Mothers', Spring Publications, 1973]. Murray Stein points out that devouring by the authority of the father results in= "conventional thought, feeling, and behaviour. ...consciousness [is] bound, swallowed in convention and habit, [focusing on] duty as defined by prevailing collective norms." This is a person who finds their identity in the structure of established power. Anything 'outside the box' is heresy. This person is rigid, locked up; as in Leo Tolstoy's short story about a lawyer dying of a mystery illness, "The Death of Ivan Ilyich", the person has put the 'dead hand of tradition' over themselves like a blanket, and then it suffocates them= they cease to be able to breathe, and start to die inside, such that their actual death is a mere formality. This is 'death through excess of order.'

Eric Neumann calls the process of devouring by the father 'castration by convention', or 'patriarchal castration.' Staying in line, to avoid retribution, becomes the goal. James Hillman says that the patriarchal 'angry old man in the sky' kills off the 'inner child', who is not the childishness clinging to mother but is the childlikeness wanting to adventure out towards the undiscovered father. Christ rejected the patriarchal god when he said, 'unless you become as a child again you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Between the true child and the real father there is a golden bridge.

4,

Mathew 23 not only says 'call no man father', it also says 'call no man teacher.' This is not understood in the Christian West or the Christian East. All that is allowed for the human fatherly role, in true religion, is that it exercises a kind of mentoring. This is what Paul means when referring to the Corinthians as his 'beloved children' whom 'he has begotten' [1 Corinthians,

4, 14-16]. This carries no patriarchal implications, such as are obvious in terms like 'Fathers of the Church', monks as 'father', or priests as 'father.' The papacy as 'holy father' is the ultimate in patriarchal idolatry.

But it matters not at all whether we call this patriarchal idol blocking out the real fatherhood of God by the name Pope of Rome, Patriarch of Constantinople, Chief Rabbi of Britain, Moderator of the General Assembly, or any other foolish appellations forbidden by the new road of the Messiah where the paradoxical route direct to God is reopened, once and for all, and for everyone without any exception.

Patriarchy eliminates the human heart, for better and for ill, in its glory and tragedy, its bigness and meanness, its courage and cowardice, its trust and suspicion, its depths and superficiality, from religion. It cramps this divided and conflicted heart, paralyses the heart, causes the heart to hide, to creep round corners, to cower in shadows. The huge pretence begins. The heart starts play acting the good boy and the good girl. It pretends to be won over to the fatherhood of God when it is not; all it is doing is kow towing to the authority of patriarchal institutions, figures, books, all of which are idolatry. If your heart cannot say an honest No to God, your heart will never arrive at a truthful Yes.

Since God chooses the human heart as his vehicle, this inhibiting of the heart is disastrous for humanity's hunt for the fatherhood of God, our contending with it, our engagement with and commitment to its mysterious reality, our resistance against it and betrayal of it, and arduous returning to it.. We lose all heart for God, we lose all heart for this world. The two are flip sides of one coin. The heart is 'put away', put under wraps. We hear from it no more. Its action, so needed in this world, is absent. We fail our heart's summons to the world by default.

5,

Nor does it work to simply reject patriarchy, in its severity and strictness, and embrace matriarchy, in its permissiveness and 'tolerant' indifference to the knife-edge issues of real concern in the heart.

If the hunt for the real fatherhood of God is distorted in patriarchy, because kow towing to patriarchal authority lets us off the hook of the true search for God, in the way we risk our heart in action toward the world, then that hunt is simply given up in matriarchy. We please ourself, and in doing that, become like an athlete refusing to train. Thus we get flabby, and go nowhere. All sorts of pestilences creep in to our laxity.

Neither suppress, nor indulge, the heart.

Joel, 2, 12= "Now it is Yahweh who speaks -- turn to me with all your heart.. Let your heart be broken, not your garments torn" [or= 'rend your heart, not your garments']. Come back."

6,

Judaism is the religion of heart= the religion gambling on the human heart. It is not just that linguistically 'lev', the Hebrew term for 'heart', is predominant in the Jewish Bible. It is that only Judaism runs with the heart in its full risk, existentially. The evil spirit objects fiercely to the faith God puts in the human heart. His game plan is to prove to God that such faith is misplaced, that it cannot work..

As the story of Jacob declares, we have a contention with God, because his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts.. God requires the heart. And so God wrestles with us, where we are.. God accepts our real ambivalence, ambiguity, conflicted state, and encourages the arduous 'inner warfare' necessary to come through 'the two hearts' to whole-heartedness, but rejects our pretending to be someone we are not. Our No to God is necessary because it tests and authenticates our Yes. If someone says to us, 'I love you, I love you, I love you, I really love you', we need no great empathic intelligence to realise that their heart toward us is the opposite of what they say it is. Piety, if exaggerated, is impious= not real to where we are.

The fatherhood of God is the deep heart pain in all humanity. The Messiah lets this pain reverse him, to reverse it in in humanity. The Messianic Spirit powerfully engages with this pain, to give mankind a new heart.

THE THIRD HELL

The world ends not with a bang, but a whimper.

PROLOGUE

Not long before he died in 1997, Viktor Frankl was persuaded to revise his old book, 'The Unconscious God' [1975], exploring humanity's 'unconscious religiousness' [like Martin Buber, he rejects Jung's take on this]; the new book was published posthumously ['Man's Search For Ultimate Meaning', 2000; 2011]. Frankl takes the opportunity to review his life's work, and reaffirm what he had to go through in the concentration camp, and what was forged in him from that confrontation with wholesale evil.

The 'will to meaning', which Frankl argues to be the primary human intentionality, can be finally defeated in a kind of evil ennui, or spiritual torpor, which he terms 'existential vacuity.' This echoes the 'accidie' of the early desert tradition of spirituality in the Christian East. The root meaning of the term in Greek, according to John Chryssavgis, refers to an inability to stump up any 'concern' for anybody or anything. St John of Damascus called this condition= "weariness in the face of one's work"; it becomes impossible not to abandon one's post.

Existentially, it is the third, and the deepest, undermining of the mystery the heart stands upon in having no 'ground' other than the abyss.

This malaise of 'vacancy' so widespread in the modern world is explored in 'The Sheltering Sky' by Paul Bowles [1983]; the novel is a vividly experiential portrait of the third hell, the empty void, the abyss that becomes nothingness.. His way of expressing a travelling going nowhere, a travelling into empty nothingness, is masterful in its perfect mixing of literal and metaphorical= outer mirrors inner, and inner mirrors outer..

Since this hell creates 'the banal', a lot of the events in the story are trivial, necessarily; but on the occasions when the sky splits, and the great nothing roars into the world, or rather, into consciousness, it is dramatic.. If this hell wins, superficiality is the result, but a certain kind of shallowness, a shallows with the certitude of meaninglessness, and futility, in built.

This is not death. It is worse by far than death.. You could be alive or dead, technically speaking, and this 'absence' would be the same. Indeed, such is the horror of this absence, even if you were alive to experience it, you would yearn for extinction so as to stop experiencing it. It eclipses any distinction between life and death, ushering in a vacancy so terrible, it is like a scream that, as the book says, exists independently of your inert body, your inert corpse. This hell is not pained in the usual sense. It is a horror that rises from shadowy depths and elicits even in the most feverish, minimal consciousness, a gasp of terror that breaks into the universe, and splinters

the sheltering sky above, revealing the same nothingness above as roared up from below..

This third and most abysmally deep hell is very near the surface in America, or rather, just below the surface, threatening the narrow band of indifferent normalcy with collapse into its nameless horror. This is beyond angst. This is the worst case scenario that angst entertains as possibility become reality. This is not the loss of belief in God. This is the loss of all visceral assurance, all subtle intimation, of God from way down in the abyss moving dynamically upward to move the heart into fearless action. This is the reverse assurance, the inverted intimation, of nothingness coming up, like a bad sick. There is no escape, into life, or into death. There is no peace, only falling through, and falling in, forever.

1,

Port Moresby and his wife Kit are from New York, wealthy, upper class, with nothing to do, nor any need to work, spending their life drifting to exotic places-- to escape. Escape America, escape each other, escape the self.. They have been everywhere-- and nowhere. On this occasion, in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, they are in French Algeria, starting out in the north, and heading inland, going ever more southward, deeper and deeper into the absent zone of the Sahara Desert. They show observant disinterest to the backward Arabs, and make no attempt to relate to them. They prefer the 'ambiance' that comes off all the exotic peoples, clothes, mannerisms, animals, architectures, haunted by the burning sun and the wind-tossed sands.. Their conversations with each other are sophisticated and brittle, always avoiding any true contact, yet maintaining a fruitless bond that neither husband nor wife can break. Sex has left their marriage some while back.. Yet they travel together, ever further into the meaninglessness and pointlessness that is inside each, and between both.

They are travelling with a third man, called Tunner, who is a kind of foil they can play off. He is described as having a face of "bland contentment", whilst Port and Kit are inwardly disturbed, driven by some nameless force they cannot grasp consciously at all, though in him it produces a kind of intensifying despair, and in her it generates numinous fear. She withholds herself, from him, and from all of life. He keeps moving, yet the movement is increasingly peeled back, and revealed, as a kind of desperation. It becomes clearer later in the novel that Port is going into the Nothing to die, to die of the Nothing. He has a date-- not with destiny -- but with the Nothing. It draws him deeper in, passing through more and more remote and primitive enclaves, going ever more down into the featureless threat emanating from the desert and blowing into the towns. He is rushing with increasing urgency down into the ominous nullity, frantic to catch ever more primitive haulage to get to places ever farther removed from the consolations and defenses of 'civilization.'

All his life he has skirted the Nothing, let it eat into his innards, and rob him of any élan for living, leaving him poisoned, full of apathy and alienation,

throwing away half perceptive quips and effete clever intimations of the smell of disavowed despair coming off the Nothing his being cannot dispel, indeed, does not want to dispel. He is within a comfort boundary living like this. Yet for no reason, it seems he has elected to take the first boat out of America after the war to North Africa, to begin his adventure into what he consciously thinks of as a year of wandering, but which at an underlying level he knows to be the end of all his restless flitting from location to location. It is as if he is no longer comfortable to be sickened by the Nothing infiltrating his whole inwardness, but now has to drive head-long into its very essence. At some more implicit level, Kit wants to face the Nothing, challenge it to do its worst. He will not, he cannot, fight it. His vital ignition, his creative juice and substantive pith, is too eroded to fight the monster in its lair. It is as if he wants to prove -- to himself as much as or more than the rest of the world -- that there is only the Nothing, and his life of Nothing was 'right' all along..

Kit is less well sketched. The Nothing is breathing on Port, but in her it has created such fearfulness of life that, as the book says, she lives behind a glass from where she observes living things but they cannot affect her. She is like that sea flower whose outstretched petals spring back from any alien touch. Because the Nothing is for her, as for him, insinuated at the very core of existence -- the heart of darkness indeed -- she tries to hide from its outer looming menace, by hiding behind her fear, going into herself to get away. She wants Port to shield her from the Nothing, this seems her only attachment to him, but he is much farther 'gone south' than she is. It is ensconced in his entrails, and in his unserious and non-earnest throw away style, he has a need to declare, before he goes down, the truth of there being no truth. Thus he cannot comfort his wife, but is always increasing her basic unease.

This is a marriage made not in heaven, but in hell.. Even the way in which they cannot reconcile with each other, nor break from each other, speaks of the Nothing that brought them together and is all that they now share..

2,

This story is chilling, though it passes through all the hottest places on earth where even the air is on fire. Forget Dante. We are truly descending.. Even the increasingly bare towns are harbingers of the endless desert farther away, creeping ever closer.

The first layer of hell is briefly evoked. This is the pit of deadness, the old Greek Hades and the ancient Jewish Sheol; a ghostly half-life, a life fatally deadened, life frozen in unending stasis, all initiative stifled, all forward thrust caught in a prison from which there can be no exit. The leitmotif of this initial hell is decay. The seedy towns, the seedy officials giving themselves airs, the sense of pointless outer convention that masks inner failure of nerve and avoidance of real duty.. Everything is random, arbitrary, chaotic, rotting.. The few people in the story who show humanity to the travellers [especially a Jewish merchant disliked by his Muslim neighbours] stand out like beacons, for they rise out of the general malaise, not sinking into the thick mud

dragging down any hope that 'things could be different.' Whatever began well is ruined. Dust covers everything, blinding the eyes, clogging the soul, strangling the heart... Life is blanked out, leaving the people blank.

The second hell comes with places less reeking of ruination and more burnt up by sun and wind and sand. This place is metallic, stings, bites, has an edge to its suffocating heat. The winds burn, the sands burn, the very land has no protection from the sun that burns to a crisp everything it gazes upon. It finds nothing worthy, and consumes everything in its disapproving and withering intensity..

At this stage in the narrative, Port betrays Kit in a strange encounter with a beautiful young female Arab dancer, who promptly betrays him.. He has made love to this exotic creature in a tent ensconced in a dark valley outside the gates of the city, and when she tries to steal his wallet and he stops her, she cries out to a group of Arab men in other tents nearby, and Port has to flee for his life. They will rob and kill him, for sure. He escapes, slightly exhilarated, because even this episode of falsity is preferable to the nullity that is drawing him towards a vortex that negates all of life, negates everything... This will be the last sexual encounter of Port's life, and fittingly it is a failure of fidelity, a failure of faithfulness. He briefly exults in it, yet just as easily forgets it.. The furnace of hell is enjoyable for a stolen instant, yet its cold flames flaring up cannot keep out the emptiness of the void into which it is already collapsing.

Meanwhile, Tunner sees Kit as a prize to his male pride, and starts pressuring her, subtly, to sleep with him. Port and Kit have a chance to leave Tunner behind, if they will travel onward to the next little town with a ghastly mother and son duo -- Eric and Mrs Lyle -- in an old Mercedes; the mother is a travel writer who sneers at everything she sees, escorted on her explorations by a feckless son who pretends to all manner of accomplishments -- patently fabricated -- everywhere they have visited. Everyone dismisses this pair as ludicrous. But Kit rejects the chance to jettison Tunner, so she and her husband can be alone with one another; ostensibly she feels bad about leaving their guest and travelling companion on his own. In fact she is annoyed about Port's adventure of the previous night [though she does not want to know what he got up to], and hence contrives to send Port off with the Lyles, while she and Tunner go together on the train.

Port's ride in the car is fitting punishment: he has to listen to the inane mother carrying on with yet more put downs in the same vein as her previous constant railing against her useless, and vile, son.. There is something very sleazy about him -- though once mother and son are witnessed by an Arab hotelier in bed together ferociously going at it, her incessant abuse of him, and his adroit mix of slimy subservience and sneaky subversion towards her, takes on a very different colouring.

In what hell are a mother and son locked in mutual hatred as they incestuously fornicate? They fornicate furiously, not languorously. Is this lust?

No, it is something far more hellish. They are not so much possessing each other, devouring each other, consuming each other, as staying close to each other so they can kill each other. Not the sins of omission, as in the first hell of the pit, lamely capitulating to the rigours of existence which results in the surrender of all integrity; rather, the sins of commission, as in the second hell of the furnace, the cold flames which betray and falsify truth. What is the savage truth about this damned pairing? Is it rivalry that causes a parent to suck back a child of the opposite sex to whom they should give birth? Kill off the life in your child that you were never able to live, before it can reach fruition; then contentedly watch it waste its substance in trying to kill you, for revenge.. Your jealousy is now assuaged! That is a love affair of sorts-- incest as the murder of the personhood and its heart for existence before it can emerge.

Whatever locks the Lyles together in a mutually destructive mother-son fusion, it is a fierce, not lazy, hell. It is poetically accurate that they both sweat in it, and cannot get any cooling respite. No dew on the blossom; the poisoned flower just sweats the poison like blood from an uncloseable wound.

Tunner seizes his opportunity, taking Kit to the distant town by train, and over the long night, he gets her drunk on champagne and has little problem seducing her; she gives in, not understanding why she does it, and regretting it instantly. The burning remorse of guilt grips her toward her husband. Having slept with Tunner, Kit realizes he is utterly repulsive to her. His charm is hollow. Yet she could never have said no.. The ravages of guilt -- absolutely typical of the second layer of hell -- never leave Kit for the rest of the story. Her final destination is a mental break-down into a kind of catatonic madness, and guilt is an element in this state. But there are other elements as well. In needing rescue, she is victimized, and her rescuers use her as they will. She has no answer to this. Her will is spent. She can only deploy it to 'get away.'

Port manages to whisk Kit out of a settlement, in order to finally get clear of Tunner. Yet after several journeys into even more remote places, Port has a fever, and it is clear that he is seriously ill. By now they are far into the Sahara. Under a fort, in a simple room, the French commander of the local garrison diagnoses typhoid. Even before Port finally dies, Kit runs away, hitching a ride with a local caravan headed for Dakar in sub-Saharan Africa. For a moment, this feels like a break out, an embrace of life with no protective thin film between it and her soul, but the two African merchants leading the camel train across the endless wastes repeatedly take her sexually, and her situation forces on her a submission she cannot evade, but which eats into her core more and more.

One of the men having her nightly -- they both do, in immediate succession -- seems to love her, or at least to prize her; to the disgust of the older man who does not like Kit at all and seems to just use her as a seminal toilet into which to relieve his tensions from the day. The younger man, called Belqassim, insists upon establishing Kit in his household once the stately procession arrives in a city of mud houses. This wealthy African trader is kind to Kit, even

tender and generous in love making, and she gets to like sex with him, and even crave it, but he never the less makes it clear that he 'owns' her. She is a prisoner in an exotic room, and her only solace is his nightly sessions of love making. As she becomes more addicted to his regular but intermittent visits, so she loses more and more any independence of decision, and power of initiative. Kit's predicament is not as well sketched as Port's; in a strange way he stopped running by running faster and faster right into what he was running from, but she withdraws more and more into the self, in a sort of reflex away from what Port in his backward way faced. Is his the more active response, hers the more passive reaction, to what is stalking them both?

Port had always thought to no point, but Kit avoided all thought to no point. As the nemesis approaches her, she simply shuts down. Will it be impressed by this ploy? Will it pass over her? She senses Port as an agony inside her that will go on.. He voices the nemesis for her. It robs her of all voice.

She loses time, loses self, through her submission to the power of her captor. Even when addicted to being 'in the power of' the master, the enslavement harms the slave. Kit becomes more and more withdrawn into a kind of pleasant stupor. She only wakes from it by realizing she does not need her lover and jailor, because she can get the sex that hooks her to him from any number of other men.. As with Port in his dying from typhoid, she manages to run away.. Despite a moment of feeling power, because of getting free, she is soon passive toward fate again, once she finds herself in the care of the local French authorities. She is 'safe', at last, yet this is only another prison, and increasingly she is only able to feel mounting dread at the coming nemesis which is all that she sees in front of her, waiting for her, advancing upon her.. What is it? She knows without allowing herself to know. She does not want to go home, nor be rescued, yet what does she want? Nothing is clear, and she cannot choose clearly. Her collapse into herself is extreme. Now she is transported back to the Mediterranean coast, to Algiers from where they started out on 'an amusing adventure, to distract them for a year.' Still nearly catatonic, or giving the appearance of being so, at the last minute, outside the hotel, having heard from the woman sent by the American Consulate to get her there that Tunner is probably inside waiting for her, she slips her latest masters and, unseen by anyone, jumps onto the old street car taking Arab workers back to the Arab Kasbah.

"At that moment a crowded street car was passing by filled largely with native dock workers in blue overalls. ..Noisily it pushed along, cleaving a passage through the crowd that filled the street, it scraped around another corner, and began the slow ascent to the Avenue Gallieni. Below the harbour lights came into view and were distorted in the gently moving water. Then the shabbier buildings loomed, the streets were dimmer. At the edge of the Arab quarter the car, still loaded with people, made a wide U-turn and stopped; it was the end of the line."

Kit disappears. Into the 'shabby and dim' she will try to hide, but 'it was the end of the line.' The dynamics of 'power over the other', part of the second and active hell, are for her only a distraction, a temporary respite, from the

Nothing. Even in hiding out in the farthest reaches of the soul, immobilized, cowering like a little girl behind a door that has opened which she had always hoped to keep shut, the formless and nameless terror finds her.

She has come to 'the end of the line.'

The third hell is our profoundest collective nightmare become reality. After all the sinning, all the running, all the falling and falling head-long, we reach the end of the line. As Roberto Duran said sitting on his stool after a battering by Sugar Ray Leonard, 'no mas.' There is no more. You have lost life and integrity; you have lost passion and truth; there is no more to lose. You have run out even of hells to keep you busy. Now all the nonsense ends. Now the smoke and mirrors are no more. You are at the end of the line, and even the complex hells you have lived through, dallied with, been drowned and burnt in, will not rescue you from the ultimate end. It is all over.

It is the end of the line.

You have gone to the end of the line, racing outwardly, fleeing inwardly, though a succession of places of increasing sound and fury signifying nothing, and now you have arrived.

This is what is beneath it all.

The depth is empty. Beneath everything, the abyss is empty.

You are where all the hells in the linear progression of a life without God and without the heart upheld by God in its abyss, unable to sustain soul and barely able to keep mind intact, ends. This is it. This is the end.

You have come to the Nothing, at the root of everything, outer and inner, and there is nowhere else to go. Time is up. Space is exhausted. This is it.

You are falling, now, forever. You are not extinguished. You are registering falling. On the bridge that is crumbling, over troubled waters and beneath a fractured sky, the famous painting begins the screaming that will be something almost apart from you, with an impetus of its own, as you fall and fall, unendingly. The screaming goes on, even though you are not there to hear it..

3,

This novel is elegant, sharp, nuanced-- and gets under the skin..

These are quotes that startle with their veracity, and accuracy, in describing the onset of the third hell. This final hell, deeper and vaster than the introductory hells, is the great beast lumbering toward Bethlehem to be born, in the poetic image of W.B. Yeats. When this beast is born even in our holy refuges, when this beast is incarnate in each of us, and is all that we can

share between us, then 'it will be all over bar the shouting.' That will be where our line runs out.

[1] "He awoke, opened his eyes. The room meant very little to him; he was too deeply immersed in the non-being from which he had just come.. He was somewhere, he had come back through vast regions from nowhere; there was the certitude of an infinite sadness at the core of his consciousness.." [p 11].

[2] "That night he awoke sobbing. His being was a well a thousand miles deep; he rose from the lower regions with a sense of infinite sadness and repose, but with no memory of any dream save the faceless voice that had whispered: 'The soul is the weariest part of the body.' The night was silent, save for a small wind that blew through the fig tree and moved the loops of wire hanging there. Back and forth they rubbed, creaking ever so lightly. After he had listened a while, he fell asleep" [p 109].

[3] "Experience had taught him that reason could not be counted on in such situations. There was always an extra element, mysterious and not quite within reach, that one had not reckoned with. One had to know, not deduce. And he did not have the knowledge. .. 'I wonder if after all I'm a coward?' he thought. Fear spoke; he listened and let it persuade.. The idea saddened him" [p 115].

[4] "It was a physical shudder; he was alone, abandoned, lost, hopeless, cold. Cold especially -- a deep interior cold nothing could change. Although it was the basis of his unhappiness, this glacial deadness, he would cling to it always, because it was also the core of his being; he had built the being around it. ..Running assuaged his fear, but when he stopped and looked down at the ring of lights around the market he still felt the cold, like a piece of metal inside him" [p 124].

[5] "As he walked along the hot road toward the wall of Bou Noura he kept his head down, seeing nothing but the dust and the thousands of small sharp stones. He did not look up because he knew how senseless the landscape would appear. It takes energy to invest life with meaning, and at present this energy was lacking. He knew how things could stand bare, their essence having retreated on all sides to beyond the horizon, as if impelled by a sinister centrifugal force. He did not want to face the intense sky, too blue to be real, above his head, the ribbed pink canyon walls that lay on all sides in the distance, the pyramidal town itself on its rocks, or the dark spots of oasis below. They were there, and they should have pleased his eye, but he did not have the strength to relate them, either to each other or to himself; he could not bring them into any focus beyond the visual. So he would not look at them" [p 143].

[6] A kindly Jewish shop-keeper says to Kit -- upon her saying to him, 'But I am afraid.. How can I change that?' -- 'You should be a Jew in Sba, and you would learn not to be afraid! At least you would learn not to be afraid of God. You would see that even when God is most terrible, he is never cruel, the

way men are.' "[But] what he was saying sounded ridiculous [in Kit's ears]. She said.. she must be going" [p 189].

[7] "She turned slowly about, scanning the horizon. The air, doubly still now after the departure of the wind, was like something paralysed. Whichever way she looked the night's landscape suggested only one thing to her: negation of movement, suspension of continuity. But as she stood there.. the sensation came to her.. that some part of this landscape was moving even as she looked at it. She glanced up and grimaced. The whole, monstrous star-filled sky was turning sideways before her eyes. It looked still as death, yet it moved.." [p 202].

[8] "He opened his eyes. The room was malignant. It was empty. ..But later he had a moment of vertiginous clarity. He was at the edge of a realm where each thought, each image, had an arbitrary existence, where the connection between each thing and the next had been cut. As he laboured to seize the essence of that kind of consciousness, he began to slip back into its precinct without suspecting that.. ..here was an untried variety of thinking, in which there was no necessity for a relationship with life.. [These thoughts] were coming again, they began to flash by.. ..He tried to stem the rush, but he felt his resistance falter.. It was in the silence of the room that he now located all those hostile forces; the very fact that the room's inert watchfulness was on all sides made him distrust it. Outside himself, it was all there was. [He wished to] have something to hang on to when his eyes should shut.. There was a screaming sound in each ear.. In front of his eyes clusters of round spots were being born. He tried to recoil from the expanding globules of matter. Did he cry out? Could he move?" [pp 202-203].

[9] "The pain could not go on. He opened his eyes, shut his eyes, saw only the thin sky stretched across to protect him. Slowly the split would occur, the sky draw back, and he would see what he never had doubted lay behind advance upon him with the speed of a million winds. His cry was a separate thing beside him in the desert. It went on and on" [p 208].

[10] "And Port had said [to Kit]: 'Death is always on the way, but the fact that you don't know when it will arrive seems to take away from the finiteness of life. It's that terrible precision we hate so much. But because we don't know, we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well.. How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty. And yet it all seems limitless.' She had not listened at the time because the idea had depressed her.. She was incapable now of thinking about death, and since death was there beside her, she thought of nothing at all" [p 212].

[11] Kit has a moment of grace, in escaping the outpost where Port has died. "Life was suddenly there, she was in it, not looking through the window at it. The dignity that came from feeling a part of its power and grandeur.. it was years ago that she had last known it" [p 220]. This strange intensity, this looking in which "she had the impression that for the first time since her childhood she was seeing objects clearly", is soon lost. She cannot regain the

lost moment in childhood where, neither wanting power over, nor allowing herself to be in the power of, she was immersed in the power of being alive.

[12] Kit ponders the nature of sex with Belqassim who 'owned her completely' but there is no retreat from the empty abyss by trying to drown in sex: "The bed was a wild sea, she lay at the mercy of its violence and chaos as the heavy waves toppled upon her from above. Why, at the height of the storm, did two drowning hands press themselves tighter and tighter about her throat? Tighter, until even the huge grey music of sea was covered by a greater, darker noise -- the roar of nothingness the spirit hears as it approaches the abyss and leans over" [p 261].

[13] Another rescuer, who has helped Kit get out of the clutches of Belqassim, says to her, [after trying to comfort her], 'Women always think of what is finished instead of what is beginning. Here we say life is a cliff, and you must never turn around and look back when you are climbing. It makes you sick.' "...Still she was convinced this was the end, that it would not be long before they found her. They would stand her up before a great mirror, saying to her: 'Look!' And she would be obliged to look, and then it would be all over. The dark dream would be shattered; the light of terror would be constant; a merciless beam would be turned upon her; the pain would be unendurable and endless.." [pp 276-277].

[14] "She gave up.. Before her eyes was the violent blue sky -- nothing else. For an endless moment she looked into it. Like a great overpowering sound it destroyed everything in her mind, paralyzed her. Someone had once said to her that the sky hides the night behind it, shelters the person beneath from the horror that lies above. Unblinking, she fixed the solid emptiness, and the anguish began to move in her. At any moment the rip can occur, the edges fly back, and the giant maw will be revealed" [p 280].

4,

The book's outer journey is, at the same time, an inner journey. As we run away from the summons of existence, so we start falling down through layers of innerness that leave behind the 'European' ego, and its defenses, and plunge straight through the 'Arabian' unconscious, and travel onward into more mysterious deeps where, at last, the abyss infiltrates, like the desert sand, the desert silence, the desert night, announced by the howling of 'a million winds' and then a quiet so eerie, it is a tangible presence, audible in peculiar whispers.. The desert is where God is not. Or, the desert is where God is at the most powerful, unvarnished, unhidden, raw and awful, to the human heart -- the warrior in the abyss who enables us to stand upon its emptiness and find the groundless ground that banishes all fear. Upon this ground, we face the abyss undergirding the entire world, and unafraid where it will plunge us if we take on the world, we enter the worldly arena to fight.

If you relate from the inner to the outer in a certain way, by passion of heart, you gain strength and power, inspiration and intensity, from the abyss as existence tests your mettle.

If you live differently, in the way portrayed so vividly by Port and Kit -- and there are many equivalents of their aimless life -- then your life becomes running away, and this running instigates a headlong descent into the emptiness of the abyss as ultimately, and finally, 'void.' The obvious ground gives way, and each subsequent more obscure layer of ground gives way, in succession, like the floors in a house falling in on each other, one after the other, bang, bang, bang.. You start falling, down and down, everything collapses in on itself. Strength collapses into full scale weakness, power collapses into full scale disempowerment, inspiration collapses into cynicism and sneering cleverness, laughing at what has castrated you. Yes, it is very funny you have no balls for life, isn't it?

The English now a days, living in a broken culture that has no forward impetus, make great jokes about that. It is simply hilarious your stomach has turned to water, your fire of heart has frozen, and that you can laugh about it! Clever you! Aren't you so great to laugh at your smallness! Obviously it matters not one jot that you fiddle while Rome burns. Whether you fiddle with yourself, fiddle with others, fiddle with things, or just sit around fiddling your time away, it makes no difference. The rationalizations for doing nothing come thick and fast. All the 'advanced' humour of today, in America as well as Britain, is sharply ironic, implying that scepticism is better than trusting anything, and getting caught out. At all costs, never look the fool. Keep your appearance of cool, even as you whistle in the dark..

The world does unexpectedly contain inconspicuous holy persons in very ordinary situations who can help the fearful, but like Kit with the Jewish merchant, and like Port with everyone, the sophisticated high flyers who mock the impossibility of heroism for themselves invariably pour scorn upon such unheralded people who make a stand against what they have succumbed to.

The book skilfully understates the ever expanding terror that culminates in an ultimate, and final, horror. Over stated, we would get the giggles.. But we should be more sceptical about our laughter. Freud said humour masks aggression. Perhaps being ironical about our impotence is an unstated aggression against what we would have to 'do', with the heart, leaning on God, to reignite any potency. If so, such inverted aggression manifests in the attempt to laugh off our fear of the abyss as 'exaggerated.' If it can be over blown IN BIG CAPITALS, then we can laughingly dismiss it as just the comic book nervousness of the child, finding numinous threats under the bed, in the closet, behind the wall.. Ha, ha. Look, I hear in your need to laugh at the last, and the profoundest, threat only cowardice. You have fooled yourself, and other foolish people, but you do not fool me. I see the slight tremor in your hand, and I smell the urine rolling down your leg under the fashionable jeans. If it makes you happy, carry on.

Humour can be the last acceptance, the acceptance of it all, just the way it is. This is the big belly laugh. This is the laughter in tears, and the tears in laughter. Laughter catches out the defended, the dishonest, the pompous-- for once they laugh out loud at what is said, even by an enemy, they are

caught out. They have acknowledged the truth of it. Our spontaneous bodily laughter demonstrates we have realized the truth that the humour declared. This weapon of humour slays all of us, thankfully..

But you know perfectly well that it is not the truth-revealing humour that is any problem. It is the truth-denying humour that is problematic. It wants to say life has failed us, our failure is inevitable, so go to hell with demands for anything more! This is sly, as well as dishonest; we are lightly dismissing the gravity of the emptiness beneath our feet, yet underneath this air of desultory superiority we are angrily repudiating the only path 'through' existence that could enable us to cross its terrible deeps. The truth is, we have failed life, we have failed our self. The Eastern desert-dwelling monks of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, called this state into which Kit and Port are moving, ever deeper in, and ever deeper down, 'accidie.' This renders the heart listless, despondent, apathetic, yet restlessly unable ever to settle in one place. It is the most deadly of the eight fallen states of being. In it, falling does not end. And thus we end not with a bang, but a whimper.. We go out in abject, and full-scale, defeat.

Very funny. You laugh until you get near your own confrontation with the abyss. Then the acid of denigrating your perilous condition becomes the pain that opened Port's guts as he died, and sent Kit rushing towards another oblivion which would be the end of the line.

Humour, employed as the desperate attempt to deny the undeniable, to invert what comes up at us from below, to disparage the whole drama that exposes us as coming up short, is the last weapon of the coward.

If the mirror Kit feared to be held up to her were suddenly to be held up to us, in the midst of our stratagems for avoiding the void, then we might see just how unfunny we really are. Failing to rise to our call to existence, leaving our post unmanned, is not funny.

It is beyond sad. It is tragedy. We are too proud to weep. If we could be humble, and if we could weep, this would free the first stumbling and halting steps back to real existence. Blessed are the poor in spirit.. Blessed are those who mourn..

But our tears remain frozen in the ice of our haughtiness..

5,

Pit of Deadening= Shame
Hellish Furnace of Burning= Guilt
Void of Nothingness= Fear, Terror, Horror

Paradoxically, as we go down further in, and go deeper down, it gets hotter, yet this heat is also turning into a cold so profound, like that in outer space, it kills your vitality and puts out your spark.

Paradoxically, it is the cowardice toward what calls us 'out' which unleashes an ultimate fear, terror, horror, of what comes to swallow us in our cowardice. The empty abyss confirms us in our cowardly life, and therefore as we go over the edge, and plunge ever more in and ever deeper down, into the Nothingness, at least we have the consolation that we were correct all along about life having no meaning and no point, and even if it did, we could not have risen to its exactions. So, existence is a dirty trick, and the assurance of this seals us in, and brings about the fate we always sought to flee from. We ran from the abyss initially, and therefore we started running into the abyss. A closed circle..

The outer places in the story are existentially real, the back side of the world uncovered by those 'permanently' on the run; at the same time, these outer places are also locales in the heart, as we enter its margins and then go farther and farther within the heart's deeps. To the person loving the world, the unfathomable deeps of the heart are full of roaring lions, and swift moving dragons, helping them do 'what's gotta be done.' To the person frightened of the abyss and in flight from it, the heart's deeps are a landscape of movement into a vortex whose 'centrifugal force' drags everything in our constitution into its black hole.

The book, in short, 'charts' the descent into Nothingness, pointing out its way stations toward the third, and last, hell.

6,

Some key points in the descent are worth highlighting.

'Weariness'= This means he has already given in.. The interior weariness, almost a laziness, and certainly a refusal of the 'work' required to change things, is the flip side of outer restlessness, outer keeping busy, outer wandering pointlessly from one meaningless thing to another meaningless thing.. A change of scene is always imperative. It is impossible to stay in one place, and take up arms there and then. The real battle -- to return to life, and make an impact upon existence -- is postponed. It will be possible elsewhere. It cannot be done here and now. So move on.. Keep moving. This at least gives a faint illusion of 'real living.'

'Sadness'= There is a moment we could catch ourselves sliding down hill, and turn back, however hard on us the effort at this late stage may have to be. But when we grow sad as Port does, then this becomes a moment when we choose not to choose, and then promptly forget what we have thrown away. It should outrage us that we can entertain such a self-immolating thought. Yet, at this moment of potential reprieve, when the downward spiral could be stopped, we allow fear to get us off the hook of choice. Fear uses sadness to blunt any remaining 'anger for truth.' Henceforth we are regretful towards a life we never tried to live, and 'in love' only with the odd motion of spiralling down..

'Deadening'= Port will always cling to a 'glacial deadness' at the core, because he built his very being around it. He has willed this extreme coldness of inward extinction by the running away he has embraced. Running relieves the fear he has elected for rather than pursue the courage of facing up to it and out facing it in the battle on the rim of the well. If we win this battle, the eternal is experienced in the finite, and thus life is in fact a well-spring, contrary to Port's account of the hated precision of its finiteness. But refusing even to mount the rim is to be propelled, more and more, from the edge.. Our fate is sealed by what we will not do, by our opting for spiritual listlessness.

'Extinguished'= No more intensity, no more energy, stirs. The point of passion is thrown away, and then the engine of passion runs down. This enervation, reinforcing alienation, is physical, psychological, spiritual.

'Harsh Light'= At some point in this descent, 'they' hold up a mirror, and Kit is forced to look.. What she sees in the mirror that reveals herself to her own consciousness shatters the 'dark dream' of the attempt to use sexual -- or any other kind of -- oblivion to escape seeing what the self has chosen and what it has become as a result of such a choice.

'The light of terror' is the pitiless light that finally catches up with us, and is shone on our cowardly evasion, in all its steps, in all its levels, in all its consequences for us and all its impacts on the world. A 'merciless beam' is turned on us, at a certain moment in our running away, and we see with stark clarity our absence from the post in the world to which we were summoned, and how those who relied upon us to make a stand at that place and at that time were affected because we refused. Our failure, our cowardice, is lit up, before our own eyes, in all its searing unadorned and unconcealed truth. We experience this truth as a punitive sun burning into us from high above. As we believe by this stage that no change is possible, then it seems such punishing revelation of truth will pain us forever.

Earlier in the book, this merciless light is evoked by the journey across the Sahara. "During the middle of the day it was no longer the sun alone that persecuted from above -- the entire sky was like a metal dome grown white with heat. The merciless light pushed down from all directions; the sun was the whole sky" [p 247]. The Egyptian, Syrian, and Greek, desert dwelling monks called this experience of the horribly revealing light 'the noon day devil.' When the sun is at its zenith in the middle of the day, this signifies those moments in existence when it is hardest to go uphill, hardest to work, hardest to fight for good. Thus we resist even trying. This refusal of even trying simply adds to our already enervated and burnt out state, rendering ever more futile any urge to struggle to do something. A vicious circle.. It is hard to try, so don't try, hence it becomes harder to try. The unbearable desert within makes all of existence an unbearable desert without. In and Out, they are the same. Nullity rules!

Yet this sun, though truthful, is used by the devil to keep us faint-hearted. Truth without love is devilish. Even late in the ghastly journey toward irrevocable doom, it is possible for us to discover that 'even as Jacob's heart

fainted, his spirit recovered.' We need to see our cowardice for what it is, but 'judging' it encloses us in it. This is why William Blake urges that 'pity' for people's failure and falling, and our own, is needed to reverse it. Yahweh is truth, and thus he gets confused with the noon day devil, but he is also mercy. If we come from love, then love has compassion for everything human, including this most final 'blowing it all.'

We need to swallow our pride, and weep tears of hurt that ask for help. We need to deal more kindly with the tragic fall of the heroic at the base of us all. We need to stop pretending to be what we are not. We need to stop mocking, sneering, laughing, at the falling down of what matters so much, for once it is down, there is no point in anything for anybody.

If we are pitiless in judgement of it all, we will be judged pitilessly-- in our own sight.

The abyss reveals God's terribleness and mercy, compassion, kindness, at once. God is terrible. This makes us, realistically, full of 'fear and trembling.' But God is not cruel. The Evil One is cruel. We must learn to differentiate, from the roots up, God's terribleness and the devil's cruelty.

Fear is the beginning of the 'wisdom of the heart' in regard to God and his mission for us; we are sent by God into the world. Therefore he often tells us, 'fear not.' We are not to fear, because he is with us, between us, in us-- and moving out into the world, through our heart. The human heart, given to the world, gives God to the world. This makes things go, and turn out, differently.

Yes, fear cruelty, you should, because it wills your destruction, and indeed wills the destruction of the entire human venture; but dwell in God's terribleness, and fight the evil at work in the world, rampaging through it like a ravening beast no one can stop. God put you here to stop it in its tracks. He will not let you vanquish it by exterminating it. Its role in the human drama will go on until the very end, the real end, the Apocalypse implicit in Ezekiel, Daniel, St John of Patmos. But God put you in the world to stop evil, undercut it, begin its redemption..

Become terrible, in God, to vanquish the cruelty from which all of us shrink, like wilting violets.

7,

"The womb is a tomb, if you stay too long." This is so if you want to be born. But born for what? If birth delivers you over to a world where the abyss stalks your every step, then why accept birth? Yet, where can you run, retreat, slink off, to avoid being born into having to walk the narrow ridge, having to keep going through the long dark tunnel, of this world?

Kit's repeated attempt to disappear into oblivion, through different men, and through increasingly depersonalized and impersonal sex= return to the womb.

The oblivion of dissolving into something all-encompassing: protection from the world that calls you out and the you who is called out.

For Kit, 'regression to the mother' is not pleasurable in itself, like an adult sucking their thumb to comfort the deprived child latent in them. This is not Freudian, it is Existential. Unconsciously seeking an all-enclosing womb is an increasingly haunted search for an ultimate refuge against the ultimate terror. The refuge must shut out the existential landscape that reveals the world, and our action in it, as inescapably and fundamentally 'risked' to the abyss= the blackness breaking through the 'impenetrable' sky, the blackness shattering the 'solid' earth. The vault of sky can be breached, the foundation of earth can be shaken. The celestial is unknown. The terrestrial is unsecured.

A child goes through stages, in growing into adulthood, of protection by the mother and then protection by the father. The father over looks you, from above, the mother upholds you, from below. But no substitutes for these sheltering helpers in later life can prevail against the blackness. Neither the over-arching sky above, nor the undergirding earth below, provide sufficient consolation, sufficient comfort, against what is hunting us, day in and day out.

So where else left to go? The last place of escape is to climb back into the shelter wherein we began.

As a solution to the existential predicament all flesh is heir to, reversing the dynamic thrust of birth by crawling back into the womb does not work.. The arrow of time goes forward, never backwards.. Even that primordial cave, the circular globe of timelessness prior to being thrown into the inevitable and unstoppable trajectory of time, cannot save us; 'in the end' the brief time of seeming timelessness runs out, and the Nothing finds us, wherever we cower from it..

Returning to the mother obliterates our distinctness and uniqueness as a personhood, by absolving us from having to face up to the outer reality and our inner agency toward it. But this is preferable to standing up to the world only by accepting the blackness above and the blackness below.

The womb exerts a powerful pull on us, sabotaging our forward momentum into life, because we believe it more powerful than any mother's love, more powerful than any father's love. Kit, like Port, is fatherless and motherless. For her, the womb is, as for many persons today, the only remaining deity. This is atavistically potent. Animal mothers will, under threat, sometimes kill their acutely vulnerable young by eating them; the mother is trying to guard them by putting them back in the womb. We humans just go on all fours back up the birth canal. Absorbed into the enclosed, and magic, circle, at last we rest, we melt, we fuse.. Nothing can disturb this peace, we believe, as we doze off into a dreamy and submerged consciousness. We are being soothed, not just chilled out, but liquefied= the tadpole swimming in the primal waters of life.

This oblivion, this dissolving, in 'sweet extinction', is what people often want from sexual experience. They want the womb in the bliss of drugs. They want the womb in the degraded Dionysic frenzy of pop music. People want the womb even in violence= they don't fight one on one any more, but a large group gone berserk like a pack of feral dogs sweeps over a single victim, and kicks him to death once he is down. Regression to the womb makes us intolerant of pressure, stress, challenge, sustained effort, the aiming of the arrow at a target and the intensity needed to draw the bow string to a point of tension, before it can be released. The womb also demands instant gratification, pleasurable and non-affecting streams of experience, and is impatient and hostile toward the pain of existence which it can only regard as 'punitive.' Pain, and the suffering it occasions, deepens the heart. However, in the womb this harsh instruction in the profound is resisted; things are OK, provided you don't get too excited about them, the child sucking its finger in the womb 'philosophizes.' Take it easy, float along, do not invest in anything too demanding, do not get over heated. What is the point. There is no point.. Enjoy the drift in the water wherever it takes you. Be cool..

Above all else, go on eating! Consumerism is soothing, taking in whatever soothes is solacing. Just swallow it passively. This too is the womb state.

The womb, the final hide-out, is no proof against the Nothing. It comes. The Nothing is more powerful than the celestial father and the terrestrial mother; finally, even the womb, the only experience of divinity the secularized world still worships, succumbs. The sanctum away from all numinous threat is invaded. It cannot hold. The baby sleeping its life in fantasy is rudely jolted awake. The terror has arrived.

It is fitting Kit sees the horror as a great maw.

You can laugh. How we moderns laugh at Nothing.

It is reassuring we can deny our perilous condition, by replacing its pathos with bathos.

'GEHENNA' AS HELL IN ANCIENT JUDAISM= A Misunderstood Existential Reality

1,

The Jewish Sheol is the exact same as the Greek Hades. Where the Hebrew text says 'Sheol', the Greek term 'Hades' can be used without any loss or alteration of meaning.

Neither Sheol nor Hades are the same as the Jewish 'Gehenna.'

Sheol/Hades= abode of the dead.
Gehenna/Hell= abode of the wicked.

Sheol/Hades= the place of forgetfulness, 'deadness', ghost-life= half-life.
Dark, dank, and gloomy= 'insubstantial.'
A nether-world, the mythical 'Underworld.'
David in the Psalms refers to Sheol as a 'Pit.'

Gehenna/Hell= the place of torment, unquenchable fire and the worm which does not die.
Those in Gehenna feel pain and weep. The worm gnawing away at the dead corpse= remorse. The burning flames that do not let up= self-reproach.
Abraham saw Gehenna as a 'Fiery Furnace.'

Thus, Hades/Sheol= a Pit of Deadness underground, whilst Gehenna/Hell= a Furnace of Evil [equated with a valley, or chasm in the earth].

Hades/Sheol and Gehenna/Hell are not only metaphysical 'places' in the afterlife [from the perspective of the Greek mind], but also they are existential 'conditions' experientially real in this life [from the stand-point of the Jewish heart].

The Jews embraced Hades as well as Gehenna.

The Greeks tend to fix on Hades, and ignore Gehenna.

Christianity must be Jewish in confronting both 'negative' mysteries.

2,

Around 1100 AD, the Jewish Rabbinical tradition identified Gehenna as the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem, where 'filth' was cast away. Though Gehenna is a symbol, a figurative expression, the equation of the symbol with the 'Valley of Hinnom' is very plausible.

'Gehenna' is Greek, yet it could very well come from the Hebrew for the Valley of Hinnom= 'Ge Hinnom' [thus= Gehinnom]. In the Talmud, the name

is 'Gehinnam', and in the Aramaic spoken by Jesus= 'Gehenna.' In modern Yiddish= 'Gehenna.'

The King James Bible translates every occurrence of Sheol/Hades and Gehenna as 'hell.' In a loose sense you can do this, provided you know you are doing it.. But Jewish commentators speak with one voice – unusually for them – in saying only Gehenna should be translated as 'hell.' [An old Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'hidden', according to one scholar.] Modern Bibles only use the term 'Hell' where Gehenna is in the original text, and use 'Hades' or equivalents when the text says Sheol.

If the Valley of Hinnom below Jerusalem is indeed the origin both for the symbol and the linguistic terminology of Gehenna passed on from Judaism into Christianity, that would make sense of the 'unquenchable fires' and 'worms that do not die'.. Both these images are from Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and when Jesus uses Gehenna 11 times in the New Testament, he means Gehenna, not Hades or Sheol, because he borrows that exact prophetic imagery.

3,

The story about Gehenna as a literal topographical place is very meaningful in regard to why it became Hell.

The valley began as a place where worshippers of the Canaanite pagan religion sacrificed their children [Chronicles, 28, 3; 33, 6] to the pagan deity called Moloch [one of several pagan 'lords', or Ba'als= St Gregory of Nyssa links Moloch to Mammon]. They burned their children in fire. Already this gives a profound meaning= Hell is the sacrificing of our children for religious reasons [idolatrous religion].

To the Jews, this place of pagan idolatry and cruelty was an utter abomination. Not only followers of the Canaanite religion but apostate Jews 'practiced' child sacrifice in this place, for a religious purpose [Jeremiah, 7, 31-32; 19, 2, 6; 32, 35]. [This throws the story of Abraham and Isaac into a different context.]

Such a place would attract evil spirits and evil forces in real numbers. 'This is hell on earth' we say, referring to situations, events, happenings, where evil power seems to be concentrated, so that doing good, fighting for justice and loving sacrificially, is particularly opposed from 'the surrounding atmosphere', and therefore becomes very difficult.

Over time, the Jews used this valley as a rubbish dump. They regarded it, however, as more than a place to throw away unwanted debris. It was regarded as 'unclean', religiously. Indeed, it was regarded as a place utterly 'accursed' [Jeremiah, 7, 31; 19, 2-6]. No worse place on the face of the earth could be imagined by Jews following Yahweh. Thus for them, it was a place of 'filth', literally and spiritually. Things regarded as ritually unclean were dumped there= the carcasses of dead animals, and the bodies of criminals.

The Jews buried people in tombs above ground, thus for the body to be cast away in this manner was considered horrendous, almost the worst that could befall someone.

The 'unquenchable fires', and the 'worms gnawing away without ever stopping', as two images which are taken as definitive of what happens in Hell, come from a reality, then. They are not purely metaphorical. The Valley of Hinnom had fires burning in it all the time, to burn up the filthy trash, and especially the rotting flesh of animals and criminals, and of course, legions of worms found the corpses delicious= they literally became worm food. So, the 'Hell' derived from the Valley of Gehenna is a place of ever burning fires – with sulphur and brimstone added to make that burning more efficacious – and hordes of worms always eating.

Though Judaism before Jesus already had a multiplicity of differing interpretations, one point stands out, and should be flagged up as necessary to any understanding of Hell – as distinct from Sheol/Hades. Ending up in Hell is a kind of debacle, a disgrace, a loss of honour, a sign of no stature, a 'destruction.' In Hell, all your plans, works, aims, projects, end up 'destroyed.' Your life work, what you 'did' with your time in the world, comes to catastrophic ruin.

4,

Judaism has always, to its credit, tolerated multiple interpretations of sacred texts and indeed had different streams of interpretation of the whole religion. This is very evident in regard to the interpretation of Gehenna/Hell. Judaism does not speak with one voice on this significant matter.

There were Jewish writers even before the time of Jesus who saw Hell as punishment for the wicked= not for those who are a mix of righteousness and sin, but for those given over, or given up, to real wickedness, and likely to go on forever; other Jewish writers thought of Hell as purgational. Some Jewish commentators thought of Sheol/Hades as purgational..

Such is the divergence of views, it is hard to derive any single teaching in Jewish tradition about Sheol/Hades vis a vis Gehenna/Hell..

Most schools of thought believed that Hades is where you go after death. It is 'The Land of the Dead' in some mythical systems. It is not annihilation, or complete obliteration of the human personhood. It is where, once the body is dead, the soul goes. But the soul, without body, is only half alive. Those in Hades/Sheol are ghostly in a strong symbolic sense= they are cut off from life, cut off from people alive in the world. They continue, as it were, but in some reduced state. In this respect, the Jewish Sheol and Greek Hades are similar, if not identical.

Sheol/Hades was regarded an ante chamber where you go after death, to 'wait' for the general resurrection, in which all people will regain body as well as soul. They will not be, ever, 'purely' spirit.

For some Jewish commentators, Sheol/Hades is a place of atoning for sins, and as such, is definitely purgational. People can 'learn', they can still face their life and repent, and let go of the illusions and errors they clung on to in life. Hades is a place of regeneration, and healing. Hades is restorative, for those who avoided inner wrestlings with truth during their time in this world.

Indeed, for certain Jews, Sheol/Hades had an upper chamber and a lower chamber.

The upper chamber is paradise [also 'Abraham's bosom' in the parable of the rich man who shuns the leper at his gate], and is where people having attained sanctity in their life on earth go once it ends. The lower chamber is less salubrious but holds out the possibility of shedding past mistakes. It is not an easy place, but its outcome is very optimistic.

For other Jewish commentators, Gehenna/Hell -- not Sheol/Hades -- was the place of purgation/purifying/cleansing. You atoned for your sins, and thus sin itself was burned out of you, like fire consuming rotted wood. At the end of that ordeal in the furnace, you were ready for the general resurrection. You spent only 1 year in Hell! Moreover, only 5 people were in Hell forever! [The list must have increased by now..]

For modern Hasidism, once purged -- wherever that occurs -- the soul that is resurrected with its body proceeds on to heavenly happiness in the unceasing kingdom of God. These Hasids tend to dismiss the idea of a Hell where wicked people remain eternally, and are punished eternally.

If a Hasidic Orthodox Jew uses the symbol of 'Hell', it invariably has a purgational effect. The Fire of God burns out sin. It readies the person for everlasting bliss, and hence is a blessing, not a curse.

5,

There were Jews before the time of Jesus, however, who held to an entirely Dualistic interpretation= this stream of Jewish tradition resembles the belief in 'Heaven and Hell' as eternal principles in the afterlife held by Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians of today. Indeed, many Jews and Christians down the ages have held to this Dualistic belief about the split eternity awaiting humanity. On this view, the wicked 'go to Hell', and they go there not to be purged, or regenerated, but to be punished. The law of karma is not overcome= as you sow, so you reap.

For Jews of this perspective, Sheol/Hades is a sort of 'half-way house' where people who have died await the general resurrection of everyone. Then, once everyone is raised in body and soul, the Last Judgement occurs, and this Judgement determines that the righteous will go to Heavenly bliss in God's presence, whilst the wicked will go to Hellish torture in Gehenna. This Hellish torture is eternal. There is no let up, no change possible.

You can find places in both the Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible where this traditional Dualism seems to be supported by the texts-- though that is always 'open to interpretation.'

None the less, it is more honest to acknowledge that at times, Jesus sounds Non Dualistic, even Anti Dualistic, whilst at other times, he sounds markedly Dualistic.

The paradox of both Jewish and Christian Scriptures is that Dualistic and Non-Dualistic texts both exist. It is easy to pick one kind of text, and ignore the other kind. But the Jewish and Christian Scriptures contain both kinds of text. This is either a glaring contradiction, or a subtle paradox, a tension that has to be accepted. Severity and Mercy co-inhere, and it is wrong to interpret the one without the other. Having to confront both horns of the bull leads on to a very different land of heart; severity without mercy is misleading= the error of conservatism; mercy without severity= the error of liberalism. The truth of love is both sharply true yet universally loving..

Such a koan means we cannot talk 'about' God, it forces us to speak with God.

6,

For the Jews prior to the time of Jesus, sins likely to put a person in Gehenna included some obvious things, but also some things we might or might not question today= a man who listened too much to his wife was headed for Hell.. But more obviously= pride; unchastity and adultery; mockery [contempt= as in Mathew, 5, 22]; hypocrisy [lying]; anger. The Letter of James, 3, 6, is very Jewish in claiming that Gehenna will set the tongue on fire, and the tongue then sets on fire the entire 'course' or 'wheel' of life.

Good Deeds that protected a person from ending up in Hell= philanthropy; fasting; visiting the sick. The poor and the pious are especially protected from ending in Hell. Israel is more protected than the pagan nations all around her and always threatening her..

The worst of all sins= the idolatry of 'sacrificing our children for religious reasons', in order 'to get on' in the world. When we idolise a false 'god', it is always to get worldly benefits, it is invariably to profit from whatever we sacrifice to please this deity's demands= 'if you give me your children, I will give you the good life.' This sounds more like a demon than a god. A deal is struck, you sacrifice something genuinely precious, then the devil will bestow upon you all manner of earthly rewards.

A literal interpretation protests that such things do not happen in our modern, enlightened, progressive, civilised, society! Or if they do, only in backward corners of that society, or only among backward uncivilised peoples.

But a more probing interpretation concludes that these very civilised peoples are all engaged in sacrificing their children to the devil, for the worldly gain it

will bring them. Look more closely. Look more subtly. This most hellish of all actions is something many parents are doing to their children as a matter of routine, for it reflects the unacknowledged reality of society as a system where, in order to fit in, violence must be done to the person= they can never be true to their native humanity.

This native humanity has to be attacked, bent out of its prototypical shape, suppressed, before it can grow up and overturn the cosy and poisonous apple cart.

Leonard Cohen has an amazing song about this, 'The Story of Isaac' =

The door it opened slowly,
My father he came in,
I was nine years old.
And he stood so tall above me,
His blue eyes they were shining
And his voice was very cold.
He said, "I've had a vision
And you know I'm strong and holy,
I must do what I've been told."
So he started up the mountain,
I was running, he was walking,
And his axe was made of gold.

Well, the trees they got much smaller,
The lake a lady's mirror,
We stopped to drink some wine.
Then he threw the bottle over.
Broke a minute later
And he put his hand on mine.
Thought I saw an eagle
But it might have been a vulture,
I never could decide.
Then my father built an altar,
He looked once behind his shoulder,
He knew I would not hide.

You who build these altars now
To sacrifice these children,
You must not do it anymore.
A scheme is not a vision
And you never have been tempted
By a demon or a god.
You who stand above them now,
Your hatchets blunt and bloody,
You were not there before,
When I lay upon a mountain
And my father's hand was trembling
With the beauty of the word.

And if you call me brother now,
Forgive me if I inquire,
"Just according to whose plan?"
When it all comes down to dust
I will kill you if I must,
I will help you if I can.
When it all comes down to dust
I will help you if I must,
I will kill you if I can.
And mercy on our uniform,
Man of peace or man of war,
The peacock spreads his fan.

Then, in reading 'the sacrifice of our children for profit' more metaphorically, we should extend the crime against children into, quite simply, the sacrifice of the most vulnerable humans for the sake of Mammon. The 'crime against humanity' is widespread; it has many takers today, as it always did.

The Valley of Gehenna, as a Hell on earth, a Hell in the world, is a typology much the same today as in the past. Hell is one of the constants in human existence over all of time.

Why? That is the real question.

7,

The belief in God eternally punishing his human 'children' by forsaking them in Gehenna/Hell is oddly parallel with the pagan worshipers sacrificing their children in fire in the Valley of Ge Hinnom. William Blake is clear that the 'god' of damnation is Satan the Accuser, not the 'hidden father' Yahweh.

Isaiah, 49, 14-15= "But Zion [Israel] said, Yahweh has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me." Then Yahweh replies= "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."

None the less, that does not mean Gehenna/Hell should be dismissed in polite company. It has a more powerful point, once free from the punitive misunderstanding.

8,

One modern interpretation of Gehenna, which styles itself a 'narrative historical hermeneutic', makes sense of many texts, Jewish and Christian, by understanding the iconography of Hell more in terms of Israel's struggle with its pagan neighbours. God will vindicate the Jews, finally, whatever the beating they take on the way. So, after all that long historical and political struggle, in which the Jews are repeatedly the victim, at last, at the very end,

Yahweh will support and prove, vindicate and laud, the Jews – and ‘give hell’ to their pagan persecutors.

This interpretation makes sense of Isaiah and Jeremiah as well, because it reads those references to the ‘Hell’ coming to Israel as a warning of the imminent fall of the Jewish nation and Exile to Babylon. Thus Jerusalem itself will become like Gehenna/Hell [Jeremiah, 19, 2-6; 19, 11-14] once it falls to the Assyrians. Why? Because when Israel falls, it will be like the Valley of Rubbish, fires will consume it, worms will feed off its corpses.

In short, the images of Hell as the place of “the unquenchable fire” [Mark, 9, 43-48, quoting from Isaiah] and the place “where the worm does not die” [Isaiah, 66, 24; also repeated by Jesus in Mark, 9, 44; 46; 48] refer not to somewhere, or some state of being, we go to after death, but are images of destruction, down-fall, in this life. Both Israel, and her Assyrian enemies, will come to this Hellish condition after they ‘tumble down’, and are brought to ruin. Their own addiction to evil will bring upon them this terrible ruin.

There are at least two very important aspects to this meaning of Hell as final destruction of the Evil Way – not punishment for those who give in to the Evil Way, yet definitely the end of what they valued, pursued, built up, by its power.

[1] The warning that evil doing ‘comes to no good’ in the end is addressed not just to the Jews in their specific context, but to all of us in ever shifting contexts. The constant is that to fight the good fight and walk the good road is not simply difficult in itself, the hard way as the converse of the easy way, but more importantly, it is opposed by worldly forces, and the evil forces ‘secretly’ running them. Hell is ‘hidden’ in this world under cloaks of respectability, validation by human law which cares nothing for real ethical uprightness and tolerates ethical transgression, and an entire patina of poisoned fantasy images of ‘the good life in the earthly paradise’ that seduce and flatter to capture and corrupt human desire. In this situation, the people trying to live by ‘faith, truthfulness, justice, mercy’, are going to get a rough ride. The Way of Evil will prosper and rule, for a time, for a long time, and those opposing it, whether religious or not religious, will ‘get hell’ for their stand.

The imagery of Hell does not say that those who opposed redemption will never be redeemed. It is really addressed to those working for redemption, and facing ‘an uphill battle.’ These workers in the spoiled vineyard, trying to make it flower again, have gambled their life on redemption, and to these it is disclosed= you will be vindicated, in the end. Whatever the set-backs, and ‘punishments’ to be put up with from the Evil One and his servants getting up to ‘wickedness in high places’, the leap of faith -- its trust in the unknown and non-secured -- must be maintained ‘despite everything.’ Carry on. Do not throw in the towel. Do not conform. Dare to ‘come out of the woodwork’, in standing up for Truth against the Lie. ‘The meek will inherit the earth’= those heavily oppressed for the sake of righteousness will be victorious ‘finally.’ In this world, doing good and resisting passing on the evil done to you by doing the same evil to others, may not be respected or materially rewarded= more

likely it will be punished; none the less this struggle is its own intrinsic reward, and significantly, it will 'win out' over the longer haul.

For people who serve nothing but falsity and lovelessness, their lives, their works, their successes in evil and edifices of vainglory, will end in whole scale and pitiless destruction.

The destruction will be in some sense a 'final verdict' on the betrayal of truth, and rejection of love, in such life-projects.

This need not have any implications for an afterlife, given the Jewish emphasis on the ultimate importance of this world.

[2] Never the less, even if Hell speaks of the mysterious spiritual power that will be fiercely active especially in the End Times, it does have one very important implication for the afterlife. It does not imply eternal punishment for evil doing, but it does warn the evil doer of two realities easy to sweep under the carpet. [a] Not only that they will, in the end, 'leave nothing behind' as a testament to their time in this world -- their legacy to the world will be that they contributed nothing to its redemption and therefore their time in the here and now leaves only a record of guilt and shame. [b] But also that it is not possible to go into the everlasting, in the direct presence of God, with filth, with rubbish, with untruth, with lovelessness. It is not that God punishes us for having done X, Y, Z. It is that such is the divine truth, and the divine love, anything untrue and unloving cannot 'abide' in it. In this life, we can hide from truth, and hide from love, and seem, for a while, 'to get away with it.' To leave this life is to be stripped naked. No more hiding. The truth of our truthfulness or untruth, our attempt to love or evasion of love, is revealed. It is more than revealed= it cannot survive 'forever.' It had a brief 'shelf life', but it cannot go into the everlasting.

This is a way of speaking about what we take with us out of this world. We may own a house, a yacht, a car, but 'you cannot take it with you.' We are only custodians for a brief moment of these worldly things. Is there anything we can take into the everlasting from our life in this world which will survive in that new environment? Only the deeds of truth and love can 'go on.' These will be our robes of honour that we do take with us. Obviously, if we are heavily identified with and invested in untruth and lovelessness, then dying will be a shock, because all that we put such value in, such hope in, will be shown up as worthless, and ephemeral. When it burns up like yesterday's newspaper in fire, 'we will have nothing left.' We will, in that case, enter the everlasting as the real paupers.

9,

In Isaiah, Hell is called "the burning place" [Isaiah, 30, 33], and that this burning is 'accursed' speaks of something not so concrete as a ruined city after an invading army has sacked it, something more powerful and mysterious.

The historical-narrative hermeneutic should itself not be pushed too literally. Downfall, or destruction, has spiritual and existential meanings as well as a definite political and historical context. What unites all these meanings is what 'destruction' really means to, and in, the human heart.

God does not punish, only the devil punishes, and therefore the devil is the architect of the 'reward and punishment scenario', as the 'false god' of idolatry who demands sacrificing our very humanity for the sake of Mammon. Satanic religiosity is inhuman, anti-human, and in this stance, attacks, and indeed sacrifices, the childlike in everyone. The child is too vulnerable and bendable, too bold and stropic, too much a mixture of wheat and tares= Satanic religion wants this paradoxical mixture of our basic humanity 'sorted out', decided 'one way or the other way', and uses the threat of eternal banishment and eternal torture to enforce in this life a premature and harsh division of lambs and goats. The Satanic religion solves the ambivalence and conflict of our two hearts, by deciding in advance of God making any judgement, who is 'in' and who is 'out.'

It is Satan the Accuser who wills Hell to be the 'end of the road' for humanity. In his warped view, humanity is the experiment that did not go right, but went wrong. Therefore, Hell is regarded by him as the spiritual dustbin where the rejects are thrown away, and the more full to the brim Hell is with human trash, the better he likes it.

God does not punish. But, God certainly does destroy. Evil is destroyed, if not blatantly [historically-politically], then more inwardly [psychologically-spiritually], because the evil we do puts our own heart 'in Hell.' Whether this purges us, or we flee its pangs of compunction, is the question. But, since the Fire of God 'is' Truth, to be in the Lie, both inside the heart and in the deeds done by the heart exteriorly in the world, is to experience the Fire as a burning which 'consumes' our untruth and, if that is all we have become, therefore destroys us totally.

The point is, sooner or later, the evil fire we fanned and built into raging flames in our heart's passion and doing will 'burn up' in the Fire of Truth. We cannot imagine that untruth, inside us and in what we do outwardly in the world, can simply be 'tolerated' forever. The fire of untruth cannot 'eternally abide' in the Fire of Truth. Thus whether the burning of Truth that consumes untruth happens in this life, or happens after we die, either way, it is an inevitable fate. The heavenly experience of this Fire of Spirit is warmth and intensity of passion; the hellish experience of the same Fire of Spirit is torment of passion. 'No rest for the wicked'= the torment never allows us peace.

The torment arises and then goes 'on and on' when we are lying to ourself and to humanity and to God, holding on to our untruth, resisting its exposure, and repudiating the necessity to let it go, to let it, like the trash it is, be burned up and given over to the worms to feed on.

In the experience that is Hellish, untruth of heart and its passion can be burned out of us. Such burning could only be eternal if we resist this process in which our trash – the things in us ‘not fit for purpose’ and thus to be cast away – is consumed and reduced to ashes.

The chance for purgation starts in our life on earth, and maybe continues into an afterlife.. Let’s hope we take the opportunity for purgation, after death, if we have evaded it in life.

10,

But why care about any distinction between the burning of God’s Fire that is heavenly or hellish, depending on our embrace or repudiation of it? Why not say, so what? What is the big deal? Let’s drop the fuss.. Let’s chill out..

The Hell into which untruth in the heart and its deeds brings us can only be ignored, or lightly dismissed, if actions do not matter.

If actions do not matter, then the heart does not matter.

If the heart does not matter, then the ‘organ of fire’ through which God wants to come into the world he has made is lost.

That would be catastrophic. Punishment for wrongs is Satanic. Yet, it does matter that the evil in the heart, and in the deeds it does in the world, has dire consequences, for the doer and for everyone else.

Most of all, it matters for God, if the human heart is indeed to become the throne-chariot of God’s coming to the world.

Hence, untruth getting burned up in the Fire of Truth is a necessity for the completion of humanity’s calling to be the doorway through which God enters the world.

Hence, untruth getting burned up in the Fire of Truth is a huge blessing, not a curse.

11,

Hades/Sheol also needs to be understood existentially, not metaphysically, as a place where the heart gets stuck. Thus, in terms of the heart’s duty to this world, Hades/Sheol signifies decay, degeneration, loss of vigour and zest for life, a ‘forgetfulness’ because of disconnection from the vital challenges of existence. The Pit closes you in. The sins of omission= what you did not do, and thus allowed to degenerate. The garden you did not tend which became fruitless and declined into wholesale despoliation. Shame= you do not want to be seen, you cannot speak, your inaction intensifies, dragging you down. By contrast, Gehenna/Hell is not bogged down, but far more boiling away.. ‘My sin is ever before me.’ Sins of commission= what you positively did that

betrayed and damaged everyone and everything it impacted. Guilt= your conscience stabs you.

But whether it is more a case of fudging doing good, or acting for the evil, our heart is sore afflicted in realising its passion did not fight the good fight, did not run the race until the end. The heart is honest enough, in all of us, no matter how far gone into deadening or wickedness, to acknowledge that we 'blew it.'

This can result in extreme despair.

To be in despair, yet still cry to God= such brokenness God will not disdain.

12,

It is important, given the existential understanding of Hell, to note the way in which Jesus refers to Gehenna 11 times in the New Testament.

One of the motifs he repeats again and again is that it is better to be injured, or incomplete, if this prevents going into Hell, rather than being whole and using this health, talent, strength, to pursue wickedness. "It is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into Gehenna" [Mathew, 5, 29; also= Mathew, 5, 30; 10, 28; 18, 9; 23, 15; 23, 33; Mark, 9, 43; 45; 47; Luke, 12, 5].

This points in a new direction-- to the Cross.

Through our injury, through our incompleteness, we may be stopped from 'potent' adherence to evil. If we can be broken enough to reach the heartbreak in us and in everyone, deep down in the heart, we can then embrace the Cross.

In the heartbreak, we are 'in a better position' to embrace the Cross.

The Cross undercuts Hell in the depths of all humanity. Thus, the Cross ends the Dualism of 'Heaven and Hell.'

This is not widely known in Christianity, because few Christians have walked the Way of the Cross. Arguably the first to try it out was the Good Thief, who died on the Cross next to Christ. This man was not righteous, but admitted to being unrighteous. On any strict Dualist Judgement of his 'worthless' life, he must be headed after death not for paradise, but for Gehenna. Yet the Cross has a reversal whereby the thief, the unrighteous, could come in to the kingdom of the redeemed first, before the righteous. The righteous 'don't need the Cross' – but that is their loss. If they do not embrace it, they miss out on what puts an End to 'Heaven versus Hell' by undercutting Hell from within its own root in the human heart in the fathomless abyss.

Jesus had to enter Jerusalem, and go through his Passion, to know the Cross would end Hell.. Heaven versus Hell is a relative truth, like Karma, because it

takes seriously the truth or lie in our actions, and thus in the heart from which all action comes; in the Cross, it is reversed, and does not become the eternal truth. A different truth, won from suffering and reversal, emerges from the bottomless abysses where Hell is 'hidden' yet all the more devastatingly potent for that.

The Jews understood Hell as the converse of 'the kingdom come.' Yes= in Hell, we realise we betrayed redemption in this world, and thus our remorse and self-reproach bites into our heart terribly.

But the Cross ends this Hell of the heart that convicts itself, because its Way Through is a Way of Failure, and Heart-brokenness.

This is why in Hell is God's 'hidden wisdom.'

13,

Because God took a risk with humanity, and is betting against the devil that humanity can stand the test, it is not just humanity, it is also God, on trial in this existence.

The Satanic Accusation is directed at God's heart which has come, is coming, will come, in the human heart.

If the experiment God has taken with humanity ends in Hell, then God will go to Hell with humanity.

But God has tricked the devil, who prides himself on trickery.

For in the falling down, and abject failure, of humanity ending in Hell is hidden the secret which changes everything.

The secret is not the pearl of great price buried in the earth. That is the heaven wedded to the earth.

The secret is not in the Temple.

The secret is in Hell.

Hell is in the world.

The secret is in the Hell in the world.

The secret is accessed only through Golgotha, the cave mouth leading down into Hell.

God placed the secret in the Hell underneath the world, before time began, so that it could be found and energised before time ran out on the human venture.

The secret wisdom and the secret power is hidden in Hell= but only the Passion Deed of the Messiah unlocks it, making Hell the gate many will pass through.

We are only joined to Christ's Cross in the world= by being crucified in the world as he is. We go where he went, we do what he did, in the world, to embrace Hell as he did, in order that we will, with him, pass through Hell, and with him, be resurrected to the new life of passion.

Everything Christ does is theandric, divine and human. The passion of Christ is supremely theandric= the divine heart in the human heart, divine passion working in human passion.

Passion, Christ's and humanity's, the former redeeming the latter to make it a redeemer= this is the Drama of Holy Week, of Passion Week.

In the future, Christ will be found in Hell. It is Hell which is make or break for the Messiah who redeems all of humanity.

Saving= the lost.

Redeeming= the broken.

This is the Mystery of the Cross that was hidden from before all the ages= Hell as the place of the turnaround, where the deepest evil is undone by the deepest love. To do this, love must suffer. This is Passion. Passion is Holy. Passion is Holy not just in God, but also in humanity. The Holy Passion cannot just be from God, it must also be human.

Anyone who has a heart can be redeemed= in Hell, and through Hell.

Hell becomes, by the Cross, the process of 'coming through.'

The moment of worst crisis in the burning is often the moment of the most dramatic turnaround. In some people's depths, you can hear the change-over like a summer tornado suddenly in your back yard. In other people's depths, it happens imperceptibly, like the gentlest spring rain.

THE 'SON OF MAN'

1,

If Christ were only a good man, even a very divinely inspired man, his story would be moving, even instructive, but not decisive for humanity in changing the very forces at work in the human predicament. Christ would simply be another hero cut down, punished by religious and worldly authority, precisely for his heroism. This has happened before, it will keep happening.. It adds to the endless list of righteous men and women who testify to God not with words, or even beliefs, but with their blood, sweat, and tears. Such martyrdom is worthy of respect, even gratitude. It can work as a 'moral exemplar' encouraging people to follow in its footsteps. Yet it does not shift anything existentially fundamental, within or without= inside each of us and between all of us.

Human heroism cannot, of itself, change the human tragedy.

2,

Christ is the 'divine-humanity' of William Blake, the 'Godman' of Vladimir Soloviev= not God absorbing humanity, nor humanity absorbing God, but a mixing together of divine and human, 'without confusion, without separation.'

Indeed, the Messiah is God 'in' humanity, through the heart, primarily, and only secondarily through the nature. Christ is the interlocking of divine and human hearts, existentially, not just the co-inhering of uncreated and created natures, ontologically. Moreover, the ontological joining is not complete at Christ's birth, and only becomes complete in his resurrection after his crucifixion. Divinisation is existential and heart-focused= what the two hearts accomplish, in conjoint action, makes possible the final ontological seamless knitting together of the two natures. The main theme of God's Incarnation in the human is thus only revealed by the Cross= to find a way through the human dilemma wherein humanity is blocked.

It is because in Christ there is God, as well as humanity, that what this 'God made man' does becomes the turning-point for all of time, for all of history, for all of the world.

Christ is 'the Son of Man' in Daniel's vision. The Ancient of Days, the Everlasting Yahweh, gives to the Son of Man the Messianic Kingdom which shall be God's will done, on earth, as it is in heaven, and which shall last forever, from ages to ages. This is 'the world to come.' Olam ha-ba, in Hebrew.

In ancient Judaism, the title 'Son of God' meant an upright person. It is significant that Yeshua prefers the title 'Son of Man' to refer to himself. In the former, the human strains up to God; in the latter, God descends to the

human. The emphasis in the former is on God; the emphasis in the latter is on the human.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE MESSIAH

Passion, in its terribleness and beauty, its grief and ardour, is built in to the human condition. You don't need religion to find the presence of passion 'marking' human existence. So, passion is something people 'already know' from their own experience, their own struggle with existence.

However, this passion that already is known by people [even if they flounder in expressing it], is a dilemma to them, something they want and resist, and if they truly embrace it, then it throws them into a deeper predicament as they try to live it in the existential arena of the world.

Christ, as the divine-humanity, embraces this human paradox, joins it, suffers in it, and becomes decisive at the point where humanity's passion fails. This is why St Paul says of Christ that 'because he himself has suffered and been tempted, so he is able to help those who suffer and are tempted.' Christ takes human passion through death and hell, and brings it to the other side, into a new living fire for the world, a fire that redeems everything it seizes hold of in its love.

Thus, Christ divinely validates, or confirms, our human passion, but reveals it to us at a deeper level, and brings us through its crisis and failure to a point of redemption of its potential that changes it at source into an active force -- 'hayah' in Hebrew -- for redeeming all the world.

In this sense, Christ does not appear as a *deus ex machina*, an arbitrary religious 'extra', dumped on top of what we are and what we suffer from.

Rather, Christ comes to us as involved in our dilemma, as addressing it, and resolving it-- thus blessing even its dark and hell, let alone its risen power. He confirms what we are, reveals our predicament and possibility to us, and takes us 'all the way' through it.

No other spiritual or religious reality can join and suffer with us in the human dilemma, nor take us through it to the far shore. That is the uniqueness of Christ, the specialness; yet paradoxically, that very extremity confirms, validates, blesses, all that went before which made any contribution to this path of passion, the 'hard road' of the Daemonic God.

So Christ blesses people of no religion who struggled on this path, and Christ blesses all religions which struggled on this path; what he 'adds' to these non-religious and other religions is 'here's the way to take it all the way.' He is what they were looking for, as the crucial element needed to 'get through' the narrow straits and even the horrible finality of crashing into the wall.

If the church wants to bear witness to the universal, enworlded and historical, redemptive mission of the Christ-- fine.

If they try to put their brand on this, or their flag on this, or put themselves in the way of this-- making acknowledgement of their status a prerequisite for this-- not fine.

THE KING REVEALED IN 'THE LEAST'

The koan of Mathew, 25, 31-46

1,

Humans love power, the fallen power that 'lords it over', and so our king must be 'above' the least in the kingdom, the outsiders, the weak, the broken, the tramps by the wayside, the futile, the impaired, the sore affronted and hurtfully afflicted. The ruler, by a visceral instinct in the people, is to be looked up to as in every way far above these denizens of the lower echelons where humanity fails. The stench of the Pit is upon these people. They reek of the odour of decay= the rotten, the putrid, their life is decomposed by the process of wasting away; it is foul smelling, corrupt, unsound, unsatisfactory, worth nothing. By contrast, those who arrive at the top are the very converse of all that wretchedness. Only the top-most, in power and money, get the validation of being 'worth a lot.' They sit at the top table because they earned it, by getting ahead and getting to the top of the heap. They smell clean, and wear that sharp perfume of the rich, and would never allow themselves to be besmirched by the human trash at the bottom.

The Messiah is a different king.

He is revealed in the least, because he understands what the least reveal= the brokenness in everyone, but disavowed by the winners and put on the losers.

The Messianic King says= in as much as you did it to one of the least of these broken, you did it to me.

Christ was hungry and you gave him meat.
Christ was thirsty and you gave him drink.
Christ was a stranger, and you took him in.
Christ was naked, and you clothed him.
Christ was sick, and you visited him.
Christ was in prison, and you came to him.

You did this when you fed the least, welcomed the least, protected the least, consoled the least.

And when you refused to do this, you refused Christ.

And when you refused to do this, you refused your own least, and withheld it from Christ.

To withhold our own brokenness, because we foolishly believe in the special Tower we have constructed over the common Pit, is to refuse the only remedy for our own hunger and thirst, our own aloneness, our own poverty, our own sickness, our own imprisonment.

It is better, for those few in the Tower sneering at the unwashed mass in the Pit, that lightning strike the Tower, and bring it 'down', so that the proud in heart know they too are defeated= living lives of no value, lives that are worthless, lives invested in what will unravel and spoil.

Or is it better that a cloying, and sickly sweet perfume thinly disguises the stink of death?

2,

The Last Judgement is rooted in a contrast between, not 'the good and the evil', not 'the righteous and the unrighteous', not 'the ethical and the immoral', but in the existential difference between the proud of heart and the broken in heart.

For the proud of heart, their own brokenness is denied, and repressed, and therefore the people in the world who blatantly live out, who openly manifest, this brokenness are ignored, rejected, derided, or condescendingly given cold 'charity.'

For those brought low by existence, and forced to become aware of and 'carry' the brokenness deeper down in everyone, charity takes on a very different meaning.

Rabbinical Tradition has things to say about charity that pertain directly to the Messianic King bound to 'the least' in humanity.

This is why poverty is close to God, and why the way in which everyone deals with those living in poverty – not only spiritual but also material – is a 'final judgement' on their own heart= where it stands to others in need reveals where it stands to God in its own need. As Rabbi Chaim Clorfene and Rabbi Yakov Rogalsky put it= "if one has mercy on others, God has mercy on him." These scholars provide succinct, and pointed, commentaries from the Talmud.

The faith of charity= "cast your bread upon the waters, and you will find it after many days" [Ecclesiastes, 11, 1].

The point of charity= "charity rescues from death" [Proverbs, 10, 2].

The spirit of charity= "the life of your brother is with you" [Leviticus, 25, 36].

The commandment of charity= "you should not harden your heart, nor should you close your hand from your poor brother" [Deuteronomy, 15, 7].

God is close to poverty-stricken people= "and the cry of the poor will he hear" [Job, 34, 28].

Everyone has the obligation to give charity according to their ability= "a little charity from a poor man is considered as worthy as a great amount given by

a rich person. As the sages say, 'when one offers a sacrifice, it does not matter if.. it is a large offering or a small offering, the main criterion is that the giver directs his heart to Yahweh, his father in heaven' [Babylonian Talmud, Menahot, 110a]."

Every community has an obligation "to your brother, to your poor, to your needy" [Deuteronomy, 15, 11]= "the community should supply every need that a poor person lacks. The people of the city are obligated to supply him with whatever he is lacking.. and they should give it to him discreetly, so that few know he is receiving it."

The challenge of charity= "one who wants to conduct himself in an honourable way should conquer his evil inclination and widen his hand. Anything that is done for the glory of God should be done gracefully. If he feeds a starving person, he should feed him with the finest foods that he can offer. When he clothes someone who is threadbare, he should clothe him in the finest apparel he can offer."

The graciousness of charity= "and your heart shall not grieve when you give to him" [Deuteronomy, 15, 10], and= "if anyone gives charity to a poor person, and gives it with a sour countenance and a feeling of condescension, even if he gives gold pieces, he has lost all the merit of his actions. One must give with a sense of joy and a cheerful countenance, and he should console the poor person on his tribulations, cheering him with words of comfort."

The obligation of charity= "it is forbidden to reject the requests of a poor person and turn him away empty handed even if all one can afford at the time is a morsel of food. If there is really nothing in one's hand to give, then one should say kind words to the person indicating that he sincerely wishes to give him something, but that it is not possible at this time."

The warning against disparagement= "it is forbidden to rebuke or raise your voice to the poor, as their hearts are already broken and humbled. Woe to one who disgraces a poor person. Rather one should be like a parent to the poor, demonstrating mercy in deed and word."

The requirement of forbearance= "If one distributes money to the poor and the poor in turn insult him, he should not be concerned, because his merit is now far greater because of the humiliation he has borne."

Do not brag= "one should attempt, if at all possible, to give charity secretly. The best way of giving charity is when the giver does not know to whom the money is going and the receiver does not know from whom it came. One should not boast about one's personal acts of charity; self-glorifying causes the merit that has been attained to be lost."

Charity is not to be abused by the needy= "a person should try to avoid becoming the recipient of charity. Even suffering hardship is preferable to becoming dependent upon another person. Nevertheless, others should not

be subject to hardship, such as one's wife and child, because of an unwillingness to take charity."

3,

The broken in heart know they need God's redeeming. This is why they can be redeemed.

The proud of heart deny they need God's redeeming. This is why they put up a barrier against being redeemed.

It is not, with those resisting redemption, that God finds them wanting. It is that those resisting redeeming find God wanting. They put away the need in their own heart, as they wash their hands of the need in other hearts.

There is a possibility that remains open, beyond even this most ultimate of all divine judgement. If the proud in heart finally embrace their own brokenness, they return to reality.

Only when they are humbled in heart will they reach out to the humbled in heart in the wider world, and understand the relevance of the humbled king, the suffering and inverted Messiah, to the common condition deepest in all humanity.

TIBETAN BUDDHISM TAKES A MESSIANIC DIRECTION

The Messianic Spirit, like a secret agent, 'blows where he wills', and has been active in, and influenced, many persons, cultures, spiritual paths..

This change of direction in Tibetan Buddhism is manifest in the story of Geshe Chekhawa who lived in the 11th century AD.

He was an advanced master of meditation but one day he stumbled upon two lines in a book that threw him= "Give all profit and gain to others, take all loss and defeat on yourself." The unconditional love expressed in these lines astonished him. He set out to find the master who had taken such a new step, but this person was dead; instead, after a long search, he met the person's chief disciple. He asked the disciple how important these two lines were for Buddhism, and received an unexpected reply: "Whether you like it or not, you will have to live this teaching if you truly desire to attain Buddhahood." This reply shocked Geshe Chekhawa almost as much as his first encounter with the lines..

He stayed with the disciple for 12 years to study this new teaching, undergoing all kinds of hardships and ordeals, receiving criticism and abuse from other Buddhists. At the end of his life, Geshe Chekhawa told his followers he had been praying to be reborn in the hell realms, so as to be of help to all the beings there. Unfortunately, he added, he had a dream showing him he would be reborn in the realm of the Buddhas. He was disappointed and begged his students, with tears in his eyes, to pray to the Buddhas that this would not happen, and that his passionate yearning to help the beings in hell would be granted.

Sogyal Rinpoche describes such passionate love as "dedicating ourselves to others, taking on their suffering rather than cherishing ourselves" [*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 1992, p 189].

This is exactly what the Cross teaches, and more importantly, accomplishes as an actual turn-around, a reversal, in the deepest abyss of the human heart, so that such an urging of the heart becomes 'grounded' in the Spirit of God dwelling there.

Similarly Redemptive in Spirit is this Sufi poem=

"Unlike someone who begs on the street for money to survive,
A dervish begs to give you his life."

And this Egyptian Desert saying of Abba Agathon=

"If I could meet a leper, give him my body and take his, I should be very happy. That is true love indeed."

IN HELL= A Letter From A Friend

“Dear Jamie:

This is how I understand the difference between Salvation and Redemption from my own life.

When people talk of Salvation -- being saved -- they mean that they have been made whole again. Anyone who has lost a beloved knows what an injury that is -- how fractured they feel -- how undeserving.. But anyone who has found love again, that wonderful 'aha' moment when they find themselves back in the garden, feels forgiven. It is a humbling sensation. The rediscovery of love lost feels as if you have been found deserving of the opportunity to start again -- like being reborn -- by some powerful force outside yourself. Indeed, you once told me that in Hebrew, the 'grace' inherent to Salvation means 'to be favoured.'

Everything is whole from the first.

Enlightenment realizes the wholeness still tacit in everything from its beginning.

Redemption is very different. It is not about being made whole again.

Redemption is the impossible mission of rectifying the world process, past, present, future, whilst at the same time giving up any expectation of happiness for yourself.

When you know 100% that you are not innocent is when you enter Hell.

Part of us feels we should not be in Hell. Don't we have a right to happiness?

You plunge into Hell when, gradually or suddenly, you understand 100%, without a shadow of doubt, without any excuse, that you are not -- and never were -- innocent.

A rich man can be very generous with his riches, taking care of his workforce, not being mean with healthcare and insurance. He can give to charity, immerse himself in the woe of others, and work tirelessly to put it right. He is doubtless a decent man.

But.

Sooner or later he has to face that his wealth is predicated on the poverty of the very people he is trying to help. Without their want, their grief, he could not be rich in the first place, whether his wealth is earned or inherited. He is simply playing one side of a very old chess game with a very wily player. Make no mistake -- this is a terrible understanding.

In Redemption, the heart embraces its complicity in 'what has gone wrong', and accepts no one is innocent, most of all itself.

If you accept your complicity, you throw away the whole chess game. When you refuse to play anymore -- "he is to blame, I am not to blame"; "I am on the right side, he is on the wrong side" -- you cease to play your part in a fantasy of division, and then nothing anyone ever did to you, no matter how harmful or hurtful, has any more weight. It ceases to be of interest because you know you are worse.

The insistence that 'I am innocent' is the refusal of our suffering. If we refuse suffering, then we also refuse kindness toward the human tragedy.

We stay in Hell until we are redeemed. Redemption is through Hell. In Hell we rejoin the human race.

love,
Anita”

VAN GOGH= Painting the 'Supernatural Realism' of the Daemonic

1,

I have been reading several biographies of Vincent Van Gogh. The damage inflicted by his childhood is clear, and its debilitating effect upon his adult life is equally obvious.. But it is not what fuelled his painting. Indeed, his psychological damage constantly undermined his 'mission' of supplying a gospel in paint, 'evangelizing through art.' He always recovered from his worst attacks of mental breakdown by regaining the spiritual fire of his painting zeal.

Thus the 'real' story of Van Gogh is nothing to do with the romantic myth of the mad artist. He not only carried severe psychological injuries from his early family background, but also he was assailed by a brain disorder diagnosed both in his time and more recently confirmed as epilepsy. It is interesting that Dostoyevsky also had epilepsy -- the disease of creative genius, according to nineteenth century pundits -- but Van Gogh had a 'cerebral epilepsy' that seemed to be inter-connected with his psychological damage such that when the brain short-circuited, so the unconscious complexes were more likely to surface.

The real story is of a man who, in spite of his early childhood hurt and brain disorder [epilepsy ran in the history of the Van Gogh family], is fated to strive with the Daemonic. The Daemonic wounded him, by placing him in worldly troubles and torments very early on, which is often its Way, but it also drove and inspired him on the journey of his art which he likened to going fast on a train-- so fast you could not bother with the mundane details, and you were swept along by an engine you could not see.. Van Gogh loved 'the real' -- not the imaginary or fanciful -- and he sought for the 'truth' of the real, in all his painting. The Daemonic, having gotten a hold of his heart through a stabbing wound, took him on an incredible, almost unbelievable, fast journey. Vincent painted scores of works, most of them masterpieces, in his final two years [summer 1888 to summer 1890]. The story of Vincent Van Gogh, the real story, the truthful story, is of a very passionate and vulnerable 'fanatic heart', struggling with the Daemonic. He said he wanted an art "heartbroken and therefore heartbreaking."

Van Gogh wanted to give his heart to the world, not to express himself but to 'hearten' the world that had lost all heart for existence, a dispirited world, but that very world -- starting with his cold mother -- did not want anything from him. He was comprehensively rejected, and even his brother Theo was markedly torn about him, near the end, tipping him over into his pre-mature death. Vincent was, from an early age, cast in the position of the Outsider.

He was 'too much' for everyone. As a painter, he was intense, earnest, vehement. Quite apart from his undeniable psychopathology which was not

easy to be around, no one wanted to warm their hands near the flames of such passionateness in its striving for a truth, a reality, no one understood. He was sincere, in work and in life.

The bourgeois 'normal world' did not want any such fieriness. Equally, this fieriness caused ambivalent reactions among the only religious, or spiritual, artists of that era. Van Gogh's art was not Impressionist, yet neither did it fit in with the enticing yet obscurantist other-worldliness evident in Romantic, Pre-Raphaelite, and Symbolist, art movements. Van Gogh's art was too this worldly. His painting of the chair has a terrible, aching pathos because of its radical presence in the world of space, matter, and time. This painting moves the heart as no rhapsodically luscious, and suggestively mysterious, evocation of other worlds could ever achieve. It hits you in the way that suddenly catching sight of a beloved dead person's shoes would. Van Gogh stood alone.

2,

It is instructive to consider Van Gogh's titanic battle with the amazingly gifted yet narcissistically arrogant, and personally dishonest, painter Paul Gauguin. Monsieur Gauguin portrayed himself to the art world as a 'sauvage'= he was a consummate poseur -- though if anyone was the savage, riding the wave of Fire of the Daemonic, it was the 'wild' Vincent. In marked contrast, Paul Gauguin was actually a city sophisticate, and a shrewd manipulator. Pissarro, his mentor, disliked such wiliness= "Gauguin is not a seer. He is simply crafty" ['Paul Gauguin', Ingo Walther, 1992, p 29].

This judgement is certainly unfair, in picking out an aspect of a complicated personality, and treating it as the entirety; however, there is no doubt that Gauguin was a cool, even cerebral, painter. Indeed, Walther points out that Gauguin's "involvement with the human condition was marked by distance" [p 24].

The Symbolist approach championed by Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard -- inventing their own version called 'Synthetism' -- was clearly an art dedicated to Eros. They argued for art as an abstraction away from ordinary life, a quest for the 'essential idea' [the Symbolists talk in Platonic vein, without necessarily realizing it]. This pure 'idea', being an essence of meaning, could only be alluded to, conjured up metaphorically, in paint. The viewer of the art work, like the painter who created it, is always reaching after an alternative reality beyond the constrictions of the everyday. For this reason, Gauguin told Vincent to stop painting from nature, and instead paint from memory.

In fact, Gauguin painted from a rich imagination which augmented prosaic visual memory, rendering the familiar strange, so as to point to an intangible reality behind its 'surface' factuality. Gauguin's art is interested "in things unseen, the interior life" ['Gauguin', Nancy Ireson, 2010, p 14]. One commentator refers to Gauguin's 'pursuit of the supernatural.' Walther [p 24]= "His watchwords were happiness and harmony, and he arrived at them not

through any struggle within himself but by yielding to the [attraction] of the.. promises of [exotic] worlds.”

But Gauguin’s art is not simply a paradigm example of the doctrines in the Symbolist Manifesto published by Emile Auriere in 1891. As Van Gogh recognised, Gauguin was a person of fundamental contradictions [he portrayed himself as a sexual libertine yet wanted to go back to his wife and children], and his art reflects that complexity. For Gauguin, seeking Eros is a quest for the lost Paradise of the Beginning which he believes still exists, even if in reduced glory, among indigenous tribal cultures. But his unconscious psychological problems, as well as cultural conditioning, inevitably interferes with, and distorts, his search for a ‘natural Elysium.’ There has been much comment on this..

More interesting is that despite the avowed desire in Gauguin to find a pristine, “barbarous”, untouched and uncorrupted, Eden somewhere in this wicked world, his paintings actually show he did not find it. Walther [p 24]= “Gauguin’s attention was not on the darker aspects of life, and he preferred to pursue the lighter sides of the imagination.” None the less, there is a Daemonic darkness that creeps into the Earthly Garden in many of Gauguin’s Polynesian paintings. The figure of death, the figure of the devil, and a pervasive fear of spirits evident in the Maori faces and bodies, haunts this Paradise. Most sad of all for painter and viewer alike is that whatever the native women are ‘connected’ to, they do not disclose it. They look away from us. Their mystery is impenetrable. There is no participating in it. Thus painter and viewer are essentially alone and lonely in this place of supposed contentment and peace. Despite Gauguin yearning for the Primal Eros, the Daemonic creeps in, at the periphery, and ‘spoils the party.’ Quite unconsciously, Gauguin’s entrancing, enigmatic, symbolical, paintings declare that there is no Garden of Earthly Delight where we can go to escape the Fallen World or the Daemonic which is its only remedy.

3,

Though Van Gogh always regarded Gauguin the superior artist, out of his neurosis, and inherent humility, the Daemonic spirit in him also fought back against Gauguin, and insisted upon a very different approach to art.

Odd as it may sound, Van Gogh's approach to how art works, and what art really is, parallels the way the Jewish Bible works, particularly in what scholars call ‘the Yahweh tradition.’ Van Gogh is painting the Daemonic ‘blazing’ in nature, and ‘burning’ in the pain of heartbreak deeper down in humanity. But it is not just that Van Gogh struggles to portray the Daemonic Fire, not wanting to cryptically ‘symbolize’ Eros, as in Gauguin’s art. More important, more significant, is that there is a commonality in how both Van Gogh and the Jewish Bible ‘portray’ the ‘unportrayable’ Daemonic Mystery of Fire= they both use the exact same means. The Symbolist Platonism of Gauguin is not present in Van Gogh or in the Jewish Bible. What virtually no commentary has realized yet -- though the persons who see the Jewish Bible as using an existential language come closest -- is that ‘portraying’ the

Daemonic is simply impossible, so when it actually happens, it has to do the impossible and it does the impossible only *in a certain way*. It is *that certain way* in which the unpictureable Daemonic breaks through into images, and into words, both ripping them to shreds, like lightning burning up wood, and holding them in a certain very down-to-earth 'particularity', which the Jewish Bible and Van Gogh share.

We can get a better understanding of how the Jewish Biblical narrative operates, in short, from understanding the pictorial language of Van Gogh.

Van Gogh's first positive reviewer summed it up. He spoke of a paradox in Van Gogh's art= "an art entirely realistic and yet almost supernatural." You meet these contradictory terms in many later reviewers. Like the Jewish Bible, there is something very realistic, indeed very literal, in his visual language. It may lack mundane detail [especially the human figures], but its sheer concreteness, its physical embodiment, its stark 'thereness', is very powerfully articulated. Such literalism brings something 'right into our face.' There is none of the 'hinting' at an ill-defined mysteriousness, as in Paul Gauguin. Yet, precisely due to that insistence on the literal, on the real, something transcendental rides in, not to demonstrate that it 'surpasses' the literal, but using the literal as its vehicle of arrival, yet bursting through it.. The literal, the real, makes the Mystery of Fire come to us, and its arrival is an 'event.'

The Holy Fire blazes out of the literal, but only through the literal. This is Revelation, and both the Jewish Biblical words and Van Gogh's images are revelatory.

The Holy Fire uses the realism of the literal to come to us. The 'symbols of the ineffable' deployed by Gauguin take us away from the boundaries of here and now, and point to a mystery beyond that limit. Nothing wrong with that. All sorts of realities exceeding the literal can be pointed at by symbolization in literature, art, religion= psychological, natural, spiritual. But this is not the way Biblical story-telling works, nor the way Van Gogh's visualization in painting works. We are not transported from here and now to a distant reality left open to all sorts of interpretations. Neither the Bible's stories, nor Van Gogh's paintings, are symbolic displays inviting a hermeneutics that can never settle on any one 'reading' over any other 'reading', rendering all readings equal. On the contrary, in both the Bible and in Van Gogh, a powerful transcendental reality invades, comes to us, by breaking in on the literal, the real= using it as its chariot, to ride in, to arrive, in an event wherein the Daemonic Mystery of Fire declares, 'I am here and now.' An event of arrival happens. The Mystery of Fire is brought to us, by the literal, by the reality, through which it arrives.

It 'really' happens= it is not a metaphor for something else far away, transcendent, that does not happen in the concrete, on the ground, in time. It happens, in truth, and for real, in order to ignite the human condition and change it, radically.

The Jewish Bible uses the impossible Daemonic imagery and words, just as Van Gogh does, to announce= this is real, this is happening, this is not confined to sheer facts [Fundamentalism] but neither is it static, eternal, above facts [Platonism]. That it is ULTIMATE and yet that it COMES, that it intervenes, that it explodes into history= this is the existential realism and strange poetry in the paintings of Van Gogh and in the stories of the Jewish Bible.

4,

Vincent Van Gogh was also a harbinger of the holy person of the future. Not normal, not saintly, but holy.

W. Uhde, who introduces the Phaidon Collection of Van Gogh plates, says= "He was a missionary who painted" [p 5]. His sister wrote of him at the age of 16= "Despite this unattractive, awkward appearance, there was yet something remarkable in his unmistakable expression of inward profundity" [p 7].

Dr. Gachet, who attended him in his last days, wrote of him= "The words 'love of art' are scarcely applicable to him, one ought to say: belief even unto martyrdom" [p 6].

Uhde= "His life is the story of a great and passionate heart, ..filled with.. love and sorrow. Love, not in the sense of likings or preferences, of sympathy or aesthetic taste, but in its deepest form, ..a deep religious relationship to [humans] and things. ..This love of his led him to self-sacrifice, to a prodigal spending of his own [self]. His life was an uninterrupted giving of himself, and his painting was nothing but the most adequate means of giving himself which he discovered after many other attempts" [p 5].

"The violence of this love of his did not bring him within the community of [people], it separated him from them and made him suspicious and lonely. Thus, together with love, a second feeling entered his heart: sorrow, not indeed in the lighter form of melancholy, but in the graver form of deep suffering and often of despair." His last words to his brother Theo were= 'Misery will never end.'

"His employers were not pleased when Vincent told them that [capitalist] trade was nothing but organised theft" [p 8].

"The idea of consoling those who are unfortunate in this world became stronger and stronger in his mind" [p 8].

The Impressionists "loved the appearance of things and loved them with well-tempered bourgeois hearts. [Van Gogh] loved passionately the things themselves. They liked brightness. He was a fanatical worshipper of the sun. That was something different, something deeper" [p 14].

"Here in Arles.. he created his work, ..the work not of an eye, a palette, a hand, but of a great and generous heart. ..He gave himself completely and

lavishly, as he had once done in the Borinage. ..He remained the deep, sensitive man he had been before. He had not become a 'bourgeois', nor did he become a 'painter.'

..He did not love sunshine: he loved the sun; and it was the latter he wanted to paint, not the former.

..His landscapes too are not reflections of an eye, but actual experiences of a human being" [p 15].

"That the values of movement also play an important part in all his works is likewise not surprising when we consider his passionate temperament" [p 16].

In 1889, the year before Van Gogh's death, the *Mercure de France* published a positive review about his work, and he sold 1 painting.

Fire-Bearers do not fit the designation Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal. There is no name for them because they come not from the past but from the future.

THE EXISTENTIAL CROSS

1,

The worst error in misusing the distinction of Apophatic and Cataphatic is expressed by the Italian monk Bonaventure [1221-1274 AD], and many others walking the path of Eros, and wishing to avoid the Daemonic.

Bonaventure sees the Cross of Christ as merely a symbol of entering into the darkness of divinity by the mind. So, he says that we too "must die and enter this darkness. Let us silence all our care and our imaginings. Let us 'pass out of this world to be with the Father' [John, 13, 1], so that when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Phillip, 'it is enough for us' [John, 14, 8]. For he who loves this death can see God, for it is absolutely true that 'men shall not see God and live'."

This is not the existential realism of the Cross. The Cross is a far more savage reality.

A Jewish holocaust story -- mentioned by Karin Armstrong -- captures it.

"Ellie Wiesel believed that God died in Auschwitz. ..He relates how one day the Gestapo hanged a child with the face of a 'sad eyed angel', who was silent and almost calm as he climbed the gallows. It took the child nearly an hour to die in front of the thousands of spectators who were forced to watch. Behind Wiesel, one of the prisoners muttered: 'Where is God? Where is he?' And Wiesel heard a voice within him saying in response: 'Where is he? Here he is -- he is hanging here on this gallows'."

What is peculiar about the Jewish Bible is precisely that its texts are not just another example of what Karen Armstrong, in 'The Case For God' [2010], calls 'mythos.' Armstrong is right to say they are not 'literal' in the usual historical sense, because they are something 'more' than history. They tell a story, but the story conveys the sufferings and burnings of the dynamic Daemonic as it impacts humanity, and humanity affects it. There is a kind of literalism to this narrative, an existential literalism, or better, a harsh existential realism that is a 'given' of existence in this world. What the term 'literal' is not quite the right description for is the 'given-ness' of the existential exactions, and existential fate, 'all flesh is heir to.' The existential blow, wound, depth, of our thrown-ness into the world is entirely 'empirical'= more real than the mechanical processes of nature that science pins down, manipulates, explains. These existential-empirical givens cannot be penetrated by thought, they have to be borne and endured, gone through, in the heart. They make no sense, material or spiritual. Thus their darkness is deep. This impenetrable darkness will ignite fire, divine-human, or it will kill all possibility of fire.. Its danger is 'real.'

The Jewish Bible, and the Christian Gospels in their 'end-game' drama of telling the story of the Passion of Christ, are at once 'both' existentially

empirical 'and' existentially profound. They are literal existentially, concrete, on the ground, in time, at a specific hard place on a specific day of trouble, but their deep meaning both exceeds that literalness yet is only fully revealed by it. This is the paradox of the 'Biblical Narrative.'

2,

For many mystical theologians of Eros, the existential poetry of the Daemonic storytelling in the Jewish Bible is to be ridiculed as inferior symbols, crass myths, forcing us by their very absurdity to look beyond them. St Dionysus falls into this error, as does St Anthony of the Desert and many monastics in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Dionysus dismisses out of hand the physical and 'obviously inadequate' images of God in the Jewish Bible, because they are full of 'so many incredible or fictitious fairy tales.' Thus, the Jewish Scripture supplies God "with horses and chariots and thrones and provides delicately prepared banquets and depicts him drinking.. And what about God's fits of anger, his griefs, his various oaths, his moments of repentance, his ..wraths, the manifold and crooked reasons given for his failure to fulfill promises."

Dionysus -- so adept in articulating the mystical knowing of love -- is simply 'in over his head' trying to understand the Jewish Biblical story-telling, and indeed, simply cannot bear the Daemonic Truth of the Ultimate Love revealed in its peculiar existential poetry. Abraham Heschel, in his work on the meaning of the Jewish prophets, makes it very clear that such Greek Orthodox mystical and monastic sneers at the Biblical 'pathos' fail entirely to be 'moved in heart' by its telling of the existential story of passion, divine and human.

In the Midrash, these stories are commented upon, to get at their distinctive meaning. They are in time, addressed to time, and thus existentially concerned with repairing the time= redeeming the time of humanity's existential freedom to make a world. The very word 'Midrash', according to Armstrong, means to investigate something deeply. This is what the Biblical Narratives require from us. To understand them in the heart, and to act on them from the heart. Both are existential, not mystical; both are the Daemonic, writing its poem in sweat, tears, and blood, not the song of silence in Eros.

Rudolf Bultman [1884-1976] sought to 'de-mythologize' the Biblical Narrative by pointing out its existential [Daemonic] meaning. Karin Armstrong sums up Bultman's approach to the Jewish, existential meaning of the Biblical story-telling= "Religion was only possible when people were 'stirred by the question of their own existence and can hear the claim that the [Biblical] text makes.' ..Jesus did not see God as 'an object of thought or speculation' but as an existential demand, a 'power that constrains man to decision, who confronts him in the demand for good.' Having lived through the Nazi years, Bultman knew how frequently, in such circumstances, men and women are confronted by an internal demand that.. comes from outside themselves and which they cannot reject without denying what is most authentic to them. God was,

therefore, an absolute claim that drew people beyond self-interest and egotism into transcendence" [p 269].

This is a description of the Daemonic, shooting its arrow into the human heart, which is only wakened and roused by this pain= 'confronted by an internal demand that.. comes from outside themselves and which they cannot reject without denying what is most authentic to them.' This is how the Jews encountered the Daemonic Wound of existence.

The Bible tells the story of the divine heart come to the human heart in this world, and the human heart's struggle with God's coming for the sake of the world. This story does not really begin with the creation, nor does it rely upon metaphysical and cosmological questions. It asks a different, more pained question. Is there any return from tragedy, or is it all for nothing, finally?

The Biblical story begins where the human venture in time begins= in our tragic falling down. This story wrestles with all the realistic and lengthy vicissitudes involved in the redeeming of that tragedy. St Paul, First Corinthians, 4, 2-7= "What is expected of stewards [entrusted with the mysteries of God] is that each one should be found worthy of God's trust. Not that it makes the slightest difference to me whether you, or indeed any human court, find me worthy or not. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted: the Messiah alone is my judge. Therefore, let there be no premature passing of judgement before the time, before the Messiah comes: he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God."

Redeeming the human tragedy takes on the gamble of time, but to do this, it asks us to accept complicity for the failure of that gamble at its first test, its first confrontation with existential temptation, its first encounter with the adversary, the hinderer, who will push us 'to pull out all the stops.' Redemption is extreme, and operates beyond the limit where everything has hit the wall, and come to nothing.

3,

But even the Jews, despite their own 'passion' of the holocaust, balk at its most extreme, and new, existential realism.

No theology, not even mystical theology, can be made out of the Cross. It tells an existential story, but we must commit to its 'inexplicable pain' to understand it. We must accept our own childlike innocence put on the Cross, with Christ.

The holocaust brings to an end the 'nice god' of reform liberalism. The holocaust brings to an end the 'punishing god' of reactionary conservatism.

The former is too 'anodyne and antiseptic', and ignores the tragedy inherent to existence in the world.

The latter is too judgmental and accusatory, and tries to moralize the tragedy inherent to existence in the world.

Karin Armstrong rightly says that a modern understanding of God "must look unflinchingly into the heart of a great darkness" [p 267].

The 'heart of a great darkness' will only be found in the Cross.

Only in the Cross will all existential meaning be forfeit, really defunct, and reignited.

Only in the Cross does the existential venture of God with humanity embrace a conjoint defeat, in order to uncover in that very ruination, the second chance.

This is what all the Biblical story-telling is pointing towards.

But the Cross is foolishness to Greeks, who think they do not need such a suffering and defeated God, given they have mysticism in its dark and its bright, its emptiness and its fullness. This is why it is very hard precisely for 'the best' of the Greek spirit to embrace the worst case scenario that the human tragedy has fallen into, long, long ago.

And the Cross is a stumbling block to Jews because it is, quite starkly, 'a step too far', a divine heart suffering and sacrificing too much for humanity, a human heart suffering and sacrificing too much for God. The moral boundary keeping divine heart and human heart distinct is transgressed.

God trusts too much in the human heart, entrusting too much to it, by bringing it through hell, to a new divine-human mystery on the 'other side.'

Karin Armstrong rightly points out that "human beings had thoughts and aspirations that exceeded their rational grasp, and they had traditionally expressed these in the mythos of religion" [p 234].

But the holocaust ends it all.

Eros shrinks before the holocaust= it has no resources with which to respond to such calculated evil.

The Enlightenment optimism about human rationality and scientific progress is shown up as facile, glib, superficial, by the holocaust.

Only the Cross embraces the holocaust of innocent suffering we all repudiate and have fallen victim to not in spite of, but because of, rejecting it.

In the Cross, God is where we cannot go, where we will not go, where we must go, if any second chance is to be existentially realistic.

REDEMPTION MAKES POSSIBLE THE FINAL SALVATION= The 'Ontologically Transfigured' Nature Of All Created Things

1,

Because Jewish-Christian religion is rooted in time, three steps, or stages, of a different 'nature of things' can be envisioned, corresponding to time's [1] Start, [2] In-Between, and [3] Finish.

2,

It is clear that existentially there is a marked difference between Innocent Beginning, Fraught Middle, Holy End, of time; but less often recognised is that the victory in time of the Daemonic makes possible a 'sea-change' in the very nature, the essential being, of Eros.

[1] The Paradisiacal Garden at the Start= the Golden Age;
[2] The Waste-land of the City in the In-Between= the Nightmare of History;
[3] The Holy City and Sacred Garden Unified at the End= the Eschatological Victory.

3,

Hidden in this ontological shift that occurs in time is a stupendous mystery.

Everyone is nostalgic for Paradise. Everyone wants to go back to the Goodness and Beauty in which everything and everyone begins.. Salvation looks back to this Origin which God views as Good and Beautiful. It is a 'place' where divine and created overlap, inter-sect, and the divine nourishes the created which flourishes as a result. This 'Garden' is not nature as a whole, but nature's pearl of supreme value, nature's inner sanctum, nature's soul. The Jewish Temple is, in an important sense, a memory of Paradise, a recollection of the primal unity of Uncreated and created.

The loss of Paradise is an Exile, a leaving of our 'rightful place', the place we were created to occupy.

Going back, to regain what has been lost, might be possible in Shamanism, and especially in Oriental religions. It is not possible for Jewish tradition. Humanity must take the risk, enter the gamble, of going forward toward an End where the lost Beginning might be restored, or might be forever lost in time..

It is not only that the Jews must press ahead in time, not go back to a rosy past, nor stall in the grim present.

The mystery is that when Redemption is victorious, and only if it is victorious, the treasure always buried in, always tacit in, the Garden is finally revealed and realised. This is the capacity in the created to be 'married' with the Uncreated; invisible spirit and visible matter in a knitting together and interpenetration of converse natures that generates a third more than both= a Child more than spirit-father or material-mother, a union without confusion of divine energy and bodily energy. This is the unexpected destiny of the creation= not to melt away in order to 'return to source', nor to become ever more separated from source so that fragmentation, and degeneration, the triumph of entropy, destroys the primal unity and replaces it with nothing better, but only something increasingly worse..

Rather than either reversion to source, or adrift from source, a third alternative= the 'new heaven and the new earth' promised from so very long ago. It is their marriage, their personal loving embrace as well as natural uniting in which husband and wife become 'one flesh', one complex two-fold but undivided whole, differentiated yet 'as one.' This new reality is the 'heavenly earth.'

This mystery -- latent from the Start, but only actualised, only realised in full, at the Finish -- is Incarnational. It says that matter was never the encumbrance of spirit; rather, matter was designed as 'user friendly' to spirit, and thus melting matter into spirit was never the aim.. The aim is for matter to become the poem of spirit, the house of spirit, the fountain of spirit, the hearth of spirit, the embodiment of spirit.

This is present, in prefigured form, already in the Paradise of the Beginning, for the 'splendour in the grass' already shines out from the onset; yet it will become fully literal, fully real, only in the Holy City and Sacred Garden Conjoined of the End.

What has been lost in the distant past can only be regained in a faraway future.. This is Eschatology. Eschatology is not only= we are all on our way to a battle, of heart. It is also, we are all on our way to a wedding, of soul.

4,

Redemption makes happen a radical Salvation, never before actualised, never before possible; a Second Flowering at the Finish more comprehensive, more amazing, than the First Flowering at the Start.

Only if Redemption wins= then the Salvation that marries heaven with earth, in a final Incarnational unification. Not only does the Incarnation of the Logos in Yeshua anticipate this, but Yeshua's strange body after the Resurrection is the first instance of it= 'the first born of many.' The spirit-matter marriage, and embodiment, will be a new kind of materiality, different from what we know at the present, yet it will be a materiality. Matter will no longer die, no longer decay, no longer corrupt.

This means there are three, qualitatively different 'states of nature' which arise over the entire span of time.

[1] First state of nature, first state of being= the Light shines through matter, like a stained glass window lit up from within. This is Paradise. Every person, being, thing, creature, is the signature of the Light.

[2] Second state of nature, second state of being= the Light is still there, but humanity has shut its eyes and so can no longer see it shining through, and bringing to light and fructifying, all that is. This horrendous blindness, this massive ignorance, not only limits humanity, but because we are a key player in the network of the creation, so what happens to us has a ripple effect on all other things. Nature is no longer responsive to us, nor to what we were meant to bring to the functioning of the network. We were never an insignificant and unnecessary part of the whole; even as a part, we gave something to the whole that the whole needs, and in the absence of, the whole is depleted. Hence Adam naming the animals in Paradise.

In this sense, and contrary to the widespread belief our difficulties are limited [subjectively] to our species, the human race, and do not [objectively] impact nature as such, the truth is the very converse= when we go into Exile, there is a subtle sense in which nature goes into Exile with us.

No one except the Jews understand this. Martin Buber= "The world is an irradiation of God, but as it is endowed with an independence of existing and striving, it is apt.. to form a crust around itself. Thus, a divine spark lives in every thing and being, but each such spark is enclosed by an isolating shell. Only man can liberate it and re-join it with the Origin= by holding holy converse with the thing and using it in a holy manner" [p vi, 'The Way of Man', 1965]. Humanity has caused the 'exile of the shells', and we must work to 'make sacred' all things, beings, creatures, persons, in the creation, for in this way the current opacity of matter is rendered again transparent. The Hopi shamans who feel they must pray every morning on a high rock facing eastward, or the sun will not rise, are operating in accord with the Jewish sense that mankind impacts nature at a subtle level. However, it is obvious that the opaque matter is currently 'fixed and frozen', whilst the fluid matter responsive to spirit influences is certainly still 'out there' but difficult to uncover. A veil has to be ripped back, to reach it. Shamans, and certainly Yeshua in the four gospels, work with the subtle physical stuff – more like energy – to create shifts in the hard crust of the shells. None the less, the shells remain 'encrusted.' It will be interesting to see if science ever ceases its preoccupation with the mechanical ticking over of the shell, and finds the more water-like, fluid states of materiality beneath that hard armouring. "Nature loves to hide."

In the Garden of Eden, God gave kingship to humanity, but that does not mean conquest and exploitation, but sacrificial love. The Wisdom of Solomon states that humans are not superior to beasts, but are on a par with animals, and the Book of Job states that the animals should be consulted, and learned from, because they convey a wisdom of God woven into the very warp and

woof of creation. Sophia, God's feminine consort through-out the Wisdom Literature, is the mother of all animals as well as all people. 'She' is Solomon's mentor, who guided him in the construction of the First Temple ["Wisdom builds her house."] Thus, in the act of creating, God has a partner; the creation works to a binary system.

Nature is in a contradictory state, because of human failure to love its sacred mysteriousness, of both being fixed in its outer shell, yet remaining fluid in its innermost core. For those who love, and honour, nature, possibilities of holy converse open up miraculous, and magical, natural events. These odd, uncanny occurrences look back to the song of the Start, and look forward to the poem of the Finish, at the same time.

For those trying to conquer and exploit nature, the outer shell is all they ever see and act on. To those who want to 'rape' nature to subdue her, in Francis Bacon's revealing words, nature is never translucent, always impenetrable. For those who befriend and co-operate with nature, the material world and the Spirit World are not so divided. As the Shamanic Celts put it, the Otherworld – *tir na nog* – is not found in some celestial plane but 'just behind the house.' Hasidism= "Rabbi Hanokh said: 'The other nations too believe there are two worlds.. They too say: in the other world. The difference is this: some of them think that the two worlds are separate and severed, but Israel professes that the two worlds are essentially one and shall in fact become one.' In their true essence, the two worlds are one. They only have, as it were, moved apart. But they shall again become one.. Mankind was created for the purpose of unifying the two worlds" [Martin Buber, 'The Way Of Man', p 32]. Such unifying is called 'making sacred' in Shamanism, and according to St Maximus, humanity is tasked with bringing together all polarities which tend toward division= feminine and masculine; paradisiacal and worldly; sensible and intelligible; culminating in Creator and creation.

[3] Third state of nature, third state of being= this is what we know nothing about because it is the mystery hidden over the ages, the treasure buried in nature of what, finally, it can become when fully fructified by God [Isaiah, 55, 10-11; Psalms, 64, 10-14]. This is not just the creation translucent with Light, travelling through the water rolling through all things. It is more than that= it is the creation burning with Fire.

The final ontology is the wonderful Salvation hinted at by the Jewish prophets, especially Isaiah, but what seems never to have been clarified is that it is only Redemption which can bring this Salvation.

The first Salvation= Paradise, no Exile. The creation, just as it is.

The second Salvation= 'preserve us in Exile, and get us out of it.'

But, what home do we go to after Exile? Do we go back, to something old, and imaginably marvellous; or do we go forward to something new, and unimaginably tremendous?

No human eye has seen, nor any human heart conceived, what God has in store for those who love in the Accomplished Future..

The third Salvation= Holy City and Sacred Garden.

Isaiah, 35, 1-6, 10=

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel.. They shall see the glory of Yahweh, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For water shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. And the ransomed of Yahweh shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

“The Lion will lie down with the Lamb”= and similar radical ontologically-altered depictions of ‘the way the nature of things is’, and the way the ill-being of humans has disappeared and well-being, even everlasting-being, has come, is not an account of Israel’s ‘salvific happiness’ after leaving Babylonian Captivity in 500 BC. The good times lasted only 500 years – and they were not all that good, for prophecy ceased, the Second Temple did not regain the mysticism of the First Temple, and so Israel became bourgeois again, and again fell under foreign yokes of the Greeks and then the Romans – before the third and longest Exile ended any salvational completion..

This, and similarly outlandish passages in Isaiah, portrays not what awaited Israel when they returned from Exile in Babylon.

It describes what awaits all flesh, all things, beings, creatures, persons, at the End of time= if, and only if, the Daemonic wins. No Jew, no Christian, seems to appreciate that Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, are necessary to the radical ontological transformation that is poetically envisioned as the climax of the End Time= its fruit. ‘Fruit that will last.’

Only the fight and suffering in the Daemonic secures the marriage and joy in Eros.

'REDACTING' THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES= What Went Wrong In Two Messianic Religions

1,

I found a staid – very mainline Western – Roman Catholic commentary on the Old Testament whilst in the USA. The book is more than 50 years old. I was interested in it, though, because it confirmed the recent scholar Margaret Barker who has made some radical claims about the 'Deuteronomist Party' who were largely responsible for a massive refashioning of the Jewish Bible after the return from Babylon circa 500 BC. [Karen Armstrong has also provided evidence of this in 'The Case For God', 2010.]

The Roman Catholic author uses the ugly word 'redacted' for the re-editing of the Jewish Scriptures after Babylon which, in effect, changed the Jewish religion from what it had been in the First Temple and earlier going back to Abraham, Jacob, and Job, into what it became after 500 BC= more Mosaic, more Law oriented, less existential, less mysterious and poetic..

The impression conveyed by the Roman Catholic author was that virtually all of the Pentateuch -- the first 5 books of the Bible, which Jews call Torah [the Law, the Teaching] -- were written down, or if already written, then substantially edited, after Babylon. Thus, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, are all 'later' written down segments of the Jewish Bible. What seem to be chronologically earlier parts are in fact later additions, and what is more questionable, later revisions..

For example, the two Genesis stories certainly demonstrate Babylonian influence, and were nuanced to both copy certain Babylonian motifs yet at the same time put a more Jewish take on them. The account of the Creation is therefore not primal to Judaism at all, but a later after thought, of more recent origin.

More significantly, all the multitude of 'laws' in Deuteronomy and Leviticus were mostly culled from documents found in the rubble of the First Temple, and dating no later than 700 BC, but these writings were seized upon as the work of Moses himself [a blatant lie], and in effect, post Babylon Judaism rendered Moses as 'the' Saviour Figure par excellence, and reduced being saved to the reward for keeping within the Law[s], whilst not being saved is the punishment for going outside the Law[s].. Indeed, it is almost as if this Second Temple Judaism believed that God's covenantal relationship with the Jews was really founded on Moses— rather than resuscitated by him after several hundred years of captivity in Egypt. Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, disappear as the existential founders of Judaism, and de facto, the Chief Foundation instead becomes Moses.

But there is more to it even than that.

It is as if Moses is used by the Second Temple Judaism to reinstate the First Covenant, and to do this in direct defiance of the prophets, among them Jeremiah, who declared God's revelation that the Babylon captivity signified the failure of the First Covenant, and would therefore need to be followed by the Second Covenant of the Messianic Age. Thus, Mosaic Judaism, even if ostensibly 'waiting for the Messiah', misunderstands the Messianic by virtue of clinging to the First Covenant and not letting it fail, as indeed it did fail, so as to clear the way for the coming of the New, Second and truly Messianic, Covenant. Inevitably, the Messiah becomes just an add on, an extra, to be tacked on to the Saviour Figure of Moses. Just more of the same.. That puts the Messiah as a sort of crowning culmination of the First Covenant, whereas the Messiah is in reality a replacement for, and the answer to, the total failure and entire demise of the First Covenant.

The net result was that the more moderate dynamism of the First Covenant is preferred to the more radical dynamism of the Second Covenant. The former is concerned with the reform of human actions, the latter promises a fundamental change in human disposition, a new heart.

For the Jews, whose spirituality is not spatial but temporal, 'going backwards' to an earlier felicity is entirely impossible; they must press ahead. Mosaic, Law oriented Judaism is retrogressive, an attempt to step backward in time to a relationship with God which God himself -- unless Jeremiah was deceived, as his enemies claimed -- has declared defunct, and in need of 'updating' with a very new, and different relationship. The old passes away, and something not simply renewed, but more advanced, steps into the breach.

Thus after Babylon, Judaism splits into two very distinct streams. The Official Stream of Judaism is Mosaic and Law oriented. The Unofficial Stream, signified by the second Isaiah of the Suffering Servant, and the David of the lamenting and inwardly battling Psalms, awaits the true Messiah. Yeshua was a part of this second stream. Paul began a part of the first stream, but by meeting Yeshua in person, on the road to Damascus, was converted to the second stream. It was the greater Judaism, yet treated as lesser, or just entirely ignored, by most 'official' Jews. The lesser, Mosaic Judaism was exalted.

2,

The Roman Catholic writer also said something interesting about the Torah Books [which might apply to the whole of the Jewish Bible]. He said there are four main traditions that shaped the 'First' 5 Books=

--The Priestly Tradition -- to do with ceremonies, and the theme of purification. Everything to do with worship is classified and systematized. This emphasis is lucid and precise, but lacks the warmth and vividness that is so much in evidence elsewhere.

--The Deuteronomist Tradition -- the redactors, who believed in a primitive notion of reward and punishment= if you stay within the Law[s], God will

reward you [save/rescue/deliver/flourish/benefit you], but if you go outside the boundary of the Law[s], God will punish you [not save/not rescue/not deliver/not flourish/not benefit you]. The Holocaust kills off the Deuteronomy standpoint.. Or, in a very un-Jewish way, you have to remove the reward or punishing to an after-life not in this world [as Christians of the Deuteronomy tradition have explicitly done].

--The Elohim Tradition -- stressing God's might. This is Daemonic, but too transcendent, not sufficiently immanent. It is really about establishing respect for God's unreachable height and humanity's lowliness= necessary-- but not sufficient on its own; an aspect of the Daemonic, not the whole, nor even the most important.

--The Yahweh Tradition -- it portrays Yahweh with human qualities, it is poetic in language, and -- despite the prohibition on images -- rich in imaginative symbol, metaphor, story-telling.. No abstract [Greek] theology, but concrete ikonic vision of God's energies and actions.. Yahweh is the mystery beyond all mysteries, yet he is the personalness of God passionately reaching beyond the gap between uncreated and created; the God of heartbreak and heart restoration, the God who suffers with and suffers for humanity, as well as making humanity suffer to reclaim their true heart.

3,

The Rabbinic method of teaching draws heavily upon the pathos and poetry of the Yahweh tradition.

Jesus deployed, in his parables, the same method as earlier Jewish rabbis, blending the historical and the symbolic 'as one.' Thus two converse kinds of hermeneutic are false to this method of storytelling.

On the one hand=

If you interpret the sacred text only literally, as fundamentalists and evangelicals, or the religiously conservative, do, then you miss the point. For there is a wealth of meaning latent in the literal historical 'fact' which its sheer factuality cannot transmit, unless read symbolically. Starting with the historical, the meaning takes you into other dimensions at a remove from that literal time and place, and not confined to it. This 'extra meaning' can be mystical or psychological or moral; it always expands the 'ostensible meaning' by uncovering mysterious spiritual factors at work in it. Consequently, the literal is never simply literal, because the literal is a metaphor for something beyond it, yet embodied in it. There are subtleties which inhere 'what really happened.' The literal is a poem-- not a computer print-out, or a set of rational-factual statements. These kinds of literalism have a very limited meaning. Their meaning is limited to only one level, a level not rich in meaning, but deprived of meaning.

Studying Hasidic interpretations of the Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible is very instructive. These interpretations use the historical narrative as spring-boards

to symbolic meanings quite far from any literalist reading. The Jewish Bible should never be read without consulting the ancient Rabbinical commentaries on it.

On the other hand=

If you interpret the sacred text only metaphorically, denying that the particular embodiment in which it is couched matters, then you proceed more in a Greek Hellenic, not a Jewish, manner. You go too fast to disembodied universals of meaning, or generalities that supposedly apply across the board, any place at any time. Any symbol becomes merely the excuse to trot out a panoply of 'pure ideas.' This anti-literalist approach to Rabbinic meaning-making also falsifies it. For Jews, the particular place and the particular time matters in the meaning, and cannot be shed as if it were merely an 'outer suit of clothing', not the 'inner reality.' The true meaning is incarnate, not disincarnate= not floating in some space, whether that non-physical domain is seen as spiritual or as psychological [or a mixture of the two= the 'psychic matrix']. The true meaning therefore has a body, not just a soul, for the body is what 'anchors' meaning in this world.

Such earthiness of meaning is asserting that the extra symbolic meanings are 'situated' in a given historical context, and the sheer fact they are contextualised, and how they are contextualised, is important to interpreting them. Even if he had subsequent generations in mind, Jesus was teaching first century AD Jews living in a very definite setting, and much of what he says to them has to be interpreted in terms of those people, in that time and in that place.

Yet, given how often Jesus quotes from the Psalms and Isaiah, often echoing them directly in his words [echoes that his audience would have picked up], it is apparent that he saw analogies between past events and present events. He used a form of what is called 'typology' in his meaning-making= certain symbols recur, in different forms, not because they are 'archetypes' in Plato's or Jung's sense, but because they refer to mysterious spiritual meanings and energies repeatedly intervening in historical circumstances, always doing something similar as in the past [creating continuity] and always doing something new different from the past [creating discontinuity]. In this way, Jesus upholds an ongoing 'progressive revelation' with both recognisably ongoing themes and new departures, leaps forward, which are not foreseeable. New occurrences of symbolic types, in altered circumstances, bring new meanings, but often throw additional meaning on the old symbolic types. They mean more, or mean something different, when seen retrospectively. In this way, tradition never stalls, simply repeating the past, nor does it just break off from the past.

If you stick with Yahweh's right arm, then you will always end up splitting and fighting over historical and symbolic. 'It really happened' but there are wheels within wheels to 'the meaning' of what happened.

Only Yahweh's left arm sustains the converging of mystery and word, spirit and symbol.

4,

Judaism lost its roots [the existential calling of Abraham, Jacob, and Job], and its bigger path [the First Temple of Solomon, and the wave tossed wrestlings of David, the ancestor of and ground for the coming Messiah], between 500 BC and the time of Yeshua. Salvation replaced Redemption for Judaism, just as it later did in Christianity, for a combination of complex reasons, many of them political, some of them spiritual. Jews and Christians just fought over the meaning of the Saviour Figure= the Jewish one modelled largely on Moses and this-worldly in emphasis, the Christian one rendering the Cross the 'condition' for Salvation as transport to the next world. This robs the Cross of any genuinely Messianic, Redemptive power= it ceases being the key to unlock hell, and becomes instead the key to open the doors of heaven; this 'happily' escapes hell-- and leaves the deep problem in hell unaddressed and unredeemed. The most important thing of all, in all of the human venture through-out history, is tragically left undone.

Thus both modern Judaism [for 2,500 years] and modern Christianity [for 2000 years] have had competing Saviour Figures, but neither has had a Messiah, the Redeemer.

This is a cataclysm for both religions. Both Messianic religions are broken, in opposite ways, like a bird that cannot fly with one wing.

THE PARADOX OF THE JEWS

“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth”, Ecclesiastes, 7, 4.

The Jews were 'chosen' by God. But what were they chosen for?

Were they chosen in order to receive special benefit denied the rest of mankind?

No.

Did God simply prefer them and reward the favourites?

No.

God has no favourites. God bestows no special reward.

Were the Jews chosen to be saved by God, and through this, become a paradigm, an ikon, a beacon, of 'how to be saved' for the rest of humanity?

This is closer to the mark in spirit at least, but no, it is not the reason for God singling out the Jews to undertake a mission unique in all the world. After all, Buddhist enlightenment was also 'salvational.'

The real truth is, as every Jew knows and does not want to know, they were chosen to suffer..

To suffer for God, so as to reveal something about the divine heart and the human heart otherwise locked away and obscure.

The people chosen to carry the cost and weight of the Daemonic in the human heart resisted this calling fiercely, yet precisely through their resistance revealed its truth. In struggle with the Daemonic, in wrestlings and fights, they nakedly exposed the Redemption more than any Salvation.

Yet they preferred Eros to the Daemonic like all humans, and for a people so beleaguered by enemies and imperilled on all sides by much more powerful nations, the Salvation they desired took on very specific features. They yearned for not only a land of milk and honey, but a land that would be protected by God from invasion and despoliation, a land that could be for them a 'refuge' against the trouble, strife, tumult, tribulation, that day in and day out proved to be their harsh bread and bitter wine.

"God is my refuge and my strength. Whom shall I fear?"
Psalms, 27, 2; 28, 7.

"Yahweh is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation."
Exodus, 15, 2.

None the less, the Daemonic relentlessly and incessantly refused to grant the Jews the Salvation they pleaded with God to be allowed. Again and again, its arrival got postponed.. Kicking and screaming they were dragged into the battle for the heart which is at the same time the battle for the world.

This is why that part of Jewish tradition faithful to the Daemonic requires those who follow its prompting to 'do' the deed we must do, because God calls us to it, even if we don't want to do it in another part of the heart, don't 'feel like it', and are not 'drawn to it'; and even if the rational assessment dismisses it as too demanding. Do it -- complaining as you do it all you like, but get it done, and don't wait to do it until your feelings are happy about it, your desire is attracted to it, and your mind can see the sense in it. Just do it..

When we answer the Call of the Daemonic, we leap into the unknown, we enter the arena of test, we plunge into terrible depths.

Only the heart -- shorn of feeling, shorn of desire, shorn of rational evaluating -- can take this step, can gamble this existential uncertainty, can accept this existential non-guarantee, can tolerate, and persevere in, such vulnerability.

From exactly this vulnerability to God and vulnerability to the world, the heart's way is uncovered by flame burning in darkness.

William Blake asked the Daemonic Tyger if the God 'who made thee also made the Lamb?'

The Jews were the first to prove, by what they had to go through, the answer to this question is Yes.

THE RIGHT QUESTION

1,

A child of 7 is asked by her grandfather, gruffly and out of the blue, with no lead up.

Do you believe in God?

Yes.

Why?

Because I exist, and someone must have made me.

A confident theological reply to a question that becomes more pained with age.

2,

In old age, she remembered this incident from the distant past, and recounted it to her husband, now also older.

He commented, you answered the wrong question.

She demanded, how would you answer?

Put the question to me.

3,

Do you believe in God?

Yes.

Why?

In my heart is a God shaped hole.

The existential answer to the real question.

KISMET= The Jewish Koan

INTRODUCTION

Black Elk summarises a very old manner of expressing Eros as the way of soul=

"[There is a] peace that comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realise that at the centre of the universe dwells the Great Mysterious, and that this centre is really everywhere, and also it is within each of us."

The Daemonic as the way of heart is very different.

Like stringing a bow tightly to shoot an arrow,
God has finely wrought the human sinews of passion:
its dilemma wherein we are squeezed;
its suffering wherein we are deepened;
faith that risks existence;
truth that is the only ground over the abyss.

1,

Ross Daly -- an Irishman who has spent much of his life in Crete and learned the Cretan lyre, becoming a master of traditional Cretan music -- encapsulates the meaning of 'Fate' in the liner notes for a CD called 'Kismet' by Bijan Chemirani and Stelios Pretakis [2003]=

"The word 'kismet', or variations thereof [Qisma= Arabic; Kismeti= Greek; Qismet= Turkish; Qismat= Persian] is derived from the ..Semitic 3 letter verbal root QSM which means 'to divide, distribute, assign, ordain.' Kismet, in everyday usage, refers to fate, fortune, or destiny with the implication that this is one's portion or share of the sum of reality or being.

The Middle-Eastern concept of fate, fortune, destiny, kismet, is.. often seriously misunderstood and even shunned by Western attitudes as mere 'fatalism.' ..a certain basic understanding of the [complicated] concept of kismet is probably essential to one's understanding of any given aspect of the culture of those peoples in whose world it has a rather special place."

The peoples for whom Kismet 'has a special place in their culture' are living in ancient lands stretching from the Balkans and Greece through Palestine and Turkey, to Arabia and Persia. It is a mid-point between East and West, neither Oriental nor Occidental.

But all the languages referring to Kismet derive it from the same verbal root in Hebrew, and therefore this shared intimation about Fate is essentially Jewish.

Indeed, QSM is arguably the Hebrew root which, though not identical with, is closest to the ancient Greek term 'Daemonic.'

2,

A commentator on Hebrew terminology amplifies what Ross Daly has claimed about Kismet. There are several roots in Hebrew that mean 'to cut.' QSM is one such root. The commentator cites the Hebrew scholar Klein who says that QSM originally meant 'to cut, break, divide, distribute, apportion.' All this is implicit in the Hebrew 'kesem', the equivalent of Kismet.

The commentator also refers to what the Hebrew scholar Jastrow points out= that 'kasam' means 'a carver', and can be applied to God, but when thus invoked, God is no longer spoken of as 'Creator ex nihilo.' Hence, 'kesam' is the implement of the carving, not unlike the sword which Christ warned he was wielding [Mathew, 10, 34-35] when announcing he came not to create peace [Eros] but to sow conflict [Daemonic].

The same paradox inheres the Hebrew 'cleaving' to God, spouse, neighbour, world; the sharp cutting edge of the sword which separates and divides is necessary to the most radical heart to heart adhering. How can that be?

Jastrow clarifies traditional Jewish texts which imply that if a person invokes God in cursing someone else, then the curse rebounds on the one doing the cursing. Only God can cut the world, for the sake of a closer joining with it; when we try to do this, in God's name, we inevitably become Satanic. This is the problem in fundamentalism, and really in any attempt to correct, or put right, other people. 'Judge not, lest you be judged.' Trying to be 'the scourge of God' always goes with refusing God's scourging of oneself. In modern Hebrew kesam can refer to a 'toothpick', and it is best we clean our own teeth out, and not seek to put the bite on others. We can discern their failures, but to discern our own failings means accepting we and they are in the same sinking boat. People foolishly tear each other to shreds as the boat takes on ever more water..

The commentator goes on to a further amplification. He quotes again from Klein, who clarifies that 'istaqsama' means 'he got a part allotted to himself', and 'qismah' means 'portion, lot, fate.' Moreover, there is even a suggestion that QSM in one of its variants means to 'swear', or make a 'vow.'

Thus QSM is the key to the Daemonic Fate that seizes humanity violently, and will not let go of those who must confront the existential reality that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God.'

"What do you want from me?", the Daemonically afflicted scream at God. Only over time, in the throes of a long dereliction, does God reveal what he is doing with us.

What the Sanskrit root 'RTa' is to Eros, QSM is to the Daemonic.

3,

The very word Daemonic began in Greek as 'a person's share of happiness', then by losing a prefix, became a person's share of suffering, a person's portion of the common fate of suffering that befalls all humanity. Hence the Daemonic is 'fated suffering.' The suffering 'allotted to you, as your portion, of the sum of suffering that befalls everyone by virtue of existing in this world.' That such suffering will indeed befall you, that there is no escaping from it, is Kismet.

Kismet is therefore initiatory into the Daemonic— the knock on the door at the hour of the wolf in the dark of the night which wakes you in a cold sweat; the unexpected and unforeseeable turn of events that changes your life forever; many things that happen 'for no discernable reason' but affect your life decisively for good or ill.

Christ on the Cross is the supreme apotheosis of fated suffering, and he knew it was his Kismet, though he humanly desired to avoid it, and wavered in confronting it in the Garden of Gethsemane before Golgotha. He did not 'float through it', he did not 'rise above it.' He did not detach his heart. He met it head-on. It hurt him. 'Not my will, but thy will be done' the human heart says to the divine heart when it has 'fallen into the fearful hands of God' and acknowledged that dynamic situation as the Fact of facts, the Reality of realities, and at last 'accepts' it. We humans always start by rejecting our personal and particular Kismet, as can be observed in the Psalms of David, and only through terrible struggles against its blow, followed by struggles in the abysses of its wound, do we finally reach the wisdom of accepting the fate, the share, the portion, the allotted measure of suffering, willed for our existence in this world by the Daemonic God.

This is not 'submission', out of fear of an authoritarian tyranny. It is 'surrender', out of trust in the unknown. The blow of fate, the wounding of fate, is not defended against, denied, fled. Rather, it goes into us, and goes far down. A blues singer from the American South recently chose as a title for her CD 'deep down where the Spirit cuts into the bone.' Federico Garcia Lorca calls it 'the knife in the street.' It always comes 'out of left field.' It cannot be expected and planned for. It overturns every apple cart.

4,

David in the Psalms says humanity is 'wonderfully and fearfully made.'
Wonderfully made= Eros. Fearfully made= the Daemonic.

Even Eros has its fated portion of happiness, bliss, ecstatic release in union with what is good in life, but humanity's greed and lust, envy and jealousy, rivalry and animosity, always demonstrate that we kick against this 'portion' of the good things, because we always demand 'more.' We wish for the whole pie, not our slice, and thus our wish-fulfillment phantasy, as Freud called it, echoing the Eastern Christian Desert Tradition of spirituality, is always in overdrive, in an overheated state, disappointed in the slice we do have, and

restlessly seeking bigger, better, more and more. What we have is never enough. Gratitude for the slice of goodness we do have, and contentment with it, is a sign of Enlightenment in Eros. Just as 'the water goes up and the water goes down', so too accepting the one bird in the hand rather than being flooded with illusory wishful images insisting upon the two birds in the bush, is a spiritual yoga of Eros.

If we try to keep, hold on to, 'own', even the decreed portion of joy that does come to us, so we drive it away.

William Blake=

"He who binds to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy,
But he who kisses the joy as it flies,
Lives in eternity's sunrise."

Thus even what we are given as our share of the goodness of life cannot be 'possessed.' The open, non-grasping hand, not the closed, grasping fist, is the only way to relate to not only the inevitable comings and goings of Eros, the winter and the spring, the sour and the sweet, but also the very particular portion of Eros we are granted as our happiness, our joy, our bliss, during our brief sojourn on earth.

Kismet imposes limits, disciplines, yokes, in the journey toward the authentic fullness of Eros, as the ancient Greek myth of 'Eros and Psyche' makes plain. The soul is 'schooled' by Eros in how to love= how to respond freely and personally to the gift of love, how to take delight in love, how to let go of ego so as to cease blocking the flow of love. Everyone is a 'learner' in Eros. If we are genuinely growing, then 'yearning' replaces restless discontent and ingratitude.

Rumi ['The Illuminated Rumi', Coleman Barks and Michael Green, 1997, p 74]=

"How will you know the difficulties of being human
if you're always
flying off to blue perfection?"

..We need
ground
to scrape and hoe, not the sky of unspecified desire."

Rumi says the soul has the shape of a bowl [p 89], and that the very longing for God without getting anything back is 'the return message' [p 78]. Thus= 'Listen to the moan of a dog for its master. That whining is the connection.'

Rumi is not speaking of the Daemonic. He is telling us that on the path of Eros it is the negatives of life which bring us nearer to the real positive in all

things than our 'religious approximations' which are like concocted menus compared to real food.

The Kismet hardest of all to embrace is that Eros is transitory in this life= it cannot be preserved, like a museum piece safely ensconced behind glass. Good things do not last. Russia's cultural, social, religious, flowering in the nineteenth century ended. King Arthur's Round Table ended. Jack and Jill's romance ended. Chinese proverb= 'if you want to be happy for a year, fall in love; if you want to be happy lifelong, take up gardening.' Yet real love is akin to gardening. Eros is far from an easy stroll in the park. The paradox= fasting teaches us what it is to feast. A similarly important lesson is only learned by having our share of the good, not the 'bigger and better' version we wish for. The sulky child rejects the good thing he can, for a time, enjoy, because it does not match the fantasy-fulfillment that he prefers.

There is a working of Kismet even in Eros..

5,

Kismet is more radical in the Daemonic. Consequently, any person, or any culture, which rejects Kismet also rejects the Daemonic. The Daemonic is not an idea, concept, image, archetype, pattern, undergirding or overarching structure. It is an Unknowable and Inexplicable Presence, and Power, that strikes people in their heart whether they like it or not, are ready or not, recognise what is happening or not..

It breaks the heart.

This breaking of the heart on the road of the Daemonic is mysterious, and impossible to describe. Henry Miller, with all his élan, love of flexing his muscles in language and throwing off restrictive shackles, tells Lawrence Durrell a more fundamental truth about his life ['Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller= A Private Correspondence', ed. George Wickes, 1963, pp 374-376]=

"All I was trying to say, bedazzled as I was, and it was like trying to put a knife in a crevice, was: 'What's it all about?' .. Looking back over my more tumultuous writings I begin to wonder if perhaps I was trying to hide something? Or perhaps I was hiding from myself. ..What I feel like saying sometimes—when the whole bloody Crucifixion comes to an end—is 'Ladies and Gentlemen, don't believe a word of it, it was all a hoax. Let me tell you in a few words the story of my tragedy'.. And what would be the story? That, wanting desperately to be a writer, I became a writer. In the process I sinned. ..I betrayed my wife, my child, my friends.. [because] I fell in love with the medium. ..I recorded what I saw and felt, not what was. ..I would like to talk to men or with men in a different way now. Like Parsifal, not Pagliacci. My heart was never broken. I'm intact.."

The Daemonic wound takes away this intactness. Only a broken heart walks the road of the Daemonic.

The person, or culture, not acknowledging Kismet is at a disadvantage, because when the 'wound inflicted by the Daemonic' hits them, they will have no 'wisdom of the sages' to help them honestly face, wrestle with, pass through, the Daemonic 'long dark tunnel.'

They will blame the Daemonic lightning strike that burns up their existence as bad luck if they are narrowly secular, put it down to malevolent demons if superstitiously religious, or more commonly, people will try to deny the Daemonic has arrived..

We are, each of us uniquely, and all of us in common, 'ordained' to a suffering fate that is a calling which is key to the future redemption of existence in this world. It is in the process of redeeming the world that the human heart is destroyed and remade, forged in a fiery furnace, hammered on an implacable anvil, tested as to what it is truly made of in depth. God is relentless about putting humanity through this fated suffering, so that we will, in the end, come to a mysterious destination otherwise unreachable.

F.G. Lorca [lecture in Grenada, 1922]=

"..cante jondo always sings at night. It knows nothing of morning or evening, mountain or plain.. It is a song without landscape, concentrated in itself and terrible in the shadows, shooting its golden arrows that pierce the heart. It is like a formidable archer of azure whose quiver is never emptied."

Andalusian Gypsy Flamenco=

"I climbed the wall;
the wind cried to me:
Why these sighs,
when there's no remedy?"

And=

"If my heart possessed
windows, you could
look deep there, and see
me weep drops of blood."

The Daemonic Wounding "is deep, ..more so than any well, more so than all the seas that bathe the world" [F.G. Lorca, 1922]. The blue archer brings forth the new reality of heart unobtainable in any other way.

6,

Ross Daly points out that the fate allotted one, ordained one, requires 'improvisation'= though it befalls us as a fate we cannot change, never the less we develop our own unique reply to it. He says=

"Interestingly enough, the musical term taxim [taqasim= Arabic; taksimi= Greek], in common usage amongst the same peoples who speak of Kismet, is also derived from this exact same root. Taxim refers to a musical improvisation in a given melodic mode [maqam], and the implication seems to be that, through the medium of.. improvisation and melodic development, the mode is 'divided, distributed, assigned and therefore ordained'."

G. Marcel [1933] puts the same point in existential terms= our concrete life is "in every way 'involved', and therefore [finds] itself at grips with a fate which it must not only undergo, but must also make its own.. from within."

Thus it becomes vital to distinguish 'fate' from 'destiny.'

If we succumb to fate, then we lose our destiny. Yet only by accepting fate can we 'carve' out our destiny. It was Christ's fate to carry the tragedy in the human condition, to bear the unbearable nadir of humanity, but it was his destiny to overcome the worst case scenario from within its abysmal ruination, and secure the best case scenario only from that reversal.

This is a paradox. This paradox marks the true passion from the bogus.

[1] Kismet is not fatalism= passivity. You just lay back, 'out for the count', and say you can do nothing. People can enjoy this suffering if they think it absolves them from responsibility and effort. Such is 'fatalism.' It invites the romanticising, and glorifying, of victimhood.

[2] Kismet is not the Western notion of activeness, of 'pushing ahead regardless', which makes the ego – not the heart – the hero. Christ, at the point of being crucified, declares that had he wanted simply to 'crush the opposition', he could have done so= he had the power to call upon a host of spirits who would have terrified the Roman Centurions and sent them into headlong retreat.. He also declared that no one was taking his life from him, because he was choosing to accept that the Cross must happen to him as the will of Yahweh his Father, and thus what he was doing was giving his life as a sacrifice. The Cross therefore rules out the central tenet of the heroic ego= the insistence on achieving 'power over fate', with its endless litany of conquest, success, winning.

[3] The true way is a third way, neither of these opposites of passivity or willfulness. A Jew once hinted at this when he spoke of not getting free of our troubles but growing with them= in reality, not growing but *radically changing* in our profoundest foundation, through these very torments. We shed both the passive fatalism of no passion, and the false activeness of the 'forever undestroyed' passion that believes it can 'force' its way ahead= but sooner or later reality pronounces that it cannot.

Moshi ['The Ronin', William Jennings, 1968, p 2]=

"When heaven is about to confer great office on a man,

Heaven first exercises his mind with suffering,
and his sinews and bones with toil;
Heaven exposes him to poverty
and confounds all his undertakings.
Then it is seen if he is ready.”

The heart is not to be identified with feelings or emotions= your heart is your truth.

Without the truth of the human condition, and the truth of what alone redeems it -- or harms it further, by betraying it for selfish advantage -- there is no heart.

Viktor Frankl had found a means of escape from the concentration camp in which he was imprisoned. He had been careful not to tell anyone. On the evening he was to get free, something stopped him. He suddenly was disturbed, torn, conflicted. Then it hit him that the people imprisoned with him were his brothers and sisters, and he could not abandon them. He chose not to go. Rather, he chose to stay, so that he could continue to help his fellow sufferers stand up to the assault of evil everyone faced. Once this decision was made, his heart became clear, composed, at rest.

7,

In the Far East, ‘karma’ is interpreted in such a way as to eliminate any awareness of Kismet. In the West, ‘free will’ -- or simply the belief that each of us is ‘master of their fate’ [captain of their ship vis a vis even the roughest seas] – is interpreted in such a way as to prevent any awareness of Kismet.

Kismet means that there is a presence powerfully intervening in the vicissitudes of existence, impacting what happens and influencing how things turn out. But it is in its workings obscure, not mechanistic; subtle, not gross. Kismet is nothing like a divine plan imposed on the run of events, to shape them according to a unilateral divine will. God’s workings are always theandric, and hence God improvises in response to our response. Kismet never over-rules human freedom, but confronts freedom with a choice over its very nature= the freedom to love, or the freedom not to love. ‘I set before you this day two paths..’

Kismet is very close to, if not identical with, providence.

There is no awareness of ‘the providence at work in things’ in the Orient or in the Occident.

In Greek, the term ‘pro-noia’ means that the universe is ‘positively disposed toward the mind of humanity.’ Both joy and pain, both marvellous fulfillment and pulverizing abandonment, are for our final good, though we may resent Eros for its ebb and flow, and in the grip of the Daemonic we may tend to judge ourselves basically worthless or want ‘to curse God and die.’

Nevertheless, the pro-noia of providence means that Fated Joy and Fated Suffering are both 'for us', not 'against us.' The sense that the universe is 'against the mind of humanity', not well disposed toward us, but indifferent or ill-intentioned, is in Greek 'para-noia.'

The extreme of this state is evident in paranoid schizophrenia, where the warm welcome to the baby provided by the mother is replaced by hostility, coldness, threat. In para-noia, we flee existence as such, standing back, fearful to dive in and get involved. In pro-noia, we allow existence to get through our defenses, to really get into us, to rouse and penetrate our hidden heart, for better and for worse.

8,

For any person, or any culture, that recognises Kismet and the Daemonic at work in the world, a certain way of discerning 'the things that happen' becomes necessary. It is vitally important to discern the Daemonic will of God in events, in order to avoid both passivity -- doing nothing -- and false activeness -- doing the wrong thing in the wrong manner.

It is not surprising that gradually 'Daemonic' became 'demonic' among Greek speakers, and others in the West who inherited the same misunderstanding. We must discern different 'wills' at work in the world. There is a divine will in events. But there is also a purely evil will seeking to direct the way things are going, the way things will finally turn out. The line between the one and the other can be, at times, ambiguous.

God is not only tough love. God allows evil to operate, at certain times, just as God helps us draw a line in the sand to stop evil at other times. God will even send evil to certain people in certain circumstances. The Daemonic God is 'tricky.' Evil, however plausible, however tempting, is always ceaselessly contemptuous of humanity, willing our complete destruction. Wisdom is needed in regard to such differentiating of the different kinds of spiritual intentionality impinging upon human existence.

"Discern spirits."

St Anthony of Egypt [251-356 AD] taught his students that this discerning is the prime necessity. Many of them had indignantly protested to Anthony that love is primary, but he dismissed that as misleading, because without spiritual discerning we are deceived about what is and what is not love.

[1] The human passion, and its willing, can be moved by the divine will, and then its passage through ambiguity, ambivalence, contradiction, is qualitatively different. 'All things work together for good to those who love God' [Paul, Romans, 8, 28]. Hence, 'thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

[2] Yet the human passion can also be snared by the purely evil will, and then corruption, distortion, twistedness, takes over, slowly but surely. Martin Buber

therefore distinguishes human 'sin' from demonically driven 'wickedness.' Hitler, and the entire Nazi Movement, were not simply sinful; by refusing to recognise sin for what it is, real evil of a spiritual nature gets in, and dominates. Wickedness signifies being possessed and 'inspired' by the Evil One whose Lie insinuates itself more and more into every aspect of the victim's existence. It destroys them, and they pass on this destructiveness to the world.

[3] Freud said 'character is fate.' If we are touched neither by the divine will, nor the evil will, at work in the existential cauldron of this world, then we are condemned to remain forever stuck in childhood neurosis, endlessly repeating the infantile themes of early development; we act out these themes without any self-awareness of *both* the damage to our childlikeness *and* the childish compensations, and consolations, we put in place to try to pretend the damage did not affect us as it did. Such childlike injury, protected by a childish inversion of it, is re-enacted in adult life; this dual pattern is what Alfred Adler calls the person's 'Life Error.'

[4] 'No man is an island, entire of itself' [John Donne]. Our own will never acts in a vacuum, but is confronted by other human wills. Sometimes God inspires us to act in concert with other wills. Sometimes God inspires us to stand against other wills. Either way, this serves the will of God at different times in different places. The evil will, in contrast, invariably promotes an evil outcome from either the collective or the individual. Moreover, not only circumstances, contingencies, conditions, exactions, accidents, but also the sum of past human actions, impact upon our own will, meaning that it is subject to an immense push and pull of many forces, like a man trying to stand in turbulent water where many currents crisscross. Consequently, in understanding someone, all that they were up against, all they had to contend with, must be taken into account. Some people have more strength to withstand. However, it is not true that even these 'tough guys' are unaffected by what affects everyone. We all bleed.

The challenge to each person, and to a whole culture, tested by the Daemonic, is not to lapse into 'God is punishing me', but to understand 'God is forging me like metal in fire.' What is the dross in our nature to be shed? A lot of that.

Yet more centrally, what are the extreme changes in heart that are required? These do not come voluntarily.. They come through brokenness of heart, and the humbleness this brings.

True passion is humbleness--active.

9,

Many peoples and many cultures, even if 'officially' given over to Eros, have had intimations, experiences, sudden collapses of all ground beneath their feet, in the grip of the Daemonic. Some of the persons given a blast of the dragon's breath are allowed to go back to the old dispensation. Others are

more singed, and do not easily revert to what previously sustained them. Like the Jews, they confront an agonisingly protracted time in a 'spiritually charged' desert, an electric place that can destroy them utterly -- or remake them for a very different calling.

In Orient and Occident, the dragon's roar and the dragon's fire haunt the periphery. In the mid-point from the Balkans to Persia, the dragon is more central. This is why the devilish opposition to the Daemonic is so fierce in this region of the world.

The hardest to bear, and endure, in the unending 'night without stars', in the endless wasteland of the desert, is that hell is plumbed, and the final heartbreak of humanity is uncovered. We are abandoned by God, even as we have abandoned God. In the absence of God, the devil comes and 'sifts' us, just as he was granted permission by God to do to Job.

St Anthony underwent terrible assaults by demonic forces alone in the wilderness. After a very long time of this, Christ appeared to him. Anthony reproached his Redeemer= 'Where were you when I needed you?' Christ replied= 'I was right here, admiring your valour.'

In the moment of trial, we are bereft of all help. God is gone and the devil plays upon every point where our existential faith is vulnerable. The ordeal is terrible. The ordeal is real.

Never on the path of Eros is God really absent. The illusions of Eros have to be removed, but the progression towards ever more unity is never itself lost. It is evident in Rumi's poetry that he has not tasted God's desertion of the human heart= "Welcome difficulty as a familiar comrade. Joke with torment brought by the Friend" [p 77]. In the abysses of hell, the absent God ceases to be any kind of friend, any kind of lover, and this is why we rage against him, and despair of him, all hope extinguished.

10,

QSM contains the hidden secret of the Daemonic.

Fate divides before it can unite. This 'divides then unites' meaning of Fate is only understood in the Middle East; it is understood neither in the Occident [duality/willfulness] nor in the Orient [oneness/passivity]. The Jews were fated to have to come to terms with this paradox. For the most part, the Christians funk it.. They fear to grapple with God, honestly oppose God, and this produces cramped, insincere, hyper piety.. God invites us into war with his way before we can accept it; but when we do come to the divine heart out of opposing its way in our heart, we are reconciled to that way as never before.. Fate means a process which divides, then unites only after the dividing is worked through. People do poorly with the Daemonic because they are afraid of that 'working through.' The truth of Jacob= only honest contention brings about final binding.

This is the distinctive, and peculiar, Jewish Koan. It is absent from, and indeed inexplicable to, every form of Eros, whether in Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Greek Hellenism, or Shamanism. The sense of separateness in the Relative toward the Absolute is the error to be overcome on any mystical path. In the Daemonic, God's otherness makes possible humanity's personalness, and places upon the heart the burden and respect of responsibility for the deed of personhood. If the heart could not question, and reject, God, then it would never be free. In the existential radicalness of freedom, the heart goes against God, and is sundered from God. Yet God does not leave it at that. We oppose God, and God locks horns with our opposition, and through this two-sided contending, the divine heart is revealed to the human heart, and finally, the human heart is won over. It cannot be compelled, intimidated, seduced, flattered, to give its true assent.

The mystical illumination that 'God is nowhere, God is everywhere', is not denied by Hasidism. However, Hasidism refers to this approach as 'rational', because the mystical path always makes sense. But, there is a different way God relates to the world which Hasidism calls 'the divine madness'= through personalness, through the heart, through the freedom that risks the personal heart. This is a real gamble.

QSM is the 'wild card' by which God seeks to win the gamble with the devil who has bet God that the human heart is 'not up to' what God proposes to do with it. God's honouring of the human heart is, from the devil's perspective, madness indeed.

The mind can be described, with the right philosophy. The soul can be described, with the right poetry. The heart cannot be described. The heart is, like God, hidden and inaccessible. It must be searched for, and searched out, fathoming the fathomless. The heart is not the centre of a sacred geometry. It is 'central' more dynamically in being the prime mover of the rest of the body, the rest of the composite humanity, and thus the heart is the agent of action. 'Men of courage'= 'men of heart.' The heart's thoughts are its actions= there is no distinction. The heart makes decisions, makes commitments, vows itself to the world through its deeds. The heart also devises wicked schemes [Proverbs, 6, 18]. The obscure 'counsels' in every heart will, at the end of time, be exposed. The heart affects the rest of the person, and its stricken condition can 'crush the spirit and dry the bones' [Proverbs, 17, 22]. To lose heart, or take heart, is key to what we make of existence, what we do in existence= what we give to or withhold from existence. We are powerfully affectable, as well as powerfully affecting, because we have a heart. We are not 'invulnerable', complete, a whole, in and of itself. Without loving God unreservedly, we will never love the world unreservedly. But we must look for God with all our heart [Deuteronomy, 4, 28-29], and only then will we find 'the unknown God.' Human beings judge by externals of appearance and behaviour, but God searches far into the heart. The heart 'ponders', the heart is meant to 'understand', and 'wisdom will enter your heart' [Proverbs, 2, 10], or in another translation, 'wisdom will enter and extend your understanding.' David to Yahweh= 'in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom' [Psalm 51, 6]. The kingly heart is unsearchable to humankind [Proverbs, 25,

3] because it is most akin to God. Peter was 'cut to the heart' when he betrayed Christ three times. This is more than conscience= our heart is cut when we remember our calling, having thrown it away, or uncover it in the midst of troubling times. The heart also leaps in our chest, almost breaking the ribcage that contains it. Those not cut to the heart are not moved in heart= their heart becomes 'hardened', callous, obstinate, insensitive, invulnerable; such a heart cannot be moved in a new direction.

Yet, the strangest mystery of the heart is that it must initially say No to God's heart before it can ultimately say Yes.

Through this, the devil's inducements 'not to have a heart' are taken seriously, and are 'gone into.' The triangular contest between God, humanity, and the devil, reveals to the human heart the basis on which it can freely repudiate the unworthiness of the evil way and confirm the worthiness of the divine way acting in and through, with the co-operation of, the human will.

If we are not fully human, we will never be divine-human.

Hence the Messianic Spirit is given 'in the heart' [Paul, 2 Corinthians, 1, 22; and Paul, Ephesians, 3, 17-20]. For the Jews, as a commentator puts it, 'soul' in Hebrew – nephesh – cannot be translated as 'heart', nor can 'heart' in Hebrew – lev [lebh] -- be considered as a synonym for 'soul.' This is even more so for the distinction between mind and heart. The mind has to be 'taken down into the heart', or it loses its link to what is human, and becomes enticed up into the sterile air of Abstractionism; the 'pure mind' wants to be an angel, a disincarnate spirit, and looks with disdain upon the body, soul, and heart.

On the Daemonic road, the heart has prominence, for at stake is not simply its renewal [the old possibility] but its reversal and divinisation [the new promise], which carries out the will of God.

We have a heart. God wants to give us a new heart, after terrible travail.

1 Samuel, 2, 6; 2, 8=

"Yahweh kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and brings up..
Yahweh raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the
dung hill,
to set them above princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.
[These are] the pillars of the earth which are Yahweh's,
and he has set the world upon them.
..for by strength shall no man prevail."

THEODICY?

1,

I kept coming across this word 'theodicy', which was unfamiliar to me.. I had to look it up.

I discovered that the term is fairly recent, having been invented by the philosopher Leibniz; it refers to the attempt to understand how God can be a being of Love whilst at the same time the world God has made is full to the brim with forceful spiritual evil, and is also overflowing with terrible human suffering— including the innocent suffering of the guiltless and the vulnerable. The holocaust makes the traditional rhetoric about God – that divinity is all loving, all powerful, all knowing – seem like pap designed for the naïve, the credulous, those not really awake in the here and now. As a Jewish rabbi said to me about the catastrophe that befell the Jews, 'we knew we were bad, but not that bad.' The abuse of defenceless children, in all the many ways they are harmed from their entry into this world, is another example, and arguably, even worse.

Why does God, if loving, allow evil, and suffering, in the world?

A theodicy supposedly answers this question..

Augustine [of North Africa] provides the paradigm for Western [Roman Catholic and Protestant] Christian theodicy. Irenaeus [of Celtic Gaul] provides the paradigm for Eastern Orthodox Christian theodicy. If I must choose, I reject Augustine and go with Irenaeus.

However, it cannot be as straightforward as that..

Ivan -- in Dostoyevsky's last and best novel, 'The Brothers Karamazov' -- puts the case against God, an anti-theodicy, with far more power than any theodicy has ever roused. There is a profound, and valid, reason for that. If we could accept there was no God, or that God was not a being of Love, then trying to 'reconcile' in the same world divine love with spiritual evil and human suffering would not be so difficult. This problem of love, evil, suffering, all co-existing hurts the human heart. The rational arguments for or against any theodicy, whether supporting the Satanic Augustine or the more illumined Irenaeus, do not stand up against that pain. They come over as rationalisations, as justifications, for the inexplicable and the inexcusable.

Dostoyevsky's novel seeks to answer Ivan's case -- so real and true to the deep pain in the human heart in regard to God -- not by rational counter arguments, but in the pathos of living and in the mystery of heart action. The answer is in the story, when you really live, and when you really act.. The case against God, the anti-theodicy, cannot be answered rationally. Only in life, only in action, does the hurt heart receive any answer.

The young brother of Ivan, Alyosha, who is an untried Christian, listens attentively to Ivan's anti-theodicy, and agrees with it! Only in life, only in action, only in the terror and beauty, the grief and glory, of passion as lived to the end, as acted to the maximum, will any 'reply' by God to the human heart ever be given..

2,

But this was like a shattering lightning flash. Suddenly I realised something essential, basic, to all the passion writings.

Their account of what passion really is, and what passion really is doing, does not start with innocent, childlike, youthful passion. It acknowledges that origin, but only hots up round the more adult passion that is wounded, and by being made to suffer, is deepened. Similarly, the other hotting up is the passion that is thrown into the battle between love and evil for the world.

Suddenly, it hit me hard why this emphasis arose..

The passion writings are not building a new theodicy. Obviously they are closer to Irenaeus than to Augustine, but that is not the point.

The passion writings start with Ivan's case against God, they begin in Ivan's anti-theodicy.

They begin, in short, in the pain in the human heart in regard to God. This is the deep pain, the really deep pain, in the human heart.

This is the pain which the passion writings, all of them, take as the valid point of departure.

This is not about, is there a God? The human heart would not be hurt as it is, the human heart would not be broken as it is, if there were no God.

The numinous pain at the root of human existence would evaporate if it could be persuaded, quite simply, there is no God.

The pain deep in the human heart knows something worse than that.

This is about, what kind of God is there, who would allow what is allowed? What kind of God is there, who would allow what befalls us? What is this God doing with us? What is this God doing with the world?

It is not a matter of faith, or not faith. It is a matter of what kind of faith. How can I risk and venture, commit and give, my heart to this God who makes it hurt so much?

Can I trust this God?

Can I entrust my life, the life of all those I love, and the life of all the world, to such a God?

This God, the real God, the God of the deep pain and the God of the heartbreak, is not who or what conventional piety, or theological apology, says God is.

In the heart, we all know that.

The 'usual' God we are sold is false.

God is stranger, darker, deeper, more relentless, than anything we would choose, or are prepared for.

We know God's love, spiritual evil, human suffering, are bound together, and so there is no way to escape the offence, the tears, of the heart.

We do not need any rational answer that could be put into words.

What we need is a different 'ground', despite its existential groundlessness, for our leap into the unknown when, against all the evidence, and against all the odds, we put our faith in this God in whom love, evil, suffering, are bound together as a mystery of the heart, divine and human.

We need a different way of coming to terms with the God whom we have to trust, by how we live and act from the heart.

3,

Thus it hit me hard, the passion writings are not any sort of theodicy. They take Ivan's anti-theodicy as their point of departure.

The heart hurts, profoundly, and gravely.

The hurt in regard to God is valid. Here, and only here, can we begin.

It is fashionable for modern people to stop at this point. Given Ivan's anti-theodicy -- or any host of other similar versions of anti-theodicy expressed post holocaust or post the abuse of children -- we might stop, give up and give in, in regard to the heart's mysterious pain toward God.

The passion writings do the converse.

They begin with this numinous heart pain towards God.

Passion begins where all else ends.

Passion begins with the heart pain about God, and refuses to let that be the end. It goes farther, on and on, to the real end.

Passion says to the broken, those who are finished with the heart, and those who think they have 'good reason' to stop with the heart, risking it no more= you are not at the end. You have hesitated, you have stalled, half way. It is from this point onwards it gets interesting for the heart.

In the midst of the heartbreak about God that finishes everyone and everything, passion stirs.

It is irrational, and it is spirited. Passion gets up off the floor, and sees it through to the real end, beyond human heartbreak.

Passion begins where all the rest ends.

We do not want a better theodicy.

We want the living road, the road of action, that starts in anti-theodicy, and finds the abysmal ground of all the terror and beauty, the grief and glory, that our heart is subject to in this world.

The fate that ends it all for so many is where passion really begins.

ORTHO-DOXIA= Its 'Rightness', Its Temptation, Its Heresy, Its Limitation

PRELUDE

Certain streams of Judaism and of Christianity call themselves 'Orthodox.' In using this term, they explicitly reject 'liberal' and 'conservative' as descriptions. Other Jewish and Christian streams do call themselves liberal, or conservative. What is the difference? In Judaism, it seems mainly though not exclusively the Hasidic Movement which is Orthodox. In Christianity, it is mainly the Eastern Tradition which is Orthodox= Greeks; Russians; Romanians; Bulgarians; Serbians; Slovaks; Eastern Ukrainians; Finns; Lebanese; Syrians; Palestinians; Egyptians; Persians; Ethiopians; Indians of Kerala; Japanese; Koreans; Africans, Alaskan Native Tribes. The Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Celtic Christians of the British Isles and Gaul, eliminated by the later coming Roman Catholics, had explicit links to the Orthodox Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean.

What does this term mean? Why was it chosen? Why were both 'liberal' and 'conservative' repudiated?

The term is more Eastern than Western, and has a distinct link to RTa in Hinduism and Dharma in Buddhism.

PART ONE= RIGHTNESS

1,

How do you give shape to the Shapeless, the Formless, that which is Void?
How do you give voice to the Voiceless, the Soundless, that which is Silence?

In its Greek meaning, Ortho-Doxia refers to right way, right worship, right teaching, right glorifying, but 'right' in this context is subtle, more akin to being in tune in music, or staying in rhythm whilst dancing. You walk a narrow ridge with chasms of error on either side. Thus there are always going to be two false paths in every human situation; the Third Way, which is truer, is harder to find. Thus Ortho-Doxia means-- to be in the 'right place' vis a vis the divine mystery.

Ortho-Doxia refers to getting 'on target' from the very start, at inception, initially. You take up a way of standing on the narrow ridge that puts you in direct relationship with the illuminating presence of God, so that you can bathe in it, let it wash through you, and 'taste that it is good' by experiencing it for yourself.

The place of Ortho-Doxia is itself mysteriously 'near' to, open to, virtually wired into, the Source of All.

This is a mystery you do not know until you have lived it.

Many ancient peoples discovered this strange, and powerful, 'locale', and named it differently, but crucially, they knew when they were 'in' it, getting things from the Source directly, not by indirect means [thoughts, words, images, authorities, structures], and when they had fallen 'out' of it. In it= Paradisiacal; out of it= the Fall into Sin [West], the Fall into Ignorance [East], the Fall out of the Sacred Circle of kinship among all things [Shamanism].

The narrow ridge of the Third Way allows you to be in the moment, not fixed in a groove, not sheltered in any 'ism.'

To remain in the moment requires spiritual wakefulness, watchfulness, mindfulness. The lamp needs oil to remain lit all through the night, lest the Bridegroom come at any unexpected moment..

2,

Ortho-Doxia means to stand in a certain Way towards the Light.

The Light 'brings to light' everything it illumines, and thus it beautifies and fructifies all it falls on. In standing toward the Light in a certain Way we equally at the same time stand toward Life in that Way. The Light comes from the divinity 'in itself' of which we can say nothing; but the Light reaches down to us, to raise us up, into a relationship of love, a certain parity, face to face.

This Way has something special about it= illumined by the Light, immediately, without mediation. In other stances, like the liberal-maternal and the conservative-paternal, we can only talk 'about' the Light, at a distance; however well intentioned, these other stances are indirect and mediated. They are not standing in the Light. Thus they do not produce the figure of the Light-Bringer, or Light-Bestower [elder, guru, staretz, zaddik], the person who, though not the Light, nevertheless is a human conductor of the Light. This figure exemplifies what everyone can be= immersed in the Light, alive by the Light.

Ortho-Doxia respects roots, foundations, the 'ancient springs.' It is focused on Tradition as the over-arching reality holding together religious things= Bible, Ceremonies, Ethics, Teaching..

Ortho-Doxia is communal, not merely individual. The Light, by its nature, 'shares' divinity among the people. It invites them all, and it passes between them and dwells among them. It is held in common by all.

The Temple is where the Light becomes the common inheritance of all, not the exclusive preserve of a few advanced people.

The Light will lead us to the Fire. If the Light is God's face, then the Fire is God's heart. This is where we are going. From face to face to heart to heart.

3,

Ortho-Doxia is a paradoxical place which combines opposites without becoming polarized between them.

A Hasid= “Jewish Orthodoxy is about knowing when, how, and to what extent, to give and to withhold, to allow and to restrict, to breathe out and to breathe in, to praise and to criticize, to shine and to rain..”

The narrow ridge is a Third Way beyond two false opposites, yet it combines these ‘necessary contraries’ dynamically, not synthesizing them so that each loses its distinctive contribution, but in a higher integration it balances them, bringing them together in such a way that both are fuller and truer than they would be if they were allowed to split apart. Routinely in human psychology, these opposites do split apart, polarize, and oppose each other as eternal antagonists.

One example where the narrow ridge is lost in human life is ‘the sex war’= masculine and feminine at odds, tearing each other to shreds, each promoting itself at the expense of the other; or masculine and feminine in dynamic combination where the real masculine emerges and the real feminine emerges, and neither blots out the other, nor do they simply meld into each other creating a mush. Both the masculine and feminine, in marriage, are needed to Express the Inexpressibility of God. That is Ortho-Doxia.

A more obvious example of the lost narrow ridge in politics is ‘the culture war’ of Liberal versus Conservative= ‘Allowing’ as ‘ism’ versus ‘Restricting’ as ‘ism’, each insisting on its own bias across the board, in every situation. Liberal is maternal, and easily becomes matriarchy which is matriarchal-idolatry. Conservative is paternal, and easily becomes patriarchy which is patriarchal-idolatry. If you are matriarchal, you put an idol between yourself and God; if you are patriarchal, you put an idol between yourself and God. The culture wars wherein Liberal/matriarchal battles Conservative/patriarchal go on and on, seemingly forever; yet neither opposite has anything to do with God, when divided from each other as an ideology on its own.

Another example= in Orthodox worship there is the paradoxical combination of closeness with God, friendliness, personalness, trust like a child with a loved parent, and respect for the otherness of God, awe towards the mystery of God, ‘humility in walking with God.’ The latter means we never get over familiar with God, we never presume on God, but the former means we never treat God as foreign, remote, alien, and flee from God. The Sacred Space of the Temple -- set aside for the presence of God to ‘fill’ it – should never resemble a monarch’s court, a judge’s court-room, a lecturer’s lecture-hall. In all these cases, the pulpit replaces the altar, and thus the human presence behind the pulpit replaces the presence of God at the altar. Nor should the ethos of the space where God dwells be cold, official, proper, respectable. None of these stances are in any proximity to God. Such a space cannot be either inhibited or casual. It is, if in the presence of God, dignified yet not

puffed up. In God's presence you stand, because you are 'not created for destruction.' Yet sometimes you prostrate yourself on the ground in repenting. When the priest censures every person, this acknowledges they are the Image of God and have God in them.

Ortho-Doxia is a mysterious reality, and is not simply of human construction= it arises 'between' God and humanity, at God's instigation, yet needing human cooperation.

PART TWO= TEMPTATION

1,

But, the very 'rightness' of Orthodoxy is its demonic temptation, its weakness, its sin, its fall.. Such Rightness is very dangerous to those who espouse it. There are right ways and very wrong ways of walking in this Rightness.

The Rightness encourages a false sense of superiority, or just 'all is well' in our household, so that no self-critical -- self-correcting -- voice ever arises. No prophets to attack the priests, ministers, bishops, popes, patriarchs, and hosts of other 'religious things', is ever allowed.. Everyone is comfortable, too comfortable, that they are 'right.' This is a subtle yet necessary distinction= no one is Right. We are all having to shed our skins, in order to draw nearer to this Rightness, to get 'right on' the Rightness. We cannot presume on our being right on the Rightness. A lot of re-tuning is constantly needed.. To be self-congratulatory is self-delusion.

As soon as you congratulate yourself for walking the narrow ridge, and start looking down on other people not able to walk it, your footing is gone and you are already falling.

2,

The wrong self-congratulation for being 'right on the target' leads to endless comparison of Jack and Jim-- who is in, who is out; who is kosher, who is non-kosher; who is really Orthodox, who is really not Orthodox. There is a 'right' joy people take in being Orthodox. This is the inescapable sense of well-being that people tasting the Garden of Paradise will experience. It is good, and the goodness is not moral only, it is ontological, you can taste it with your whole being. But beware= it is in the very midst of our happiness at being wired to the Source that a subtle whisper tempts us to falsify it. The happiness is not for me; it is for me to pass to you. If I get too wrapped up in the happiness for me, I crow at you like a superior to an inferior, and then you want nothing of what has touched me. You do not see the goodness that was alive in me; all you see is the Lucifer arrogance of someone non-realistic to life's difficulties, like someone high on a drug. The very religious skepticism of other people, faced with our Luciferian arrogance, 'rightly' dismisses us as false fountains of poison that we insist is nectar. No wonder we lose this world.. No one in their 'right' mind wants the high state in which we are trapped -- without even knowing that is so.. They want nothing from us-- and

they are 'right' in turning away from us. We are 'wrong' in thinking the narcissism we peddle is 'right.'

How to remain in the Right without making it 'right', and particularly, without making it 'my' right against 'your' wrong, is a hard yoke of discipline. It needs constant repenting to get rewired, as soon as you know from your inner being you are unplugged. In every second, there is the possibility on the narrow ridge of losing your balance and starting to fall, and regaining your balance even as you start to fall. Those more stable in this walking on the edge can help those less so. This is the role of the spiritual elder.

3,

If the spiritual temptation of the West is the Satanic – Satan the pitiless Accuser – then the spiritual temptation of the East, Jewish and Christian the same as Hindu and Buddhist, is the Luciferian – Lucifer the deceiving Flatterer.

It is thus in the grip of Lucifer that the Eastern Orthodox Christians not only think their Way superior to what they regard as 'heterodox' and 'heretical' in other religious paths, but also recoil from any suggestion their Way is not perfect= it is unthinkable that Eastern Orthodox Christianity has design faults, or design limitations. The rest of Christianity is inherently flawed. Eastern Orthodoxy has no inherent flaws..

This is just the first of many fictions the Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition generates in refusing to look at itself honestly.

PART THREE= HERESY

1,

There were several respects in which the Greek Christians made their cultural Hellenism 'more Jewish' when they, as an entire people, accepted Christianity. Many modern Greek Orthodox Christian writers have explored and unpacked the conversion of Greek into Jew in this process of becoming Christian [John Zizoulas; Christos Yannaris; Costa Carras; James Bernstein]. This is undeniable. Attempts by Western commentators to suggest that Greek Christianity is simply Greek Hellenism in disguise are both ignorant and unfair. Western Christians 'have previous form' in regard to disrespecting the elder brother of the East. The Christian West has tended either to pretend Eastern Christianity does not exist, refusing to acknowledge its primacy; or, Western Christianity has sought through political machinations to attack and destroy the cultures and peoples honouring and maintaining the ancestral root of the earliest Christianity.

Any informed and just assessment of Eastern Christianity has to do with assessing both the need for, and dangers of, the roots digging down far into the earth and reaching back far into time which no vibrant religion can do without.

You can build on roots, and revise much as you go on [keeping the serviceable and letting quietly drop all the accumulated rubbish], discovering along the way further things that recast the roots, and even unexpectedly coming upon radically new things not revealed from the start.. This is the real Ortho-Doxia, and Costa Carras is right to call it 'Radical Traditionalism.' It is firm about foundations, yet at the very same time and only because of that, very open and very flexible about what is built on top of that floor.

But just throwing away roots, pretending you do not need them and can always 'start again from year zero' at any arbitrary moment, is disastrous. It undermines religion, culture, solidarity among peoples.

Duane Martin, chief of the Cante Tenze Warrior Society, once told me that the modern way of singing ancient Lakota songs takes a short cut, and lacks the power of the 'right way' of singing practiced in 'olden times.' He sang only a snatch of the same song in both ways, ancient and modern, and I could really hear the difference! It was subtle. It wasn't that the modern way was bad, but the old way had an eerie strangeness and mysteriousness lacking in the modern version. The modern version was perfectly nice, and even might be described as more creative, adding some twiddle and twaddle, yet it just lacked gravitas, and what it lacked was vital to making the song live, zing, tremble, before the presence of God. Listening to the old song was a riveting and transforming experience; listening to the new song was pleasant, even edifying, but take it or leave it..

Ancient peoples will not just throw away venerable sacramental vessels full of living water in order to be 'liberated' in the modern manner. Liberated for what? Liberated to diminish the First Meaning, until all meaning is gone..

The true foundations of Christianity were laid down in the Christian East, and are parallel to Hasidic Judaism in being 'Ortho-Dox' in character, rather than conservative or liberal. There are two converse wrongs that betray the rooting which is Ortho-Dox.

[1] The anti-traditionalism of the West is wrong. The belief that the old ways are always narrow and stupid, and only the newest ways are broad and intelligent, is itself narrow and stupid= simply demonstrably ludicrous. As the song says, time has a way of demonstrating that 'the fundamental things apply.'

[2] Yet equally wrong is the tendency in the East to pretend everything significant was resolved at the very start of the tradition, and this corpus was then quite quickly agreed to by everyone and everywhere. This means that the future cannot bring anything surprising, or revolutionary, necessary to unexpected reversals, giant strides, leaps into the dark, going forward; 'what matters' is held captive to the past, and this also means that the prophets of the future are ruled out in advance due to deference to the revered luminaries of the earlier era. This becomes a Christian version of ancestor worship, and for the Jews, it is ancestor idolatry.

Thus, the modernism which jettisons ancient springs, and the conservative traditionalism that aggressively and fearfully guards ancient springs, are both in 'fundamental' error= error about fundamentals.

Christ has clearly stated both that the roots are not to be lightly dismissed, and that it will be the Spirit who moves the caravan of humanity into the future, and only in the future will 'all truth' be revealed.

'God saves the best for last.'

'There is more to come.'

The past, early days= get into 'right relation' with the Light. Turn toward the Light, Face toward the Light, initially.

This is what the Christian East accomplished.

The future, ongoing days= take the risk necessary to be ignited by 'the Fire that is coming.'

The Light is necessary, but the Light is not sufficient.

No Christianity, East or West, has been sparked into flame by following the Fire.

A halting following, a crippled following, a confused and half-hearted following..

A hesitant venturing has been made in this Fire-Bearing, but the 'revered ancestors' who were the early Light-Bringers cannot help beyond a certain point, nor can they guide step by step the fearful and wonderful 'journey and battle' which 'leans forward into time.' Christ had to depart, according to his own testimony, for the Spirit to come, the new Messianic Spirit, the Spirit of the New Age of Fire.

Thus, however beautiful and healing our initial orienting toward the Light of the Logos, 'as time goes by' a shift is demanded in stance, as we struggle to let the human heart be buffeted by 'the Wind of change' and scorched by 'the Fire next time.'

The Spirit blows where he wills, and burns as he wills. There is nothing in any tradition, anywhere among anyone, that owns the Spirit, predicts the Spirit, over rules the Spirit, confines the Spirit, defines or otherwise pins down the Spirit. The whole of tradition, if it proves fruitless like the fig tree Christ cursed, could be blown away or burned to ashes by the Spirit at any instant of his choosing.

It is the Fire-Bearers who bring the future to bear upon the present, and even if they respect the Light-Bringers of the past, their faith is in 'where it is all

going', and thus, their faith is in the going itself, because its motion, its spark, is 'in the hands' of the Spirit.

It is no longer in the hands of the Logos= it is since the Messiah departed in the hands of the Spirit.

Christians East and West have yet to grasp how radical, and radicalising, that new state of affairs really is.

The East= Logos in fullness, the Light shining without refraction and therefore near to humanity.

The West= Logos reduced to logic, the Light reflected and therefore at a distance from humanity.

Neither is the Messianic Spirit who takes over 'the running of it all' after Christ leaves the world.

The Spirit, operative in the beginning time for the sake of what will only come to pass in the future time, is God's Passion, and he takes in his hands the human passion, to overturn and remake it, so as to cast it into the world as the dynamic factor, the wild card, overturning and remaking the world.

This starts off small, it is hidden, but like an underground stream, it will at a certain moment burst out like a raging river.

2,

The 'Greek Heresy' of the Greek Christians rests in their over stressing the Light, and under stressing the Fire.

This also means over stressing the innocent Beginning, and under stressing the existential Middle and apocalyptic End of time in its relentless march toward redemption or hell for the world process.

There is something special, something uniquely blessed, about the Sacred Origin. This creates a terrible irony. The very beauty and luminosity of the Light in which we are immersed in the Beginning becomes what stops us from going forward with the Fire toward the new land of heart which must existentially risk catastrophic failure as much as unbelievable victory to persevere to the End.

The error of wanting to stay in the Light, and thus refusing the task of being sparked into flame by the Holy Fire, generates the Greek Heresy which wrongly insists upon a very anti-Jewish 'impassibility' in God and 'dispassion' in humanity. Only human passion, afflicted, forged, reversed, by the Holy Passion that implants Christ in us, can do the job for which it is called by the Messianic Mystery. Our task, in time, and in this world, is to carry on Christ's redeeming work.

The unchallenged presupposition that any human being who desires to be 'enlightened, sanctified, healed in soul and body' by God must overcome all, and any, passion, only makes sense if we are to remain in the Sacred Beginning and not take the gamble of travelling and fighting toward the Holy End.

The Greek Heresy is not only calling us 'upward' to heaven, not 'outward' into the world; but it is also keeping us 'nailed to the spot' at the start of time= it remains rooted in the Paradisiacal Beginning when heaven has a symbolic and sacramental reflection on earth= though Paradise is lost, the Temple becomes the memory of Paradise.

This is Right-- yet its very rightness is what is so potentially wrong. It is Good-- yet its very goodness is what is so potentially a dereliction of duty.

The Beginning must be remembered, but not clung to as avoidance of the Middle and the End.

The Light must be anchored in, but its static virtues must not block going with the Fire whose dynamic exultations and agonies are wholly different.

The Jewish Way both goes 'out' into the world, not straight up to heaven, and it goes 'forward' into time, not remaining near the point of beautiful, luminous, sanctified, 'first rising.'

Because this is binding for the Jews it is even more binding for Christians. Christianity should go out on a limb farther, and take a more extreme chance, in pressing ahead.

The Fire is not an augmentation of the Static Light; on the contrary, it is the converse= the Light only really radiates when it accompanies the Dynamic Fire on its perilous journey and fierce fight for the world.

The Light Christ brings is Jewish, in its hard travelling with the Fire. Yeshua the Mashiah insists on a Light of saving that works side by side with the Fire of redeeming.

It is when the Light and Logos of Eros is put in the place of, and used as a defense against, the Fire and Spirit of the Daemoniac that the former becomes 'the' primal error= the error about what is first.

What comes first must not block what comes second and third, however much the first seems overturned, turned inside out, inverted, by what arrives in between and at the finish. It is going to be a rough ride..

3,

In both the East and the West of Christianity, the Spirit is merely augmenting the Logos.

The Ruach, 'the Spirit of the Father', as Yeshua calls him, is understood neither in the East nor in the West of Christianity.

This is extreme in the West, so much so, the Trinity itself ceased to be three persons and one nature, but became reduced to the twosome of Father and Son, Godhead and Logos, with the Spirit simply the 'relationship' between Godhead and Logos= a theological after-thought. This is a total misunderstanding and denial of the Spirit who proceeds directly from God, not from Father and Son= re-routed, so to speak, through the Logos. Similarly diminishing of the 'economia' of the Spirit is the tendency among many Christians to reckon the Spirit has nothing more to do than help them read the words of the Logos in the Bible or in the Liturgy or in the Creed, so that the divine Light 'between' the lines, 'inside' the lines, 'surrounding' the lines, is not lost to the scheming and fabrication of the restricted light of the human mind. This illumining by the Spirit of what the Logos 'really means' is always needed, but it is by no means anything approaching an adequate understanding and enflament by the Fire of God, either before or after the Messiah. It pretends there is no Daemonic, and seeks to 'contain' the Fire within Eros.

In the Christian East, the limiting of the role of the Spirit to augmenting the Logos is less crude but all the more serious in error for that. Eros is Love, and the Daemonic is Love= these are two different kinds of divine love, with vastly different impacts upon the world, the former salvational, the latter redemptive. The assimilation of the Fire of Love 'back' into the Light of Love denies, evades, escapes, the redemptive task, and de facto implies the salvational task suffices. Light is enough= Fire serves the Light, Fire intensifies the Light.

This is the most serious element in the Greek Heresy of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The heart disappears into the nous and soul= the passionate action of the heart disappears into the passionless contemplation of nous and soul. There is nothing for the heart to 'do', yet this is called 'receiving the Spirit.'

It is not.

Eastern Orthodoxy even declares that the 'aim of the Christian life' is to receive the Holy Spirit= the tradition just does not understand who this Spirit is, and what he does, and this grants us permission to continue resisting our real kindling in Fire.

The Fire of God is restricted to only one role in its burning= extinguishing the fallen fire of human passion, so the human being can, via the nous and soul, become 'flooded with Light.' The Greek Heresy misses the whole point of why the Fire, always at work in the creation, comes to the human heart in a new way after the Messiah. It is not just to make the heart 'warm' when the Light uplifts soul and nous in prayer.

The Greek Heresy will always be evident in statements that are, in themselves, beautiful in regard to the Light, and thus are demonstrably 'bathed' in that Light, yet their very beauty is what conceals their error in regard to the Fire.

St Isaac of Syria= "What is knowledge? The experience of eternal life. And what is eternal life? The experience of all things in God. For love comes from meeting God. Knowledge united to God fulfils every desire. And for the heart that receives it, it is altogether sweetness overflowing onto the earth. Indeed, there is nothing like the sweetness of God."

There is no Fire of Spirit in this knowledge desired by the soul because, though it may sweeten the heart, if the heart is too captivated by such sweetness, then it will be tempted to give up the manliness of its passion, and forget its real calling to this world.

In the Greek Heresy, God's Fire is allowed to purify the heart, but not to ignite it.

Our human fire is 'seized' by the Fire of God to make its passion the Fire-Bearer.

The Fire comes not to purify the heart, but to purge the heart, so the heart can be ignited for its true calling, its real mission, in the world..

Our heart cannot remain in the sacred place, and from that stationary spot, 'flame up to heaven.'

The human passion is cast into all manner of tests and trials, tumults and troubles, in its arduous Fire-Bearing. It is checked out by the adversity of the world, sifted by the Evil Spirit, searched out by the Spirit of Fire. Yahweh will not spare us going through the waters, Yahweh will not spare us going through the fires. We go through, not around, not above; we ride the Waves of Wind and Fire of the Messianic Spirit.

Of this existence brought by the Coming Fire, the monastics know nothing because, in the name of religion, even spirituality, they reject its Supreme Love, preferring not to risk losing it, by staying with the Love at the Beginning.

In the Light= friendship with God, face to face.

In the Fire= intimacy with God, heart to heart.

The Greek Heresy= to stand pat on the face, but refuse the Jewish existential roll of the dice with the heart.

Heaven come to earth, in the soul.

Heaven come to hell, in the heart.

For the sake of the world.

4,

The Greek Heresy built in to the foundation of Eastern Orthodox Christianity is a certain 'way' of interpreting Ortho-Doxia that renders it, not the Beginning that leads on to the End, but the Beginning that resists moving toward the End.

This interpretation is haughty= it fails to acknowledge the limitation on Ortho-Doxia, what it can do and what it cannot do. From Greek haughtiness, what Ortho-Doxia can do is falsified as all that ever needs to be done; what it can do, therefore, blots out what it cannot do.

This introduces a whole series of devastating biases.

This slant on Ortho-Doxia betrays the Light that leads on to the Fire, making it the Light that resists the kindling of the Fire. Ortho-Doxia becomes, the Way Upward to Heaven, bypassing Hell, because Christ has already overcome 'sin, death, the separation of uncreated and created', instead of the Way Forward, passing through Hell, because we go where Christ went and do what Christ did by joining to him through the Spirit.

The Greek Orthodox emphasis on Communion with Christ is right, but it is understood wrongly by the Greek Fathers, for instead of the Cup leading on to the Cross, the Cup becomes, in its wine of Christ's blood spilled for us, and in its bread of Christ's body broken for us, sufficient communion with Christ. It is as if partaking of, joining with, participating in, the Last Supper with Christ absolves us from our own Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection, with Christ.

Thus, Eastern Orthodox Christianity lapses from insisting on the right foundation into preserving that foundation in aspic against what needs to come after it, built on top of it yet not confined by it.

This generates the 4 fictitious 'foundation myths' of Eastern Orthodoxy.

[1] Eastern Orthodoxy tends to claim it has preserved, from the earliest times, the *complete* -- and therefore the completed -- truth of Christ. There is nothing further of any significance to be revealed.

This is not true to Christ and the Spirit.

[2] Witness to this truth is therefore established and settled *at the very start when it was first revealed*. There is no further truth only revealed through the very different witness of a long journey and hard battle that is lengthy in time.

This is not true to Christ and the Spirit.

[3] It is also claimed that this whole and therefore finished truth was *accepted everywhere by everyone*.

This is not true to Christ and the Spirit.

[4] People who come early in the tradition, the founders, are *given an exaggerated authority*, while potential innovators, reformers, revolutionaries, or simply those inspired by God with something radically new that God withheld initially, are dismissed as heterodox [less than Orthodox], or rejected as heretical [un-Orthodox]. The 'tradition of the elders', as Father Alexander Men termed it, is restrictive.

This is not true to Christ and the Spirit.

These four stances are manifestations of the primal heresy of Greek Christianity. This error eliminates the risk God took in creating humanity, and therefore avoids Jewish existentialism; it puts in the place of 'the dynamic story of the dangerous tests and anguished travails of heart' the Greek preference for static metaphysical ontology and quietism in religious practice.

Each of these four claims, and all of them taken together, constitute serious heresy= real falsehood.

Neither Christ, nor our witness to him, was disclosed and established in fullness, and hence in a finished way, right at the outset; nor was this supposed 'common inheritance' accepted everywhere by everyone. Consequently, revelation did not cease in the past with the founders; there are prophets to come in later times who will reveal significant things missing from the early days.

There had always been more to come, and consequently there had always been a need for much time, passing from Beginning through Middle to End, to truly complete the Messianic Revelation.

5,

The Greek Heresy that creeps into Ortho-Doxia generates conservatism, which generates liberalism. The primary error, in this way, ripples outward, like a stone dropped into water.

The Greek Heresy excises the Jewish 'existential' understanding and doing from church and monastery. Thus, the Christian East starts in a wrong 'omission' of action, in its mysticism and sanctification, and then reacting to that, the Christian West proceeds into a wrong 'commission' of action, in its moralism and rationalism.

The Greek Orthodoxy false to Ortho-Doxia over-estimates 'seeing' God in the Beginning and under-estimates 'doing' what God asks us to do, in the cause

of God, in time and for the world, in leaving the Beginning, and passing through the Middle to reach the End.

If you rely on seeing rather than doing, then you reject passion so it will not disturb the peace, within or without. In rejecting 'any and all passion', you jettison the very muscle needed to bear and endure, and carry through, to the End.

Passion only understands what is at stake in the world over time by being staked to the world over time.

The Fall is a stumbling within passion, and thus requires as remedy not any kind of 'non passibility', but a restored passibility, a passibility both scarred and singed by existence's paradox and tragedy.

PART FOUR= LIMITATION

1,

The bigger, and truer, Eastern Christian Tradition not falsifying Ortho-Doxia acknowledges that the Holy Spirit has only spoken when all Christians agree, across vital differences and disparities, of place and time, of culture, psychology, temperament.. This has not happened. Until it does happen, every stream of Christianity is incomplete, nothing like as whole as it believes..

As a foundation, only a foundation, not the finished house, there needs to be a 'first consensus.' This is agreement on the mysterious, and sacred, way to stand before God with one's fellow humans. Such is Ortho-Doxia.

But it leaves many problems about the Christian Way unresolved, because the solutions to these problems were not given to the disciples by Christ. He withheld significant things, because they come later. He told the first apostolic witnesses gathered round him that he was not giving them the complete truth, because they could not 'bear' it.

In the hiatus spanning the gap from Beginning to End, real disagreements of integrity must be accepted by different persons within one tradition, and between different traditions; the disagreeing persons, the disagreeing traditions, have to 'put up with one another' given the absence of any authentic consensus they and the others can embrace. We must 'agree to differ', until a fuller truth, life, practice, is revealed which we can all, with total inner affirmation, accept. We need to not just tolerate each other, by avoiding each other, or attack each other over our respective flags of identity [my flag is better than your flag], but we must be in contention with one another in honest truthfulness..

A foundation is not the finished house we are building, all together, over all the ages, past, present, future. It is only the basis for building. It cannot be treated as a proscription against any new building.

The Truth is always being added to, because God cannot reveal everything early on. There are key things God holds back from the first witnesses to the Truth= people cannot take the Truth in full initially, but need much time, and a very slow evolution of consciousness, to grow into the fullness.

The deepest things come last, not first. The greatest things come last, not first.

2,

The Messianic Temple is only elliptically described by David in the Psalms.

The Jewish Temple is focused more on Salvation, not Redemption, because it awaits the Messiah.

The Christian Temple, by contrast, witnesses that the Messiah has come.

How does this change the Christian Temple?

It still deals in Salvation; people need that. But, if it focuses too much on Salvation, then it will, 'wittingly or unwittingly', ignore Redemption.

Light and Salvation, focused on soul and body, is repeatedly referred to in the Greek Orthodox Liturgy, but Fire and Redemption, focused on heart and passion [the heart's 'spirit'], are hardly mentioned.

This might, in itself, cast doubt on the Liturgy's faithfulness to the Messianic Revelation, yet the reality is more paradoxical than that.

The Greek Orthodox Christians modelled the Christian Temple on the First Temple of Solomon, at the very time when, by design or accident, the Jews were abandoning any Temple, and embarking upon the 2000 years of Rabbinical Judaism. God had instructed the Jews exactly how the First Temple was to be decorated. It was not at all 'bare', rather, it was full of colour, form, song, and all these things were a transparent stained glass lit up from within by 'the true Light' radiating outward through their porous membrane. Moreover, in Judaism, the Scriptures were never simply read aloud in a didactic manner, but were always sung, chanted, recited musically. Such prayerful and mind-ful music draws on indigenous folk sources, it is never 'pop or classical.'

However, the Jewish First Temple provides a framework for, and is not identical with, the Christian Temple which 'contains' a different and new mystery= the Messianic Reality that has come, and come in poverty, not in

glory. Solomon's Temple is built round God's presence, which includes the divine glory, among many marvellous 'rays' of the divine qualities irradiating the sacred space= "You are blessed in the Temple of your glory" [Daniel, 3, 53]. But there is no divine impoverishing for humanity's sake in this earlier coming of God to the Temple. That is the inversion which happens in the Christian Temple, making Jewish Ortho-Doxia and Christian Ortho-Doxia similar yet different, continuous and discontinuous.

This means that in the Christian Temple, the boundary framing its ceremony is 'old' Jewish, pre Messianic, whilst the core enlivening and driving it is 'new' Jewish, post Messianic.

The Messianic Liturgy of the Christian Temple is rooted in Christ's Last Supper. It is at this 'pause' in time, before he was catapulted into the dramatic 'moment of truth' of the crucifixion, that Yeshua 'takes the time' to ask his followers, and all future generations of his followers, to 'remember' him by changing the Jewish 'Passover meal' in a Christian direction. The Cup would no longer just contain Eros= the wine of exalted ecstasy and the bread of daily life. The Daemonic would enter the Cup= the wine becoming the Messiah's blood spilled for humanity's Redemption, the bread the Messiah's body broken for humanity's Redemption.

The very 'soul [wine] and body [bread] of healing', always implying Salvation, is turned upside down and inside out, the blood having to be shed, the body having to be torn, for the Cup to become our 'communion' in Christ's sacrificial action of Redemption.

Christ asked that we remember his Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection in the drinking and eating of the Cup of his shed blood and his broken body in the Liturgy.

This request made at The Last Supper by Yeshua precisely asks Christians not to fixate on Salvation, not to fixate on Light, not to fixate on the Temple as if Communion there absolves them from Communion with Christ existentially in the world.

Christ is precisely asking Christians, if they are really his followers, to Communion in the Cup so as to remind them, so that they will remember, that the 'real' Communion is with Christ's Cross in Golgotha, the most God-forsaken place in all the world. Golgotha is outside the city walls, a hill overlooking Gehenna. It is the worst place in the human venture, the place where it ends in Hell.

Christ is requesting his followers, by taking Communion in the Liturgy of the Temple, to remember Christ's existential deed in the place where the world ends in Hell. He wants them to realise that taking Communion commits Christians to going there. It readies them for going there to be with Christ in his dying and his rebirth.

Yes, there are Salvational elements in Communion. But these are not the goal, not the aim, and therefore Salvation is not an end in itself. In the Communion Cup, Salvation paradoxically becomes the 'bridge' into Redemption.

Consequently, as Christ was making plain at the Last Supper, we cannot have Communion with the joy, goodness, life, of divinity, full stop, because that very communing through the Cup in the Liturgy gives us away to, and strengthens us for, the Communion with the suffering, poverty, humiliation, of divinity in the Messiah.

It might be said that since Christ went from Cross to Resurrection, all we need commune with is his victory. He did it for us, so we can celebrate with his triumph, participating in it without embracing the defeat deep down at the base of the human condition. This is not possible. St Paul understood, from his own encounter with the Risen Messiah, that to join 'with' Christ, to partake 'of' Christ, to participate 'in' Christ – the very point of drinking and eating from the Cup in the Liturgy – means both being crucified as Christ was crucified and being resurrected as Christ was resurrected. The rejoicing of Resurrection is not obtainable without the terrible agony of the Cross.

By joining Christ on the Cross, we join humanity in the common tragedy. We have to join our own tragedy in order to join the tragedy of humanity. Avoid the tragedy in yourself and in other people, and you will leave the Hell in you and in other people 'undisturbed.' That is anti-Messianic. The Messiah 'stirs up Hell' to redeem it.

This is why losing the Light at some point – as happened to Silouan, but never happened to his student Sophrony -- is necessary= in order to confront the darkness of Hell within us and understand its unbreakable link to the darkness of Hell without us in the world. This crisis is key to the New Road of the Messianic Spirit.

If a Christian refuses to let the Cup in the Temple be the transition from the Last Supper to the Cross in Golgotha, then Communion in the Liturgy might not just avail us nothing, but could even be 'for condemnation.'

3,

The 'royal priesthood' is not a way of adding the greater dignity of the king to the lesser dignity of the priest. This is not a priest-king. On the contrary, this is a king-priest. It is only the king on the Cross. The Cross reaches into the Temple, and makes the priestly offering serve, represent, prepare for, the kingly sacrifice. Thus, the king still outranks any priest. The so-called royal priesthood is the priest being subjected to the service of the king, it is the Temple being subjected to the service of the Cross.

The king-prophet, as in David [not prophet-king, as in Plato], similarly yokes the prophet to the service of the king, yokes the Wilderness to the service of the Cross.

We cannot disappear into the Wilderness to avoid Golgotha.

We cannot use the Temple as escape from Golgotha.

4,

We cannot use the Salvational theme of 'Christ regenerating our human nature' through his divine-humanity to blot out, and cover over, the darkness and Hell in each and all of us, for Christ's divine-humanity acted in that abysmal defeat and tragedy of humanity, to change it Redemptively. The Spirit helped him to undergo and to come through.

The Spirit's activity is not confined within the city walls, confined to the polis, confined to the natural ongoing of communal life.

The Spirit's activity goes outside the communing of people with one another and with God to go to Golgotha and plunge into Hell.

Thus, the Spirit's activity does not just produce joy, peace, and enlightenment.

The Spirit's activity provokes what you experience in the whole of Passion Week= drama, angst, intensity, confrontation, betrayal, horror.

The Spirit's activity produces what you go through in Christ's agony= he sweated blood, his fire of passion, his spirit, was sorely afflicted, yet in the Spirit, it went through.

He accomplished the impossible deed. We cannot commune in its fruits without passing through the very struggle of change that made those fruits available.

For this reason, the Liturgy always celebrates not just the Resurrection, but also the Cross and Descent into Hell that makes it possible.

5,

The Temple that is Messianic contains a paradox= the Light that leads on to the Fire, the Cup that leads on to the Cross.

Thus if you try to confine yourself to the Light, confine yourself to the Cup, denying Fire and Cross, you actually falsify that Temple.

6,

What is missing in Ortho-Doxia is not 'wrong.'

Ortho-Doxia remains right, but it is only right when it admits that its rightness is incomplete, and what is missing is what must come in the future, as a consequence of Christ's deed, through the Spirit, being passed to all of humanity, down all of time, in all the world.

It is when people abuse Ortho-Doxia and insist it is necessary and sufficient, nothing is missing, that it falls into the Greek Heresy, and merely becomes 'religious custom', mere 'orthodoxy.' It rapidly descends from this into out and out stagnation= keeping to 'convention', upholding the 'norm', blindly passing on to your children what was blindly passed to you by your parents, and treating this ancestrally validated inheritance as a refuge from having to be stirred up about the existential ledge we are all precariously standing on, and might fall from, finally.

Such a reduced orthodoxy -- lacking the genuine, and humbler, Ortho-Doxia - - inevitably becomes moribund.

7,

The Cross is not taken on fully, not plumbed fully, not tried out adequately, in West or East.

The West becomes too moralistic and rationalistic, and the East becomes too metaphysical and ontological= what is left out is the existential realism of the Cross.

This step has not been taken by any Christian tradition, East or West.

Peter says that Christ, in Hell, declared to the evil spirits there that their time was up, their power had been broken.

We are changed in the depth by Christ to change the depth in the world for Christ.

We are changed in the depth by joining with Christ's descent into, and passing through, Hell. This is not figurative, it is actual.

It happens existentially through passion= our passion joined to Christ's passion.

SYMBOL, EIKON, POEM OF GRIEF AND FIRE

PRELUDE

It is tempting to divide all human comprehension into two modalities= the symbolic versus the literal. The Jungians do this, and recently Karin Armstrong has developed a version of it [she uses the terms deployed by Ernst Cassirer, 'mythos' and 'logos', referring to the storied and the logical].

Symbolic= there is more than meets the eye.

Literal= There is only what meets the eye.

For anyone who has found out from experience, or simply intuits, that there is more to reality than what the senses convey and intellect builds from the senses, the attempt to make the 'symbolic' the only alternative to literalism in all its forms – the soul-less decadence and heart-less injustice inherent to capitalism; positivism in science; materialism and secularism as cultural world-views – is over simple, and even dangerous.

Whilst "there is more than is dreamt of in your philosophy Horatio", this more needs a differentiating discernment. 'In my father's house are many mansions' is truer to the multiplicity of realities not confined within nor reduceable to the everyday world apparent to our ordinary perceptual and cognitive functioning. That functioning allows us to cross the street and fill in tax forms, but it misses much that is really 'there'..

I= Symbolic versus Literal

The dictionary's account of the literal likens it to an 'exterior layer' covering over other kinds and levels of reality not fully evident on the 'surface' of things. If this surface is all we take in, and seize hold of, in our dealings with the 'real world', then our very manner of exercising our eyes and using our hands renders us blind [asleep] and clumsy [cack-handed].

Surface= an outward or external veneer; outside boundaries; superficial, shallow, a mere appearance-- implying a need to look beneath the surface, so that deeper things can be brought out, or oppositely, a need to go beyond the surface to expand horizons and exceed cramped vistas.

The fundamentalists in science are no different to the fundamentalists in religion. Each is the mirror of the other= both are literalising a bigger reality of 'being' that only partly shows itself. It may be below, beyond, all around, within, the surface and thus not graspable by an exclusively surface perspective. This view-point is narrow, rigid, keen to define and pin down everything it surveys; this is not a dispassionate acceptance of 'reality as it is', but a very subjectively driven seeking for control, to allay fear of the unknown and offer the ego the spurious esteem of conquest over it.

Remaining glued only to that which is 'explicit' misses the 'implicate order', as one physicist calls it, that undergirds and overarches everything that can be formulated.

That which can be formulated rests in and points to that which cannot be formulated; the latter is always tacitly present in the former. This applies as much to mathematics as to the laws of matter. It is even more evident in our experience of nature and in human affairs.

But, when the surface can be fully unpicked and measured without loss of meaning, then such a surface is literal, it has no metaphorical quality, it is confined to itself and therefore its workings do not transcend itself. It ticks over, within its own boundary. Such is the 'machine.' Science was never designed to be able to investigate anything other than the mechanical aspect of things.

Bewitched by this idol, modern bourgeois culture seeks to make everything in human life run like a machine, regular, normal, and predictable. This is 'playing the game.'

When the surface becomes 'symbolic' then what is really there in form, colour, texture, tone, weight, length and breadth -- sight and sound and touch -- starts to metaphorically point to something more intangible. The tangible becomes a sign, even a manifestation. The shapes and hues in a Symbolist painting are an intimation of some other realm, level of reality, kind of fullness of existence, which they imply. The physical is not just physical. The physical becomes a signifier of the more-than-physical.

Symbol= something standing for or calling up something else, especially a concrete object which stands for an immaterial object or idea; an image which embodies an interrelated web of meanings; a dream image which embodies an unconscious complex; the practice of investing things with a symbolic meaning; one versed in the interpretation of symbols; to express, suggest, or evoke, ideas that are complex in meaning; artists who reject naturalism and create art by means of symbols; to admit a thing by implication rather than by express statement; to indicate more than the words plainly say.

Thus, the symbolic achieves two things not otherwise attainable= [a] it not only shows there is something more than surface appearances, shallow appearances, external appearances, [b] but it also shows this something more is necessarily and powerfully involved with the surface, and changes its very character. It is vitally important to 'see' that there is something more, which is what the 'inner eye' does, yet it is equally important to see, in the same act of envisioning, that the something more, by dwelling within the concrete, changes it. The concrete becomes mysterious-concrete, not 'just' concrete.

Thus could the Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition regard the creation as 'a sea of symbols.'

II= Symbolic versus Eikonic

1,

Nevertheless, there is a limitation in the aesthetic approach to the image which is only overcome in a religious approach to the image. As the symbol is more than the sensory and intellectual literalism it challenges, so the eikon is more than any symbolic imagination.

There is a divine Light, and a divine Love, 'shining out' from the Mystery of God in all images which are eikonic. This is not happening, yet, though it might be promised, or insinuated, in all images which are symbolic. The eikon is transparent. The symbol is suggestive yet opaque. It is not transparent. In this sense, the symbol is an invitation to 'go farther' along a religious path, not remain in the aesthetic in and of itself, to discover through more direct experience, more immediate encounter, that which the symbol only elusively indicates. In the eikon, the mysteriousness is met, face to face, and it radiates outward, both declaring God's Mystery is uniquely incomparable to and transcends all things, yet this very Transcendence comes to and indwells all things, making the forms and images beacons of Light and fountains of Life.

It is precisely the capacity to evoke yet not be able to penetrate more fully into mysteries which renders symbols so very ambiguous. They are provocative, drawing us to them, yet they are also finally not satisfying unless we find a way to contact and partake of what they are 'standing in for.'

This means symbols are like menus in relation to actual food. They ask us to descend deeper, to rise higher, to look around more widely, to look within more attentively, in order to actually move toward what they point at. If we do not undergo that travelling which transforms our being, if we simply stay at the level of aesthetic enjoyment of symbols, then they are akin to the oyster that does not give up its pearl.

Hence symbols, according to many mystical traditions, necessarily keep secret the mysteries which they only hint at allusively. For persons who do not grow in enlightenment, the hidden treasure of meaning buried in symbols remains beyond reach. It is partly disclosed but the more significant part remains obscure. This ambiguity is intriguing, yet it really requires the beholder to go farther in 'spiritual matters.' Only farther down the spiritual path will the dazzling symbols, in art, in literature, in Sacred Texts [the Bible], in Sacred Spaces [the Temple], in the natural world, in our nightly dreams, open up fully. When we get to the food, we see the menu very differently. Before we get to the food, the menu can become a block, an idol, an illusory siren-song that leads us down false roads where we remain forever famished even as the unrealised possibility of the symbol goes on tickling – really torturing – our fancy. This is why symbolic images are not only helpful in expanding human existence, but can become deceptive, and misleading.

According to Jewish Tradition, the 'sage' is someone who can read symbols in a manner those reacting aesthetically to their beauty cannot. Yet by their

very character as metaphorical, symbols are a door opening, to let everyone in. They suffer from none of the limitations of ordinary rational discourse, and they do not argue one belief against another belief. They present something real, even if it is only sensed= half apprehended and half not apprehended. We 'see' it for ourselves, without guidance or interference by experts trying to impose their writ on what we think. Symbols are like a funny joke which catches us out, causing us to laugh at the truth it declares, whether we approve or not, agree or not. Once you see what the symbol shows, you cannot un-see it. Your world is enlarged, like it or not.

Thus symbols can metaphorically depict very different levels and kinds of reality. A striking dream can portray a person's unconscious psychological neuroses, acquired from early childhood damage, or it might portray charismatic 'extra-human' talents or abilities latent in the collective psyche in the form of legends concerning gods and goddesses, and culture heroes; similarly, a Buddhist mandala might portray the entire cosmos 'gross, subtle, and pure' as a series of qualitatively differentiated yet harmoniously interwoven spatial realms. Symbols can also resolve thorny problems, not only pertaining to our subjective psychology but also pertaining to our objective thinking, by coming up with unexpected resolutions of conflicts or puzzlements that seemed insoluble within their own terms of reference. This is part of the symbol-formation crucial to human creativity.

Dreams are interesting in that, as Black Elk points out, they can be, on some occasions, symbolic, and on other occasions, eikonic. Visionary dreams are markedly different to imaginative dreams. The levels or kinds of realities evoked are often not clearly demarcated in symbols, and thus it is easy to confuse psychological, psychic, natural, cosmic, levels with each other, as well as confusing them with the spiritual. In an important sense, until the Light enters us, revolutionizing our consciousness, we do not know from experience what is spiritual, and what is not spiritual.

The sheer multiplicity, diversity, prolixity, of symbols is helpful= their luxuriant richness conveys to us that things are not as they seem to the 'mind-forged manacles.' They augment 'facticity' by 'possibility.'

But there are limitations that symbols impose, despite how arresting they can be. When we do go farther in spirituality, and engage in practices like meditation, contemplation, and prayer, and take on the yoke of disciplines like fasting and vigils, a different, ultimate showing of Mystery becomes available. A fantasy is not a symbol, as Jung tried to teach Freud [to no avail]; similarly, a symbol is not a vision, as Assagioli, and many others, tried to teach Jung [to no avail]. The wish-fulfillment phantasies of Freud are not the symbols of the imagination of Jung; but visionary alterations of consciousness are beyond imaginative symbolization.

The distinction between symbol and eikon, the sacred art of Eastern Christianity and in a different sense of Zen Buddhism, is vital. Both symbol and eikon seek 'to make the invisible visible', yet they do this in very different

ways, and this difference matters, because it indicates a different relationship to the Mystery.

2,

The eikon is the product of going up and down the ladder between heaven and earth [of Jacob's dream]. Going up= apophatic. Going down= cataphatic.

The symbolic imagination makes neither this ascent nor can it therefore make this descent. Symbols need interpretation, and permit multiple interpretations, given the richness of the meaning they disclose and conceal at once. The eikonic vision is transparent and therefore is not open to any interpretation= it is a place of meeting God, face to face, in the Light and Life of Love.

Symbols are, in the ultimate, 'mental' in the Platonic sense of 'ideas'= designs and metamorphoses of beautiful and living meaning. They lack the Love in which God beholds all he has made. Thus, until we meet God mystically, in the genuine ex-stasis of God's Love arousing the soul's love, for God and for all he has made, we do not know the Light of Love shaping and designing, indwelling, blessing, everything. The Mystery is Love, and this is why the Mystery explodes out as Light, and the Life that the Light bestows on everything from Love. Paul Evdokimov ['The Art Of The Ikon, a theology of beauty', 1990]= "the world only exists in that it is *loved*" [p 23]. Evdokimov makes the key point about the difference between symbol and eikon [p 23]= "contemplation which is religious and not aesthetic shows itself to be in love with every creature.". And [p 24]= "true beauty is not found [in the creation] but in the epiphany of the Transcendent. This epiphany transforms [the creation] into a cosmic place of its radiance, a 'burning bush'." Thus [p 25]= "beauty in the world is a divine reality, a transcendental quality of being."

The apophatic -- 'negative' -- imageless unknowing= the Mystery of God beyond everything, physical and mental.

The cataphatic -- 'positive' -- eikonic image of visionary knowing= The Love revealed by the God in everything, physical and mental.

The coming forth of God is Mysterious and Light, Mysterious and Love, Mysterious and Life.

St Gregory Palamas= "whoever contemplates the divine light, contemplates the mystery in God."

Evdokimov points out that the Epiphany of God's coming forth, which transforms nature and the world into 'a place of its radiance', is perceived by the 'whole human being', body as well as soul, soul as well as nous. Evdokimov quotes from St Gregory Palamas [p 26]= "The body also has an experience of divine things." And St Maximus [p 26]= "the powers of the soul expand through the senses." The religious experience of the shining forth of the Transcendent 'spiritualises' the body and the senses. "Our natural faculties are not sufficient to allow us to perceive the spiritual. [But] the

senses are spiritualised and become like the object they are sensing” [p 28].
St Gregory Palamas= “Those who are worthy receive [divine] grace and perceive through the senses as well as through the mind what is above all sense and intellect.”

St Gregory Palamas= “He who participates in the Light becomes himself light.” It is through the Light that we see everything, including ourselves, as ‘luminous.’

This is vision; this is not imagination.

Imagination should not take over from, and blot out, vision.

Only the eikonic image heals the dualism of ‘matter versus spirit’ that is key to the symbol.

The human face is a window for the mystery of the inner person. The body is an analogy of the soul. A body without soul is not a body. It is mere lumps of decomposing, shapeless and featureless, flesh.

III= The Need for the Symbol

It is worth considering the religious quest in the Symbolist art of the late nineteenth century. The Symbolist movement has to be set in the context of that time. Only by considering what it opposed can light be thrown on what it advocated.

WHAT THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT OPPOSED

Symbolism arose as a reaction against certain powerful trends in the West after the European Enlightenment, according to one commentator.

[1] it was a rejection of positivism and materialism as ways of knowing the world in its fullness;

[2] it was a rejection of Impressionism as an art which focuses too much on the objective world, ‘rendering it more subjective through the play of light’-- but not challenging the dominance of ‘objectivity’ in people’s mentality;

[3] it was a rejection of bourgeois amorality, and vulgarity.

According to Jean Moreas, writing in 1886, Symbolism was against “plain meanings, and matter of fact description.” It was against the Naturalism [or Naïve Realism] which tries to reproduce in paint on the canvas the external look of things.

The most crucial difference between Impressionism and Symbolism lies in where the artist finds the origin of the work of art. The starting point of both Naturalism and Impressionism was the ‘real world’ of nature or contemporary

human life; the starting point of Symbolism is the 'inner eye' of the artist. Thus Symbolism regards the artist as a 'seer' – not as an 'accurate' observer who can use paint to faithfully 'represent' what he has observed. Gauguin spoke of the artist "dreaming in front of nature."

Where Naturalists and Naïve Realists sought to capture 'optical reality in all its objective grittiness, and thus focused on the ordinary rather than the ideal', Symbolists sought a more meaningful reality through the expanded seeing evident in dreams, the imagination, and the rumblings of the psychic unconscious.

WHAT THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT ADVOCATED

Symbolism began as a literary movement, and for some of the Symbolist painters, the source of the artist's vision was found in mythology and literature. Nonetheless, the artist rarely merely 'illustrated' the myth or the poem. Instead, these materials were used in much the same way that the artist's dream might be the inspiration for a painting. Symbolism is an art of the dream. Just as the dream does not represent something, but portrays meanings not being picked up that would alter how we see that something, so the Symbolist painting is not a representation but is an embodiment of a meaning that alters how we see reality.

Another commentator points out that Symbolism was a response to the modern belief in 3 profound 'humiliations' as Freud put it=

[1] a cosmological humiliation= science had demonstrated that the earth [and therefore humanity] is no longer the centre of the universe;

[2] a biological humiliation= the theory of evolution disrupted the belief that humanity was created in the image of God;

[3] a psychological humiliation= the unconscious underlay and often drove the conscious ego; therefore, the psychology of the human being was largely an unknown factor, such that the human being was not the master of his ship, but more often, a puppet being jerked by forces neither understood nor in his power to subdue.

The Symbolists proposed art as the means for healing these humiliations. Ancient myths, in particular, provided alternative beliefs to such 'affronts' to human dignity. Symbolists assumed that ancient myths were still alive in 'primitive' cultures. Turning to mythology was therefore a way to reconnect with the lost innocence of culture before the advent of bourgeois civilization and the age of rationalism.

As Moreas was clear what Symbolism rejected, so he was equally clear what it advocated= its aim was to "clothe the Ideal in a perceptible form." Thus the Symbolist painters invariably imbue their subject-matter with esoteric

meanings. Odilon Redon sums up Symbolist art= it seeks “to make the invisible world visible.” Symbolism regards art as a metaphorical language which transcribes some expanded sense of reality-- be that reality psychological, psychic, natural, cosmic, spiritual.

IV= Symbol As The Fuller Being We Have Lost

Evdokimov deploys insight derived from Greek Hellenism to amplify what symbols are doing, and why they are so necessary to human life=

“the idea of the beautiful is interchangeable with the idea of being; this means beauty is the final stage of the progression toward being; it is identical with the ideal wholeness and integrity of being. In contrast ugliness is a lack of being, its perversion by being deprived of an essential element” [p 19].

“An artist reveals the restored fullness of being and makes it possible for us to contemplate its ideal aspects. In the words of Baudelaire, the artist allows us to see ‘another nature’, a buried and hidden truth [of being vis a vis its urge toward wholeness]. ..The artist brings his light into darkness, but he neither reproduces nor copies. He rather creates forms perceivable by the senses, and these forms become containers of an ideal content. ..Art aspires to present a vision of the fullness of being, of the world as it [will] be in its perfection. Art thus opens the way toward the Mystery of Being” [p 20].

The ‘ideal’ to which Evdokimov refers is what Black Elk calls ‘the spirit shapes of things as they should be, and as they really are.’

The artist’s task is “to restore life to what is marvellous in the world”, so that “all things are seen in their secret beauty” [p 21].

“An artist lends us his eyes so we can see a fragment in which the whole is nonetheless present, as the sun is reflected in a drop of dew. Like a living person, the world turns toward us, speaks to us, sings to us, shows us its secret colours, and fills us with an overwhelming joy; our solitude is thus broken. We commune with the beauty of a countryside, with a face or with poetry in the same way we commune with a friend. We feel a strange relation with a reality that seems to be our soul’s homeland, once lost but now found. Art ‘dephenomenalises’ present reality, and as a result the whole world opens up to mystery. It is at this point that aesthetic experience reaches its limit and stops” [p 21].

Only God is reality, the world is fragile and ephemeral, thus the symbol hints at something more it cannot deliver. It takes us beyond the literal, but it can imprison us in a hall of mirrors reflecting mirrors, an endless, tantalising, plethora of possibility that is never grounded in ultimate reality, and therefore opposes the literal yet in floating free in an indeterminate half-way realm, with no real anchor, cannot undo people’s clinging to the literal. The symbolic

becomes mere decoration, 'to cheer things up a bit', unable to overcome the profounder deadening of life.

V= The Ladder of Ascent and Descent

1,

Karin Armstrong, in 'The Case For God' [2010], demonstrates the necessity for the Apophatic, or 'negative', approach to God.

"Like Moses at the top of the mountain, we embrace the darkness and experience no clarity, but we know that, once we have rinsed our minds of inadequate ideas that block our understanding, we are somehow in the place where God is" [p 126].

"Once we have left the idols of thought behind, we are no longer worshipping a simulacrum, a projection of our own ideas and desires. There are no longer any false [mental constructions] obstructing our access to the inexpressible truth and, like Moses, forgetful of self, we can remain silently in the presence of the unknown God" [p 127].

St Dionysus= "Renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, [Moses] belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing."

St Dionysus uses the term 'unknowing' for the peculiar state we must enter in order to 'know beyond the mind by knowing nothing.'

The anonymous author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing' [circa 1300 AD], who translated the works of St Dionysus into Latin, instructs= do not seek God within or without. "Nowhere is where I want you.. So, let go this 'everywhere' and 'everything' for this 'nowhere' and this 'nothing.' Never mind if you cannot fathom this nothing.. It is so worthwhile in itself that no thinking about it will do it justice."

The Cloud of Unknowing stems directly from the writings of St Dionysus [circa 529 AD] and the Cappadocians [St Gregory of Nyssa, 331-395 AD; St Basil the Great, 330-379 AD; St Gregory Nazianzus, 329-390 AD]. But the differentiation of the Apophatic Way of Negation and the Cataphatic Way of Affirmation has roots in the writings of Philo of Alexandria [30 BC-45 AD], a Hellenized Jew, three hundred years earlier. It is evident in Buddhism [500 BC], and in a different, more existential sense, in Judaism [2000 BC].

Once 'rinsed', we come into the actual presence of God.

Then God can reach out to us, and disclose and convey to us what is of God.

God is unknown so as to be really known.

The negative is for the sake of the positive= the negative banishes what is not God, so that the positive can manifest what is of God.

We enter the divine darkness in order to be illumined by the Light from God, and not return to lesser lights, be they from spirits, natural luminosities, or our own varied potencies, of senses, intellect, imagination, psychic radar, and all the rest. Plotinus= "reasoning is in abeyance and all intellection and even.. the very self; ..this is the true end of the soul: to see the Supreme by the Supreme and not by the light of any other principle.. But how is this to be accomplished? Strip yourself of everything" ['Enneads', VI, 9, p 11; V, 3, p 17].

The real self-abandonment to God, with its ex-stasis of 'going out of the self' to enter into union with God, is not easy. It is a 'dying.' It is this dying to self, this self-transcending, that allows us to pass on God's Love. For we find in all other people, creatures, and things, the Beloved we were to God the Lover of All.

Once we see 'the true Light' of God, then we see this Light in all that God has created. We see everything in the Light of Love, and we take responsibility for all things. Our seeing is warmly loving, as well as spiritually perceptive, not hotly emotional nor coldly rational.

2,

But the Apophatic can be over-done, and then the Cataphatic made possible by 'rinsing' is missed..

No Apophatic= idolatry. The 'god' we invent out of unconscious factors in us, biological, psychological, social, cultural.

The Angry Old Man in the Sky, or The Cuddly Santa Claus who would not say boo to a goose, are equally fictitious. Or= the Supreme Being among all the other beings, just One Supreme Object in a universe of objects [more infinite than finiteness, more eternal than temporality], merely one Superior Ego in a world of egos [the big boss ruling over all the competing contenders]= all this is human invention.

Only Apophatic= God becomes too remote and alien, too abstract, or too indifferent to our fate.

Apophatic= the Reality of God that is beyond us, and is not 'made' by us, nor 'depends' on us.

The Mystery of God.

Cataphatic= the Reality transcending everything that ex-statically passes out of itself, or beyond itself, in order to relate to us, in order to be known by us as we are known by it= in relationship, in participation, in communion.

The Mysterious Reality of God is Love.

Apophatic-and-Cataphatic= God does not only want to love us. God wants to be known by us, because God wants to be loved by us. We cannot love what we cannot know. Knowing serves love, even as love encourages knowing. This is why the ancient Jews equated mystical knowing with sexual congress= it involves an ex-stasis, a going out of self, on the part of God and on the part of humanity; we are met and meet, we are entered and enter, in the ex-stasis of loving.

In and through Love, which arouses our loving, we are contacted by and enter in to contact with, the God beyond all human knowing. St Gregory of Nyssa says that it is God's desire for us that rouses in the soul our desire for God= "the true satisfaction of her desire consists in constantly going on with her quest and never ceasing in her ascent, seeing that every fulfillment of her desire continually generates further desire for the Transcendent" ['Commentary On The Song Of Songs'].

'Unknowing' does not mean, therefore, 'never to know.' Nor should it be conflated with a very valuable willingness to admit to limits to all human knowledge, nor is it the very helpful 'negative capability' of John Keats. The 'cloud of unknowing' is the darkness, the emptiness, the silence, the absence of all positives which allows the real positive 'incoming' of God to be experienced, intuited, felt, seen, 'known.'

We enter a 'negative' so that we do not confuse our usual positive -- human construction and human construal -- for the active outreach of God. By dwelling in the negative, the positive that arises in its 'vacant space' is from God.

The Apophatic is an acid bath which makes possible the 'true' Cataphatic.

Perhaps the worst side-effect of the Apophatic cure is that, if exercised severely and in hostility to the Cataphatic, it becomes impossible to speak of God meaningfully to anyone anywhere at any time. 'He who knows does not speak. He who does not know speaks.' But why say even this, then? If 'silence in the mysterious presence of God' is all we can ever attain in mysticism, then why speak of it at all? Indeed, shouldn't we drop any pointers to the moon, to gaze directly upon the moon itself?

3,

We can under-do the Apophatic. Then we get= idolatry, rationalism, fundamentalism, psychologism, all of which reduce the Mystery of God.

But we can over-do the Apophatic. Then we do not realize that its denial of any positive assertion of God is what makes possible the real revelation, disclosure, manifestation, of God vis a vis all he has created. This throws Light on God and throws Light on the creation, at one and the same moment,

because its purpose is to make known the joining of God and creation effected by Love.

The Love from God is always concerned with other persons, creatures, things, held in its embrace, not just with the particular soul receiving the blessings of Love. If the soul is first a daughter to the Mystery of God, then she can become the partner, the wife, of the ex-stasis of Love, and by virtue of that, she ends up the mother of all that Love attends to and cares for, for she attends to it and cares for it as God does, forgetting herself.

From 1000 AD onwards in the Christian West, there arose a split between a theology without the first-hand experience of mysticism, and a mysticism that conveys no knowledge of God relating to humanity, and humanity relating to God, fellow humans, and everything else, substituting for this what Karin Armstrong illustrates in the case of Richard Rolle [1290-1348 AD]= a spirituality of 'urgent longing', 'interior sweetness', 'infusion of comfort' and 'perfervid love' [p 149]. Armstrong comments= "A flood of pleasurable and consoling emotion would be seen by more and more people as a sign of God's favour" [p 151]. This anti-theological spirituality that distorts 'the felt desire' for God would eventually produce Jacob Boehme, and CG Jung, and arguably even the Aryan Myth of the Nazis= psychological processes in the human unconscious are taken as 'the god within.' No other divinity, with a different claim on humanity other than fulfilling and augmenting the individual self, is recognized..

'Dry as dust theology' versus 'pulsating charismatic mysticism'= a false, and destructive, split.

Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274 AD] illustrates the point of transition where the Christian West starts to lose the true Apophatic spirit in favour of a reversion to the philosophical rationality of Greek Hellenism. To be fair to Aquinas, he still talks about the Unknown God. But this is probably more an imitation of St Dionysius rather than a genuine experience of entry into 'the cloud of unknowing'; and thus instead of the Cataphatic light emanating from the Apophatic dark, Aquinas follows up his bow in the direction of the Apophatic with the famous '5 proofs for the existence of God', a series of spurious arguments which presuppose the metaphysics of Greek Hellenism. It was easy for subsequent Western 'theologians' to drop the concession to the Apophatic, and proceed to exclusively deploy the very kind of 'positive' thinking and terminology that the Apophatic rinsing is designed to get rid of, and banish forever.

4,

We go up to God, shedding all forms and images, and then God descends to us, illuminating all forms and images with the divine Light, Love, Life. We see these forms and images as God sees them. Only Love, passed to us from God and passed on by us to everything, opens up the visionary, eikonic seeing.

The eikon is a paradox= God is unknowable; God is knowable through the Light, Love, Life, that not only shines out from all beings, things, creatures, but opens up face to face, 'hypostatic', encounter between God and humanity. It is this friendly and personal I—Thou meeting with God that humanity then seeks to establish, and live by, with all humans, with all of nature, with all the world of matter, space, time.

The eikon is “a presence and its shining meeting place.. the mystery become image” [Evdokimov, p 174].

The eikon is the Silence that Speaks to us, telling us vitally significant things about the divine, the created, and our own calling as in-between.

Thus through the eikon God's creation as the 'Book of Light' is opened and becomes intelligible.

Black Elk spoke of 'the strangeness and beauty of the earth.' He was seeing, and speaking, in eikonic vein.

VI= Dangers of the Symbol

Symbols of what is beyond human comprehending by sensory and intellectual means are needed to remind us that there are unseen realities. As Evdokimov says, the soul feels an inexplicable affinity with these 'more than the ordinary' realities, as if the soul and they always belonged together= they are the soul's homeland. Symbols show the fuller being that the soul, and the world, have lost, and yearn to reclaim.

But, such symbols are invariably open to multiple interpretations because the mysteries pointed at remain elusively out of reach of the pointer. In symbols, Mystery is quiescent, it has not 'shown its hand.' We are moving out of the everyday toward it, but it is not moving out of the beyond toward us. The Light has not dawned. St Gregory Palamas says of the Light= “whoever participates in [it] ...becomes light himself. He is united to the light, and with the light he sees what is hidden to those who do not have this grace” [p 233].

Symbols are the menu of food, they are not the food itself.

Only in the eikonic image is the food delivered, and therefore restless seeking ends.

Evdokimov [p 235]= “The ikon is a ..representation that invites us to transcend the symbol and to enter into communion with the person represented, and to participate in the indescribable.”

Consequently, an eikon is always looking at us, directly addressing us, engaging with us, person to person. The Light is not impersonal. The Light knows our name. We are persons to the Light.

Three dangers arise from the situation where people do not move beyond the menu, but allow the menu to keep them salivating lifelong without eating.

1,

Because symbols leave the mysteries they imply open-ended and ill-defined in regard to their ontology, such that the mystery does not 'speak for itself' or 'disclose from itself', there is a tendency for the 'more than' to be equated with merely a new view, new perspective, new meaning. Indeed, the expanded reality invoked by symbols ceases to be felt as a fullness of being, in the world and in oneself, and becomes reduced to so many different 'versions' of seeing reality. The 'more than' the everyday has no ontological stability and weightiness, thus only varied ontologically flimsy 'alternate visions' comfort us in our prison house, without implying there is a reality more than vision, anchoring vision= a reality with the power to transform the prison house. It then follows that all 'versions' of reality are equally valid, and all are alternate dreams, indeed alternate 'consoling fictions.' The eye ceases to see a new reality; the only new reality is the eye free to roam through alternate visions. They do not envision anything new ontologically. Hence symbolic imagination actually, despite enjoying the flapping of its wings, goes nowhere, and changes nothing basically; the wings of symbolic imagination mask an ultimate despair about the life that has to go on being lived on the ground. This is why Jung died in hopelessness, uttering with his last breath that his work had been a 'failure.'

2,

Symbols, in their indeterminacy, encourage syncretism. All symbols tend to be regarded as varied expressions of the one and same mysterious reality beyond them. Hence different spiritual systems – whether these be different religions such as Buddhism and Judaism, or different spiritual practices such as alchemy, yoga, theosophy, hesychism – are treated as equivalent. All are just 'pointings' at the moon, and no pointing is the moon.

If the mysterious reality cannot be unveiled more 'in person', on its terms not our terms, but in its terms relating and relevant to our terms, but can only be indirectly evoked, then differences of 'expression' in images and words do not manifest differences in the reality itself in what it offers to different humans.

But, are Celtic and Greek myths really parallel, with the same universal [archetypal] themes? Yes and No. Certain themes recur, yet there is something very bizarre and oddly distinctive about Celtic myths making them basically different to Greek myths.

There is a much bigger problem.

Syncretism rules out not only the freedom of God to give Eros to one people [Hindus and Greeks], and give the Daemonic to a different people [Jews and Christians], but it also eliminates the possibility of differences in Eros as it

moves from the Orient toward the Occident. Eros is more Mother-Child in the Far East but becomes more Man-Woman as it moves Westward= contrast the Sufi path with the Buddhist path. Such differences are not absolute, but a matter of emphasis, and remain fluid, with no tight boundaries. A Buddhist can experience what Rumi experienced in Eros, and vice versa.

But syncretism rules out by definition, and in advance, the vast difference of the way the Daemonic 'reveals' itself and the way Eros 'shows' itself. Symbolism, by definition, tends to ignore and miss the Daemonic, reducing all manifestations of mysteriousness to manifestations of Eros. Worse, this stance rules out that Eros can do something new, and when it does, none of the ancient symbols will be adequate to even hint at it.

'The Incarnation of the Logos in Yeshua' is by no means merely another symbol. This momentous event is a new dispensation of the Light toward humanity. It is not equivalent with symbols pointing to a static, timeless, transcendental, realm far away. The Incarnation of the divine in the human is a huge step, something radically unique, which is done by God for humans. Therefore, whatever images or words or stories are used to convey it cannot have the same gravitas as ancient symbols, words, stories, that point at earlier dispensations of the Light toward humanity. Buddhism has its own eikons of the Light at work in the 'essence' of all things, bestowing upon them their *quintessential quality* which is also their *excellence*, their *virtue*, but this is not the Incarnation of the divine in the human. It is the Logos holding the logoi, the Word holding the words, the One holding the many. The Incarnation is more radical and bizarre than that; in the ringing declaration of St Athanasius= 'God became man so that man might become God, through communion in the overflowing and outpouring grace of God.'

3,

But the third danger of symbols never ontologically anchored is the most serious, more serious than relativism of seeing, and syncretism. This danger is evident in Symbolist art, and all its offshoots. Rejecting materialism, the Symbolists believed that nature and the human world had no inherent value other than its role in intimating the absolute. But if an object's only value lies in its functional ability to disclose the absolute, then everything in the concrete world is little more than a hieroglyphic of some transcendent idea.

In short, symbols tend to encourage us to show interest only in some transcendent world, and its Platonic Ideas of beauty, goodness, rightness. This world of matter, space, and time, is devalued. Indeed, this world is easily devalued to the radical point where it becomes merely a dream, a fiction, an illusion. At best, mere signs of another reality, at worst delusion and folly.

4,

As God is embodied in the humanity of Yeshua, so this prophetically foretells God's coming embodiment in all flesh= humanity, nature, all creation. 'God

will be all in all.' This universal Incarnation will be the Transfiguring of everyone and everything.

Thus, the eikon gains its most significant rationale from the Incarnation in Christ, for this anticipates the final Transfiguration of all persons, beings, creatures, things. This is the meaning of St Paul [Colossians, 1, 15] calling Christ 'the visible image of the unseen God', and 'the firstborn of every creature.' The divine-humanity is the eikonic prototype of what all humanity will become. St Paul also refers to this coming Transfiguration as 'the glory that is to be revealed to us' in Romans, 8, 18-23= "creation itself [subjected to futility and groaning in travail] will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." He includes 'our bodies' in redemption.

The eikonic vision of the whole ontology of the creation Transfigured means it is the true image; the idol is a false image; the symbol is an incomplete, and potentially misleading, image.

Such Transfiguration rules out relativism in viewpoints, syncretism, and the devaluing of matter. Most of all, it combats the despair lurking under all three dangers.

But each of us must make our own journey from symbol to the negative imageless unknowing and then moving to the positive visionary knowing.

It is vision which will render imagination 'sanctified and sacred', by opening up its symbols to the Light that fashioned their secrets. Much of the very richness of symbols can be wasted, like unpicked fruit rotting on the branch, until the Light illumines their meaning in the *economia* of the Transfigured Creation.

Thus, the approach to the creating and reading of symbols post-eikon is very different to that pre-eikon.

Without eikonic awareness, even sacred symbols, especially sacred symbols, remain un-illumined, and therefore are easily misread, sentimentalised, intellectualised, ignored.

The First Temple of Solomon portrayed the implicate design of human nature set within the implicate design of the creation, and the divine both at the centre of this totality and circumscribing it, like the arms of a parent holding a child.

But how many people entering any such sacred space can sense, feel, intuit, such richness of meaning? They don't 'get the message.' If they did, their soul and body would vibrate to the big dance of energies wherein they were standing.

Wisdom, 7, 17-21= "I learned both what is secret and what is manifest."

VII= The Limitation of the Eikon

1,

The beauty of God manifested through the forms and images of the creation is in anticipation of 'the new heaven and new earth', the Transfigured creation, which will come at the End.

Therefore the eikon is paradoxical in terms of time. The Light radiating out from it is both a recovery of the Paradisiacal Beginning and a foretaste and prevision of the Transfigured End. It is what was, and what will be. It shows the Primal Light which humanity could actually see, so that God was a presence at the core of the fabric of the world, and was in that fabric as its subtext, its implicate foundation, its guiding inbuilt hands.

In Primal Awareness, humanity saw that its own being and the being of everything were bathed in the same unifying Light of God. The oldest paintings [30,000 BC] on the walls of caves far underground, shrouded in velvet darkness, depicts animals. These animals are eikonic. They are not symbolic. They have the 'spirit shape' of the actual horse, the real spirit essence of the animal that is incarnate in the body and therefore allows the animal to run. These eikonic images of animals have life, movement, soul, and even look out, sometimes, in their own hypostatic manner.. Humans are barely portrayed, often only stick figures, indicating that the beholder is not self-consciously wrapped up in their own problems, and aspirations, thus unable to see the 'splendour in the grass' right in front of them. As with haiku poetry which is also eikonic, not symbolic, the gaze does not enumerate the outward but penetrates the outer, seeing the inner in the outer, and witnessing the Mystery of Love that 'holds' everything.

However, there is something that the Light of the eikon cannot illuminate, nor change.

The depth of hell into which humanity has fallen, in and through the heart, cannot be plumbed or fathomed by the Light of Love. It can only be searched out, taken on, battled, and undermined in its grounding, by the Fire of Love. Between the Light shining in things of the Beginning, and the Light joined with things of the End, there is a terrible and crippling hiatus. The Fall has to be Redeemed by Fire, or the loss of the Original Light in which humanity and everything bathed together, sharing its abundance, will remain lost, and the Final Light will not come. For, the Light at the End of time can only arrive through the Victory of the Fire in the Middle of time.

Only in a few eikons, and then by accident, does the black and red of the fighting and suffering passionateness of Fire enter. This has happened mainly with warrior eikons, though the face of John the Baptist on an eikon kept at St Catherine's monastery near Mt Sinai exemplifies it no less. This is not surprising. John the Forerunner was warrior and prophet. Moreover, Greek eikons are usually more dynamic than immobile Russian eikons, and in this way, Fire is invoked. This is evident in the Greek eikon of Christ 'dragging'

Adam and Eve, with great forcefulness, out of hell. Christ's face is not contemplatively at peace, nor is it in contemplative stillness, rather, it is passionately concentrated, but it is the body that carries the energy of his passion combating the hellishness in which Adam and Eve have been stuck.

Light is not enough to redeem the Fall of humanity. But this means that Light, on its own, cannot deify the human venture. On this point Evdokimov is radically in error, as is that stance in Eastern Orthodox Christianity which sees 'crucified love' only as the Light stooping down to our unenlightened state, to bring us up from, and out of, its darkness. This is the Salvation that betters our condition, but the price of doing that is to leave the heart in hell. The Light is a warm Love, but only the Fire is a burning Love. It takes Holy Burning to undergo and defeat hellish burning.

Deification of humanity is not through the Light, it is through the Fire.

The deification supposedly accomplished by the Light can only raise human nature up to the Light= this has no depth. The deification actually accomplished by the Fire loses all Light, in order to search out, to fathom, the depth. The Fire of God combats the fire of hellishness, suffering it to overthrow it, convicted by it to undermine it.

This is why deification cannot happen through the contemplative quiet of the monastic life; it has to come through the active involvement of passionate struggling in the world.

The contrast is marked in Evdokimov's inability to look down into the real hell. He reduces it to the Greek Hades or Jewish Sheol, merely the first rung of the deepest rungs of hell=

"Light makes every person alive, making him present; he is thus the one who sees and is seen by the other, the one who lives with and 'toward' the other, the one existing in the other. On the other hand, hell – the Greek Hades or the Jewish Sheol – designate a darkened place where solitude reduces a person to the extreme emptiness of demonic solipsism where no one's look crosses another's" [p 5]. But this is not what Hades is to the heart, and it ignores the tortured Furnace and the empty Abyss.

The Light's remedy for 'demonic solitude' is the restoration of relationship. Not surprisingly, Evdokimov locates this medicine in the Temple "which is already a fragment of eternity.. It calls us to a radical turn around.. in human relations, to 'the sacrament of the brother', ..to.. compassion and tenderness toward all creatures" [p 149]. This healing is Eros, and ignores the Daemonic redemption. Healing human relations has been a major concern of twentieth century thought and practice, with Martin Buber pre-eminent, but many psycho-therapists [Object Relations= Fairbairn et al] and philosophers [Phenomenology= Merleau-Ponty et al] making important contributions. None of this plumbs the hell in the human heart.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity has rightly stressed human deification in Christ, but it has, mainly under the influence of the monks, articulated the wrong doctrine of deification. It is only through the heart -- not through soul and body, soul and nous -- that divinisation happens. This is why there must be hell. We endure hell for the sake of the real deification.

Why hell? That we are in hell, that anyone has to be subject to hell, is our desperate cry, and one among the long list of 'blasphemous' objections to God.

We cannot stand it, we complain..

But complaining does not change it. We bear it, even as we say we cannot bear it.

There is the most secret wisdom of all, the most hidden treasure, in hell, when we plumb its fathomless deeps and pass through it with the Messiah.

Hell exists for our deification. There is no other way that the radical love redeems the radical freedom in the Abyss.

The eikon shows the Transfigured being, nature, life, in humanity and in all creatures and things-- but only if the unportrayable dark Fire wins in the Abyss. Then, only then, does the Light return to complete its work.

This is why St Paul told the Greeks [1 Corinthians, 15, 3] that the Cross of Christ is of "the first importance"= primary, fundamental, important before anything else. It was this Cross which many prominent Greco-Roman writers of the day mocked, jeered at, dismissed as 'depraved and excessive superstition', 'a most mischievous superstition', and many other fulminations against such a 'cruel and ugly' reality.

Hell is not punishment by the wrath of God which must be appeased. Hell is the existential condition of the human heart that fails to hit the mark of its calling, that betrays its own deepest fire of action 'for a mess of potage.' Yet this betrayal is played upon and amplified by 'the evil one' and becomes institutionalized, set in stone, 'the only reasonable way to proceed.' The Cross is the divine and human conjoint pathos necessary to undo the binding of humanity to an evil grounding for existing in the world.

St Gregory of Nyssa ['Against Eunomius', 5; PG, 44, 1289]= "The fire that is hidden and as it were smothered under the ashes of this world.. will blaze out and with its divinity burn up the husk of death."

Thus Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition says of the fallen world that it is 'a still smouldering flame beneath a hard crust of ashes.' Only the Cross can reignite the flame almost gone out. This is the Fire of Spirit which Christ came into the world 'to kindle.'

1 John, 3, 8= “To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” St Symeon the New Theologian comments [in ‘The Sin Of Adam’, p 48]=

“..for those [who are] called Christians, and do [the] works of the devil, what benefit is there from the fact that they are called Christians, when the manifestation of the Son of God has not destroyed in them [the] works of the devil?”

If anyone will say that some of those who are like this [nevertheless] explain the Divine Scripture, theologize, preach Orthodox dogmas-- let them know that it is not in this that the work of Christ consists. John the Theologian does not say, *to this end was the Son of God manifested*, that certain ones should theologize and orthodoxize [pride themselves on their orthodoxy].. The Son of God, the Word, did not become man in order only that men should believe in the Holy Trinity, glorify it, and theologize about it, but in order to destroy the works of the devil.”

2,

This raises a question in regard to the Light so pre-eminent in the Sacred Temple.

Why do eikons not present hell in its real existential agony? By refusing to permit this, neither do they present the Fire that redeems hell from within its abysmal profundity. In eikons of the Crucifixion, the Abyss below the Cross is sketchily present, yet not delved in any fullness. The mystery of what happens ‘down there’, between Christ’s death and resurrection, has a veil drawn over it.

Is this playing up of the Light, and playing down of the Fire, a limitation inherent to the Sacred Temple? Does its very Sacredness exclude the extreme Holiness?

Or is there a rationale for it?

It could be that the Temple cannot do its job if it admits hell into its sacred precincts. Witness how the false hells – the endless threats of damnation -- of the Western churches have driven out the real Light. It breaks through occasionally, but these spaces dominated by hellish terror of God do not enlighten those cowering in them.

Yet if the Temple excludes the real hells so heartbreaking in the very ground of the human condition, can the Temple do its job? Not if it is a Jewish—Messianic Temple.

This is a paradox, an antinomy, a contradiction.

What the Temple is most at home with is Beginning and End, First Sacred Garden and Final Holy City. That is its emphasis on the Light.

The Light unveils all things as they really are. It does not idealise nor romanticise. It is loving yet real= it unveils the corpse being eaten by maggots as it unveils the dew on the rose petals reflecting the early morning sun. Nothing is shunned, nothing is avoided, nothing is repulsive and repudiated, everything is accepted and 'brought to light' for what it is.

Hell is the absence of God.

The Temple is the place of the presence of God.

Thus in the Temple the absence of God is difficult to 'include.' Its ugliness, its despair, in a real sense has the power to invalidate, or negate, the transformational space of the Sacred.

Why is this?

However much Christ has, as the Redeemer, passed through and accomplished 'the harrowing of hell', as the West terms it, this is opening up a road where previously no road existed, but as yet, only the Redeemer has walked it, and it cannot be victorious unless all of humanity, not just a few, walk it according to the Messianic Example and by the propulsion of the Messianic Spirit. Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God, but this power and wisdom remains secret until each one of us, and over the long haul of time, all of us, follow its Way, Truth, Life.

What the Temple finds unbearable to face is that Christ's victory in hell remains provisional, since it is not won in the rest of humanity. Indeed, it might never be won, and therefore it might ultimately be defeated in the End. Christ's victory is not unilateral, something done for us which lets us off the hook of following its lead, but is 'theandric', something that is dialogical which needs us to complete what it initiated. Christ's deed is done with us, through our entering in to it and cooperating with it. Yet this leaves the journey and battle toward the real celebration suspended, in doubt, at risk, to the very end.

The Temple can hope in everyone joining in, but it cannot pre-empt human freedom. This is why the universal redemption cannot be a part of the Temple's dogma. It cannot pre-empt what no one knows. Yet most Orthodox saints not merely hoped for, but had faith in universal redemption. Why?

This is faith not only in God, actively at work with wisdom and power in Christ's redeeming deed, it is also faith in the human heart.

Indeed, oddly, it is faith in something God has planted, as seed and spark, in the very defeat of the human heart in hell.

Only on Holy Saturday of Passion Week does the Temple refer to this most ultimate, and terrible, of all the mysteries it has been vouchsafed.

The secret of Fire is proclaimed in the liturgical prayer-- yet briefly, circumspectly, without any triumphalism which would be 'premature', and disrespect how awful it really is, still, in the hell of the heart.

The prayer announces that God's wisdom and power is a 'secret' hidden in hell, once Christ has gone through hell. This secret is the factor the devil has not counted on, and which no amount of jeering at the futility of the Cross, and despairing over the gap between Christ's redeeming action and the human response to it, can cancel out.

This points to a supreme irony.

Symbols not only point to various levels and kinds of reality. They also hide a buried intimation of mysteries belonging only to the future, once redemption is pervasive in all humanity.

In this sense, the Temple guards secrets of the victory of Christ not 'for' us all, but 'in' us all. These symbols cannot be unpacked until we all, each and every one of us, tests the harrowing of hell in our own existence, in our own plunging into and passing through hell.

When we are living this, then those few cryptic symbols in the Temple foreseeing victory for all, not for Christ alone, nor for a few around Christ, come alive for each and for all.

In our very heartbreak, these symbols of a future victory are not illumined by the Light, but they leap into vivid burning reality through the Fire.

The Apocalypse of John of Patmos is one of these future symbols that cannot be illumined by the Light in Christ, but can be brought to life when we are living what Christ lived, passing through what Christ passed through, losing what he lost, enduring what he endured, passionately risking our future to his passionate risk for the future. This is why Christ warns those who dare to call themselves Christian= "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be" [John, 12, 26].

In hell, only in hell, will the Fire unlock the secrets that the symbols of the future have kept hidden, the secrets that will help us go on, and go through, to the End.

These symbols of the future are the secrets of the poem of grief and fire our life becomes only in hell.

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN?

The old cliché, endlessly repeated, is that Christianity was built on the foundation put down by the Jews. This Jewish basis supposedly passed into Christianity, influencing first the Greeks, then the Latins, and finally the Nordics [Anglo-Saxons, Germans, Scandinavians]. The truth is tragically different.

The heart and passion of the Jews did not pass into Greek Christianity, and thus neither did it ever reach Latin Christianity, nor did it revive in Nordic Christianity. The quintessential Jewish element, the treasure beyond counting, did not 'found' Christianity. This is why Christianity, of all kinds, went wrong, and continues to go wrong..

The Greek Fathers left undisturbed some of the very core of Hellenic metaphysical spirituality, and this had a hugely negative impact on Christianity over the centuries. Like Plato before them, Christians became far too taken up with the longing for heaven [in the soul], and as a consequence, became increasingly indifferent to the plight of the world [in the heart]. Christians embraced the need to do their duty toward this vale of tears, by being a person of upright character, and doing deeds of charity for others, but this was often done grudgingly, and only to ensure 'getting into heaven.' Love for the world, and thus a loving willingness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of the world, was rarer than hens teeth.

Typical of this bias towards heaven, and against the world, is a sermon by a Christian priest where it was stated= 'the very point of life is to find your place at the heavenly banquet. The heavenly homeland should be held more precious than a few short years in this world. Finding our place at the heavenly banquet is the most important thing in the world-- more important than the world.'

This statement is Platonism masquerading as Christianity. It is not remotely Jewish, and that is why it is not Christian either.

THE POST-MESSIANIC FIRE, AND THE LIGHT THAT SERVES ITS MISSION

1,

The Light that excludes the Fire= to stand pat on the start and resist the existential birth that propels us toward the end.

This becomes an Eros that resists the Daemonic.

This is seeking communion with divinity before the Fall, or, if after the Fall, then it translates into communion with Christ's Resurrection which restores and indeed divinises humanity.

This is the error of the wrong relationship to the originating, the original; wrongly clinging to it, like a child who will not let the mother go.

2,

However, the origin is God-given= this is its rightness, and such rightness cannot be artificially constructed by human effort, however well intentioned, once it is lost.. Preserving this is necessary, as you guard something sacred.

The primal bridge, conduit, connection, between God and humanity is not to be thoughtlessly thrown away. This bridge teaches us what communing is, what communication is, what joining into, and joining with, is. It is marvellous.

The first proceeding, the first rising, of the Light of divinity and its direct manifesting, glowing, illumining, of the human is not to be repudiated, wherever and in whatever 'form' it happens. It happens all over the world, and happens to those outside religion as well as inside religion. It is the 'Light that enlightens every person who comes into the world.' This Light is natural, in that it is given to me and to you, indeed, it shines most radiantly among us when everyone gathers around it and it addresses us as 'we.' Every human being has this Light, and so in a certain way, is lit up by it and lights up the world and other people with their own way of conveying it. Not only is everyone 'in' the Light, 'in their own 'way', illumined by and manifesting a share of the Light in their particular channelling of it, but everyone therefore has 'an original face' that, like a stained glass window, is lit up in its colour and pattern by that Light radiating from within, and going without. No particularity, from an insect on a leaf, to his personhood or her personhood, just disappears into Light, dissolved, melted, formless. Every form is a window of the Light, and no form repeats another. Each 'light' that is in us, that shines from our 'original face', is unique, even as its uniqueness is only so because it differently manifests the common Light. When we see the Light in the face looking at us, and know it is the same Light looking out at them, then we can share the Light, among us, between us, passed around.. We can

delight in this sharing of the common gift, for it honours the common and the unique equally, at the same time.

Thus, even as we speak of the Light, we can and must also speak of the Light-in-Andy, and thus we must refer to the Light and the Light-in-Anita in the same breath, and realise this holds for everyone.

It holds for all created things.

The Light and the Light-in-the-eagle-on-the-wing.

The Light and the Light-in-the-tree-still-and-deep-rooted-in-the-green-forest.

Anything or anybody we hate= we reject the Light in them, and we seek the extinguishing of their way of revealing the Light. Hating certain people, even hating certain animals, means extinguishing their original face, their ikon, their song= their way of shining the Light into the world and onto everything and everyone they meet, their way of forming the Light's imaginative power of Formlessness, their way of voicing the Light's music of Silence.

Do we want the many poems of the Light extinguished?

The Light loves everything it lights up, and we, if really enlightened by it, love the Light and love everything and everyone it falls upon, bringing to light the particular luminance of that person, being, creature, thing.

Why isn't this enough?

3,

It isn't enough= yet affirming that implies no disrespect to the Light.

A koan governs the Light.

It is necessary but not sufficient.

The sudden sense we have – which can be brought by terrible and inexplicable things happening to us, or can hit us inwardly, coming from nowhere -- that the Light's sufficiency is cracking is the 'existential crisis', the injury in the fabric of things, that lets in the Fire.

The first Fire-Bearers are always injured people= outsiders, those living beyond the city walls, trying to survive on scraps, trying to avoid getting carted off to Golgotha, or thrown into Gehenna, but always on the margins, always beyond the pale.

The injured people, the heyoka clown, the holy fool, the human trash, the human rejects, the brain injured so that an opening for electricity to come through happens= all these, and many more, are those who fall out of the Light, and live near ultimate destruction. The floor boards fall away and they

fall into deeper places, not only the psychological damage of childhood but the spiritual damage of the human condition, 'surfaces' in them, and can never be pushed under the surface any more..

The people living in the Light, gathered together by the Light, communicating through the Light, their community a communing in Light, share love, but they are incapable of going out of this 'sacred circle' to confront where love fails. They do not do 'forsakenness.' The Light always gathers them all in. This is the glory of the Light, yet also this is the limit on the Love the Light demonstrates. The deepest Love must go where Love fails to gather in; the real Love must go where all primal and primary Love has failed, the land that is forsaken of Love, forsaken to Love.

But it is not forsaken by Love.

The real extremity of the Love of God's heart cannot be manifested, shown, emanated, conveyed, by the warm, inviting Light.

Only the Fire of Spirit reveals the real heart of God, and only the forsakenness of hell provokes the depths of that heart in God.

This is why God risked humanity to falling out of the Light and farther and farther away from it, into the land forsaken of Love. In this land, the First Love between God and humanity, among humanity, among humanity and the creation, fails. This land becomes forsaken of that Love. But it is not forsaken of any Love. Yahweh has not forsaken the land forsaken of Love. It is exactly in this new and terrible place, in this new and terrible time, that the deepest and greatest heart of God will be revealed.

Why did God let the loss of the Light happen?

God let it happen to give us the Fire.

God risked us to losing the Light not only to reveal his heart, but also to give us a heart like his= to make our divinisation in, and through, the heart.

God has risked us to lose all heart so that, in our terrible struggling within and without, his way of heart can be tested and proved, and burned into, our heart. The two ways of heart converge. This is the divine-humanity of Christ.

I remember the long night in which, by the fast flowing river of time, we contended.

God and humanity battle, initially, but gradually this battle for the heart changes.

We fought to a stand-still, and the fight changed. It became our battle against the real adversary, he who judges and accuses the heart.

God is implacable, relentless, unswerving, in his intent.

Evil is given its day. The Light cannot stop it, nor save in the Light, save from the outer darkness and outer hell, the human heart that must live through the evil day and live it through to its end, which will be hell, or the defeat of hell.

What heart can wrestle with hell?

What heart can defeat hell, without simply suppressing it?

The Light penetrates its concealment but cannot fight it on its own turf.

The Fire takes it on.

The Fire gives evil its fiery day, gives evil its due, lets it challenge and test, and put under trial, the heart.

The heart is put in a bind, put under pressure, put under scrutiny.

The human heart is burned by this, its first battle results in ignominious and catastrophic defeat.

The gamble of God with the human heart, that it can be tested and proved worthy of carrying the divine heart, can destroy humanity.

In the wisdom and power of God, this will be the destruction that reforges humanity.

The Light cannot let evil search to the bottom of the human heart. In gathering in, in gathering together, it cannot deal with what is broken for the Light's incoming. The Light exposes evil, but it cannot transform it, in the abyssal underneath where evil lodges, and gets its purchase on the heart.

The Light calls us all in. But if we stay out, if we cannot come in, then there arises the lost land, and the lost people of that land, the people left outside.

The human heart is not active in the Light. It is benign, sweetened, peaceable, in the Light. The nous and the soul rule, together, in the Light. Nous is he, soul is she. The mind-soul axis is adequate for the life in the Light.

The 'hidden man of the heart' sleeps and dreams good dreams, in the Light.

This is why we must fall out of the Light= the heart is made free by God, and is forced to enter the evil day, where there is no more Light.

The land forsaken of the First Light of Love becomes the forsaken land contested by the Fire of the deeper and greater Love.

Only in the forsaken land, through the forsaken people, through the forsaken parts in all people, will the Fire of God contest the evil day in the fiery troubles that let no heart rest.

The Light suppresses this battling.

The Fire takes it on.

As the long night wore on, digging in, my exhausted heart began to prevail against your implacable, relentless immovability; your forces shifted, giving ground. I came harder, and you turned me, using my own force to unbalance my standing, and then, as I did not go down, but refound my footing, I began to believe I could outlast our stalemate. A strange joy began erupting. Not you, not me, the fight became our prevailing.

The Fire contests the risking of the human heart by God.

The Fire will not back off, and give the evil day over to its ruler, in the name of some kind of retreat back to the Light, where the gamble is forfeit. Returning to the Light to escape, or get clear of, the evil day, is not going to be allowed by God. 'This is not going to happen.'

The evil day becomes the 'day of trouble' when the Fire locks horns with the options, questions, cleverness, potency, of evil. It is a fair contest. It is not rigged in advance= it could go either way, it could turn out well, it could end very badly.

Our failure of heart becomes the very turn around, the finish that becomes a second chance; or it really is 'the end.'

God will not undo the evil one's first victory over humanity's heart, magically, supernaturally, by deus ex machina.

The Light becomes, in the face of this tragedy, a heavenly estate too light-weight compared with the heaviness of the forsaken land of heart. It is not that the devil has all the best stories= he has the only story. Heaven becomes, in this duality, the land of those bathed in Light but without heart= a place for the castrati, the flames that have gone out, so the lights in heaven shine but cannot burn. The Fire will not make them warmly burn in the Light [like a sea of candles flickering in the church]. The Fire has another task= not to let them be saved into the Light, where the test and trial of their heart prematurely ends, but to join with them in the forsaken land where hellish fires and the Holy Fire contest the human heart.

It is a fiery ordeal. It is ugly, not beautiful. It is harsh, not sweet. It makes us sweat, and stink, and bleed, and cry. It is not 'pretty.' It is, in reality, very hard to look at. Very few people can look at the human heart really up against it, pressed to the limit, in the most arduous and fiery tests and trials.

The Light continues to illumine but cannot take it on.

The Fire takes it on.

What heart can wrestle with hell?

What heart can defeat hell, without simply suppressing it?

The day of trouble is when the Fire violently seizes the evil day, and digs in, and from this moment onward, it is a street fight, ugly, brutal, unremitting. Don't romanticise it. Don't idealise it. Keep your theology under wraps= it is no use in this place, in this time.

God's heart is going to be revealed by this.

Humanity's heart is going to be unconcealed by this.

God has allowed evil to probe and sift and try the human heart, to reveal the hidden heart of Yahweh, and to make humanity's horrendous battle with evil the furnace in which our heart is destroyed and remade as the throne and chariot of his heart.

The Daemonic is in nature= 'the storm that brings healing rain', but in the city of existential freedom, in the existential arena of spiritual test, the Daemonic is much more free, much more ferocious, much more actively revealing of its full intensity= it has to be to take on the evil that has its day, is given its due, in precisely that terrain.

Evil cannot be 'tried out', honestly and fully, when the heart is living in nature.

The city pretends it is not living through the evil day, where the heart is tried out and as part of that, evil must be allowed to be tried out; thus it makes a deceptive distinction between inside the walls, outside the walls. But what is outside the walls uncannily is wholly decisive for what happens inside the walls. The vandals are at the gates, and every empire will fall.

Golgotha is the wasteland beyond the walls. You see its secret presence within the walls all the time, if you awake in the heart. The infant's cry, the harlot's curse, the blood running down palace walls= it is all there to see, if you want to look at the desperate struggling of the human heart, buffeted by the evil fires, and whose only advocate is the Holy Fire. Decent people, nice people, people gathered in by the fading echoes of an already lost Light, do not want to face the street fight and so they deny themselves access to their only ally. It is not the Light. It is the Fire defending them. But they reject the Fire, and cower ever more tightly in the ever more constricting circles of illumination that is only a faint afterglow, and no wonder the evil people fight better than these good people trying to hide in an ever diminishing light..

The devil has the best stories, the best thugs..

The Circle of the Heavenly Light has become ever more denuded of the stories, of the warriors.

Fulminating religious fundamentalists, wanting to 'give them hell', for not kowtowing to their religious misunderstanding, are not in the Light or in the Fire. They are another example of the outlanders, the jackals roaming the forsaken land.

Maybe no one will wake to the heart until the city is torn down, and the hill of Golgotha over Gehenna is all that remains. We could arrive at that catastrophe very quickly. The Fire of God could push us there, to force us to get real.

If that is what it takes to bring the hidden man of the heart out of hiding, whether in the Light or in the conventional life of pretences within the city walls, or scrounging for scraps in the rubbish dumps outside the city walls, then the Spirit of Fire will do it.

It is going to get tougher, more real in struggle in the contest of the Second Love which is Fire, before it gets gentle again, before the Light returns.

In the hiatus, we are in a fire storm because the day of trouble is fighting fair with the evil day, and that 'complicated', 'difficult', 'ambiguous', 'ambivalent', day is our heart.

It is a paradox.

Through the real existential threat of evil, God reveals his heart, and refashions our heart, as his vehicle.

This is the divine-humanity.

This is the Christ.

4,

The West of Christianity= over heated hellishness.

The East of Christianity= under cooled hellishness.

[1]

In the West, a duality is created between Light and 'fieriness', and fieriness becomes the way in which the Light defends its gathering in, consigning anyone and anything not gathered in to a burning that is punishing because it is without any of the gifts of Light showered on those in the Light. Thus, God's wrath is fiery, but all this burning does is to create a place where those who have lost the Light will burn forever, without any hope of remission.

In effect, hellishness is an aspect of God, God's wrath which cannot be drawn in-- unless it is assuaged, or appeased, in a way adequate to its justified indignation. On this scenario, Christ takes the hit meant for us, to get off us

the hook. We therefore have only two options. Accept Christ as the only intermediary between us and the divine anger, the only one able to ameliorate it. If we accept this Saviour's suffering in our stead, then we go to heaven, saved from 'what we had coming.' If we deny this Salvational suffering, then we go where we were always headed, 'getting our just deserts.'

Light or hellishness are the two dualistic alternatives.

There is no Holy Fire. No holy burning, in grief, in battle, in struggling. No ardour, no leaping, no staking to the ground, no sacrificing, no humbling, no extremity of the heart's doing in the powerful impulsion of Holy Fire.

Could Christ, if truly a man as well as God, have got through Passion Week if he did not have the Holy Fire igniting his human fire of passion, and spreading holy flame through-out his guts, his back, his balls, his whole body and whole inner constitution driven from the heart? Christ's Passion is not to be understood, as many Greeks do understand it, as the Light incarnate in Yeshua simply passively putting up with the assault of evil passion, devilish and human, upon him. Then the hypostatic personhood does not act, but is acted upon. This is a radical error. It misunderstands what 'passionateness', from the Spirit in his own spirit, actively sustained Yeshua. He met the evil passion in the devil and in human beings passionately.

The Light of God filled even Yeshua's garments earlier in his ministry, so much so that when someone just touched these clothes, he felt that divine energy went out of him and flowed into that person.

No Light could have gone through what Christ endured in Passion Week. The Fire took him to Gethsemane and tested him there, and the Fire drove him on to Golgotha, even as it would then take him through Gehenna and raise him on the other side.

The West is Light versus hellish fire; whether that fieriness originates in God, or is just generated by God as the dwelling place of eternal disquiet for those outside the Light, and refusing its 'atonement' as their way back in.

[2]

The East knows the 'true Light', the Light all primal peoples lived in, and the Light whose first dawning was seen in the religions of the Orient.

The East's problem is to dismiss the hellishness of the West, and by trying to engineer a scenario where it does not really enter in, also reduces the action and drama of the Holy Spirit of Fire at work in the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection, of the Messiah. This then turns into an inability to understand, and 'go' with, the Post-Messianic Fire actively contesting the world's fate, to give it a different destiny to that of increasing hellishness taking over the world process.

The East, in being Ortho-Dox, gets the Light right, and many felicities emerge from that. The East understands that the Light's invitation is not only to communicate with it, face to face, I—Thou, but actually commune in it, sharing its abundance= eat and drink its 'food', which is the nourishing and regenerative gift of divine overflowing which pours into our diminished nature, being, life, like water into a desert.

The Communion offered by the Light is its chief blessing to humanity. Peter spoke of humanity becoming 'partakers in the divine nature.' The Greeks understood this, and they also understood that in Christ, God partakes of the human nature, and humanity partakes of the divine nature. No Jew would have gone so far, though communing is certainly Jewish in ethos. It replaces the mystical melting of the human 'back' into the divine of the Orient. God remains God and humanity remains humanity in the knitting together of divine and human, uncreated and created, natures.

James Bernstein, a Jew who became a Protestant, then an Orthodox, Christian, is at pains to distinguish the Ortho-Doxia of communing with Christ from the dreadful 'atonement' scenarios of the West=

"My youthful experience in [Orthodox] Judaism taught me that God loves. Though we had many laws to fulfil, God was always presented as merciful and forgiving. Salvation was never taught as our being delivered from God's wrath. In my eighteen years as a Protestant, I came to view salvation as our being saved from the wrath of God and from the hell that he created for the lost" ['Surprised By Christ', 2008, p 219].

Bernstein points out that the same interpretation is in the Roman Catholic Council of Trent [1546] which puts an anathema on anyone who does not confess that= "the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offence of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently [came under the power of] death, with which God had previously threatened him, and ..with death, [also incurred] captivity under [the devil] who thenceforth had the empire of death, and that the entire Adam, through that offence of prevarication, was changed, in body and soul, for the worse."

Bernstein= "According to St Irenaeus, man's original state was one of spiritual.. innocence, and simplicity joined to moral purity. Man was to gain the divine likeness through a slow process. He does not view man's Fall as a full-blown rebellion, but rather as an impulsive desire to grow before his time" [pp 220-221]. In Lakota tradition, according to Wilmer Mesteth, the primal fault in humanity is 'prematurity.' This urge to fly before you can walk is Luciferian. It is Lucifer, in the form of the mythical Serpent [not a snake], who woos Eve, as the deceptive Eros, to throw off her husband's lower and more arduous long-walk, in order to use soul and nous to 'soar.'

In Eastern Orthodox teaching, in the Fall humanity turns from God as Light= thus we turn away from the Light's illumining and put ourselves 'in the dark', and turn away from the Light's life, and put ourselves 'in deadening.'

Bernstein= "the Fall damages the spiritual eye but does not destroy it. We are not totally blind, because having been created in the image and likeness of God, we still retain free will and some degree of desire for God. Faith remains within us, though it may be the size of a mustard seed. Having faith is not an all or nothing issue. Just as differing levels of fallenness exist, so do varying degrees of faith" [p 221].

Bernstein= "...when Orthodox read a verse like 'Christ died for our sins' [1 Corinthians, 15, 3], it is understood to mean Christ died *for* us -- to heal us, ..to make us more godlike -- not *instead of us*. The ultimate purpose of his [sacrifice on the Cross].. is to change us, not to avert the wrath of God" [pp 252-253].

But what does 'make us more godlike' really mean?

The Greeks are tempted to limit the communion of humanity with divinity to communing with the Light. The Greeks are apt to miss the pained existential realism of the communing in the Fire.

In repudiating the Satanic hellishness of the Fire of God in the West, they have curtailed the Fire as the driving engine of the passionate contest for what future humanity and the world will 'move' toward, the fires of hellishness or the Holy Fire. The Greeks over-estimate what the Light can 'do', and under-estimate what only the Fire can, in reality, do.

Salvation brings to humanity a regeneration of fallenness by virtue of actual union with God, through communion with Christ. This is to be "purified, [cleansed], illumined, and ultimately transfigured organically, within the very essence of our being" [Bernstein, p 259]. Thus= "forgiveness of sin is not a change in legal status concerning the exterior of our life, but a change in the very condition and state of our ...inner being, and essence. Forgiveness of sin is the actual removal of sin, which includes our effort and participation" [p 260].

This is the Salvation which is ontological, not moralistic or juridical. It seeks to remove three barriers between God and humanity, according to Bernstein [p 258]. The barrier between the uncreated and the created is overcome in the Incarnation of God in humanity, uniting the divine and human without confusion. Sin is overcome on the Cross. Death is overcome in the Resurrection. According to Bernstein, we are saved *from* death, sin, and the devil, and saved *for* union with God.

Bernstein= "we are able to be united with Christ.. not figuratively but actually" [p 261].

It can be claimed that 'removing barriers' is the more Eros-based understanding of Salvation in the Christian East. It has strong echoes of the mysticism of Light in the first Jewish Temple of Solomon.

But what does it really mean that= "We die with Christ and we are raised with Christ as we participate in his life" [p 261]?

For the Eastern Orthodox, this process of barrier-removal is too focused on the Temple= "In Holy Communion we partake in faith of his gloried humanity, and his humanity and our humanity become one" [p 261].

This rush to the glory of the raised Christ, under-stressing the real existential radicalism of his agony on the Cross and his battling in Hell, is where the all too Greek Eros blots out the Jewish Daemonic. It contains a significant error.

God is referred to in Eastern Orthodox services as "the Lover of Mankind." However, is God the Eros lover, or the Daemonic lover? Is this referring to the First Love of the Light, or the Second and Last Love of the Fire?

The danger of the bias that Greeks put on Ortho-Doxia -- a bias not inherent to it and really a subtle distortion of it -- is that Christ's active and passionate deed in the active and passionate Fire of God is 'reduced' to a doctrine about Eros. Thus the Eastern approach extends the generosity of God's Goodness, such that God's Life is extended to, and overcomes, our death, God's Compassion is extended to, and overcomes, our sin.

This insistence on communing with God which ontologically transmutes the human into the divine-human, after the pattern of Christ, under-estimates both the hell of our separation from God, and the radical sacrifice of the Cross needed to redeem it. The separation is not between the two natures, the separation is in the heart, and it is in the heart there must be reconciliation. This must happen first, before the knitting together of the two natures. In Christ, the existential is primary, the engine, and the ontological is the beneficiary, the consequence. In Christ, the Fire is the leader, and the Light follows. In the story of Christ, the Light becomes ever more subject to the terribleness and mystery of the Fire. Early on, it is all Light. But as it proceeds, the Fire looms up and takes hold of Yeshua's salvational potencies, imposing upon him, as the room of no exit, the harsh and powerful redemptive destiny for which he came into the world. He did not come into the world to bring Light, he came into the world to bring Fire.

It is this will of the Father, that the Light be given over to the Fire, to which Yeshua was obedient. The final Light-Bringer became the first Fire-Bearer.

He ended the Way of Light, and made the Light the bridge into the Fire.

Saving= the lost.

Redeeming= the broken.

The danger in the Greek bias is that the Messianic Mystery would be confined to the Last Supper, such that people sincerely believe partaking in the Cup of the Last Supper is sufficient 'shedding of blood' and 'breaking of body'; if you partake in the Last Supper, then that mysteriously connects you to the Cross. But the Last Supper then stands in as sufficient Cross for us. We only stand at the Cross, like Mary and John, we are absolved from going onto the Cross, like Peter.

It is not that the Eastern Way of communion, more ontological than existential, is wrong. It is that it leaves out what is more dynamic, more make or break for the future of all the world.

Eros is made more generous, descending to our lowest point, in order to raise us up to its highest point.

But this does not address the depth of Hell, and the deepening of heaven needed to take on, and change that Hell, from within its citadel.

Only the Fire, not the Light, can 'make this happen.' The Fire is God's action, activeness, activity, focused upon the active organ of flame in humanity, the heart.

There can be no true appreciation of the Cross if we do not allow Hell its full power of the Lie. Only in Redemption, not in Salvation, is 'Truth won from the Lie' by Suffering Love.

This happens in the world because it is for the world.

5,

Henceforth we must behold the Light that leads into the Fire.

Let us behold the bright face that leads into the dark heart.

The Light obedient to Yahweh by willingness to be led by the Ruach into the mess, the outlands, the difficult places and the horror of times not saved, and impossible to save, yet still in with a chance of being redeemed, is the new Light in Yeshua. The Light that says to his Father, 'thy will be done', and on the Cross, loses all root in and connection to him, and plunges into the deeps where no radiance can reach.

The New Light, the Light Faithful to Yahweh in being given over to the Spirit's searching of deeps, goes back to the Primal Light, but it is going with the Fire into an uncertain future whose outcomes it, and we, cannot 'see', because their possibility or demise is still held in a dark both hellish and pregnant for the turnaround.

The shining of the primal Light= to see.

The ignition of the New Fire= to do what has never been done.

In the Primal Light, a Circle of gathering in is created, and this circling round everyone and everything has four cardinal points, making a Kosmos= air, earth, water, fire, which is also north, south, west, east [as in the four gospels, the four seasons, the four aspects of personality]. In this turning wheel, the fire conforms to the Way of Light, it does not stick out like a sore thumb, but plays its part. Its part is reduced, its fieriness subsumed in, a servant to, the Light. That must be so.

In the New Dispensation, the Fire is free, because the heart is free, the heart of evil and the heart of God, and the human heart.

Now it is 'for real.'

6,

Those people in the West opposed to the hellishness of Augustine of Hippo, Anselm, John Calvin, et al., have to denude Christian Love of any and all Fire. It becomes purely Light. No fieriness in God is allowed to threaten the gathering in, and gathering together, in the Light.

William Law [1686-1761] – the teacher of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, which is the Western tradition closest to Ortho-Doxia -- is one of many dissenting Western Christians, trying to expel Satan from the Altar, from the Cross, from the unknown afterlife, in his work called 'Christian Regeneration' =

"Some People have an Idea, or Notion of the Christian Religion, as if God was thereby declared so full of Wrath against fallen Man, that nothing but the Blood of his only begotten Son could satisfy his Vengeance.

Nay, some have gone such Lengths of Wickedness, as to assert that God had by immutable Decrees reprobated, and rejected a great Part of the Race of Adam, to an inevitable Damnation, to show forth and magnify the Glory of his Justice.

But these are miserable Mistakers of the Divine Nature, and miserable Reproachers of his great Love, and Goodness in the Christian Dispensation.

For God is Love, yea, all Love, and so all Love, that nothing but Love can come from him; and the Christian Religion, is nothing else but an open, full Manifestation of the universal Love towards all Mankind.

As the Light of the Sun has only one common Nature towards all Objects that can receive it, so God has only one common Nature of Goodness towards all created Nature, breaking forth in infinite Flames of Love, upon every Part of the Creation, and calling everything to the highest Happiness it is capable of.

God so loved Man, when his Fall was foreseen, that he chose him to Salvation in Christ Jesus, before the Foundation of the World. When Man was

actually fallen, God was so without all Wrath towards him, so full of Love for him, that he sent his only begotten Son into the World to redeem him. Therefore God has no Nature towards Man, but Love, and all that he does to Man, is Love.

God therefore is all Love, and nothing but Love and Goodness can come from him.”

William Law, and countless others like him, are telling us that if ‘perfect love casts out fear’, then fear that remains loveless drifts toward the monarchical domination of Satanic Accusation.

But there is a very considerable problem in this, as in the Christian East. In effect, the Satanic West has falsified and thus obfuscated the ‘tough love’ of the Daemonic. To escape that, the softer love of Eros is emphasised at the expense of the true love, strong and vulnerable, just and merciful, of the Daemonic.

Again, the attempt is made to recast Christianity as witness to the Light, with no communing in Fire.

The West becomes an endless battle between matriarchal liberals and patriarchal conservatives, wasting the precious time which needs to be spent on redeeming.

The East avoids any worldly battle, retreating into church and monastery, praying too much= all the time.

In both West and East, Christianity has been ‘over feminized.’ The Light favours women. The true men, under the yoke of the Fire, are thin on the ground.

7,

The New Light Subject to the Leadership of the Fire still plays a necessary, and vital, role in accompanying the Fire into bad times and bad places.

This is the ‘discerning of spirits.’

The Light is taken down into abysses of the unworked out, and taken forward into the dark of the not yet, the Light is forced to close its eyes of knowing to enter the heart, where only doing will or will not ‘make known’ the outcome in the end. This is why Yeshua did not know when the Second Coming, the Return of Light, riding the wave of Fire, would happen. This is why Paul warned Christians not to live in the immediate expectation of the Second Coming. No one knows when the Fire has reached the End. There cannot be any Foreknowledge of what remains ‘all to fight for.’

The Light serves the Fire, however, by virtue of still shining. For, the Light shows us, lights up, when we have betrayed the true Spirit.

Not everything that glitters is gold= not every enthusiasm, take over by unconscious forces, giving in to emotionalistic 'surrender', has anything to do with the real Fire. Not every wave that sweeps us along is the Holy Fire acting in us, below the neck.

In an Age of Fire, we need discernment not less than before, but more than ever before.

There is an inundation of pseudo fire flaming up, running through people, in the name of 'inspiration', 'getting the Holy Ghost', 'being a prophet of new religions', 'becoming a druid', 'acting as a psychic medium for a Red Indian guide', ad nauseam.

'Quench not the Spirit.'

Yes, but do not be gullible, easily deceived, naïve, non-discerning, too flattering of your 'spirituality.' It is Lucifer who inspires and guides all the false emanations of 'spirit' which come to dwell in our interior.

Discern Satanic hellishness, but Lucifer luminosity, and now even Luciferianly polished false flaming up, must be discerned.

The hellishness we contest for the outcome of the world is Luciferian as well as Satanic, and Mephistophelean. Beware wanting to 'give them hell', but beware becoming a Creative Torch for lesser beings to look up to and learn from, and beware the Transcendence promoted by Pure Intelligence that is soulless and heartless.

The Light still shines, unconcealing hidden evil, but it is the Fire that engages such evil in its very heart of darkness, its very heart of hellishness.

Martin Buber once asked, can a Jew still speak with God, after the holocaust?

Christ said he had wanted to save the Jews by his Light, for he likened himself to a mother hen safely tucking under her protective wings her exposed chicks. But they would not.

The future of the Jews, like the rest of humanity, is in the hands of the Post-Messianic Fire, not in the hands of the Pre-Messianic Light.

The holy people of the future, the Fire-Bearers, will not be anything like the saints of the past, the Light-Bringers.

The sanctity of the Light will give way to the more tumultuous holiness of the Fire.

This has already begun.

Dostoyevsky thought the watershed dividing the time of Light from the time of Fire to have come not all at once but in waves of rumblings gathering pace over centuries since the Renaissance but reaching the decisive 'before and after' in the era termed 'Modern.' Like everyone involved in Russia's extraordinary nineteenth century 'cultural revolution', he was an exponent of the Fire's orientation to depths where human conflicts and divisions and temptations and trials were at their most extreme, but the possibility of movement in the heart also at its most open.

Maurice Friedman takes up this Dostoyevskian theme of the spiritual meaning of Modernity in conversations he had with his teacher, Martin Buber ['To Deny Our Nothingness: Contemporary Images of Man', 1978]. He refers to modern gropings toward a truthful, realistic, viable, 'image of man'= "...not only an image of what man is, but also 'an exemplary image of man' which helps him discover, in each age anew, what he may and can become, an image that helps modern man rediscover his humanity" [p 17].

pp 20-21= "There is no question but that a contemporary image of man, to be truly so, must embody within itself.. the contradictions and paradoxes of modern existence. No modern man is excluded from images of man of past ages.. but he must relate to them just as the modern man that he is, bringing the whole complexity and perplexity of his modern existence into that relationship, or they will not be genuine images of man for him. During a conversation about Dostoyevsky's Alyosha, I once asked Martin Buber whether he thought there could be such a thing as a 'modern saint.' Buber replied, 'there can be a saint living now, but he will not be a modern man-- a man who bears in himself the contradictions of modern existence.' Buber's judgement on this point might seem an arbitrary qualification of 'sainthood' until we recall that the very conception of the saint grew out of another age and implied a social integument very different from our own. The man who remains in vital relation to the contemporary age will, for better or worse, share in the tension and problematics of that age. *Such a man is excluded from a simple personal sanctity or a self-sufficient perfection because the very wholeness of his personal existence includes his relationship to people and situations shot through with contradiction and absurdity.* One of the finest and most moving of Kierkegaard's devotional writings is 'Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing', but anyone who knows the other side of Kierkegaard -- the problematic.. author whose 'leap of faith' was based on paradox and the absurd -- will recognise that he was a complex, modern man, not a 'simple and pure-hearted' saint."

p 21= "In the end, ..we must each decide through our unique personal response what contemporary images of man possess the right tension between the raw material of the absurd and the shaping force of a new direction toward authentic existence. Particularly important here is our own experience of social violence and psychological demonry. How we have responded to this experience and let it enter into our basic attitudes will affect our judgement as to what.. amount of 'horror' is necessary before we can.. ask whether a given writer presents a realistic image of authentic personal existence."

pp 22-23= "By far the largest part of the literatures of the 19th and 20th centuries presents us not with a positive image of man but with the lack of one. Indeed, it finds its integrity precisely by limiting itself to that task."

p 295= [Buber says] '..love.. without real outgoing to the other, reaching to the other, and companying with the other, the love remaining with itself-- this is called Lucifer'."

pp 295-296="Buber makes a similar critique of his own early mysticism. He tells that, when he was younger, he spent several hours a day in a mystic meditation that divided the world into 'illumination and ecstasy and rapture held without time or sequence' and an everyday world that served either as obstacle to or preparation for this life beyond. The 'illegitimacy' of this dualism was brought home to Buber by an event of 'judgement', an experience of 'conversion' from mystic ecstasy to the task of hallowing the everyday. After a morning of such religious enthusiasm, he was visited by a young man who came with a question that Buber later learned was one of life and death. He was friendly and attentive yet not really present in spirit. He answered the questions which the young man put, but failed to guess the one which he did not put. 'What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are told that nevertheless there is meaning.' When Buber learned that this young man had been killed in the trenches of World War I.. 'out of a despair which did not oppose its own death', he accepted this as a judgement on a religious life that extracted him from the everyday and deprived him of that wholeness of presence with which he might have responded to the claim of the other. In place of the fullness of the mystic experience, Buber writes, 'I know no fullness but each mortal hour's fullness of claim and responsibility'."

Friedman adds [p 296]= "Although the mystical experience is self-validating to those who have it, Buber recognises that human existence must be more broadly defined than this 'flight of the alone to the Alone.' That mystical philosophy which leads [a person] to aim at unity with the All by sacrificing the full seriousness of the everyday is.. an exalted form of being inauthentic, says Buber.."

The saints of the past= illumined by the Light.

The holy people of the future= burned in the Fire.

In the holy people of the future, you will see their battered hearts on their faces= deep rents for abysses, gullies for tears, lines of battle carved in blood.

The modern holy people will be acquainted with the hellishness of despair, absurdity, paradox, contradiction, in themselves, as well as in all other persons, and indeed in the very human condition. To 'rise above' such hellishness is unholy.

Theophan the Recluse cosseted in his refuge= old style Light.

Mother Maria of Paris, chomping on cigarettes, drinking much, wrestling with the death of her daughter, but a sacrifice for the Jews she hid from the Nazis= new style Fire.

A different kind of religion, in all the major religions, will arise, in which there is an existential, and spiritual, connection between being 'a man for all men', and a man who knows the Hell in them because of knowing the Hell in himself.

The new holiness must plumb the Hell in me and in you, and we must both stop lying about it, and pretending we are the plaster cast good guys..

Don't ask for people in religion smelling of lilies. That is the stench of death. We need deep people in religion, people in whom you can see and feel and touch the heat of Hell, but Hell stirred up in a process of fight with the Fire of Holiness, the battle for redemption.

This is Christ's Cross and Resurrection= not your ticket into the 'next world', but your ticket into the depths of this world. Only the Fire of Holiness contests those depths.

Such is the modern holy person.

Do not resent holy people in whom you can smell the fire and brimstone, the sulphur, of Hell. Be thankful for that.

Only these people are going to join you when you are left, abandoned and alone, in your Hell. Only they are coming for you, at any price to be paid.

This is the redemptive connection, still hidden and unfulfilled for humanity, between the Cross and the Descent into and Resurrection from Hell.

No, I know you do not comprehend it. Even the churches have uniformly and consistently betrayed it. Yet in your heart you will live it.

We are still awaiting the appearance of modern holy persons. In extremis, they will come.

In extremis, we are the forsaken -- abandon hope all ye who enter here -- and we are the Holy, who come back for the last ruined one.

Thank God for the Hell in all of us.

But use it wisely.

Let the Light pull you back from mere enthusiasms which you mistake as the Holy Fire. Let the Light anchor you, as well as bridge you into, the Fire.

Follow how the Light in Christ Jesus was drawn in over its head, but do not go against the Light.

Revere the ancestral foundation of the past. Let it protect you from false 'moves', false leaps, false doctrines, false emotive eruptions, false intellectual turns, false doings of every ilk that betray the future, rather than honour it. Let the Light reign you in, and hold you back. It is readying you. It is preparing you. The Light loves the Fire as you do. It will not deny you all Fire, it will keep you for the True Fire. Then it will, as it did in Christ Yeshua, jump out, and jump in, with only Fire to sustain, fuel, drive, its sufferings and exultings of the Spirit.

'I came into the world to kindle Fire, and how I wish it were kindled already.'
We all have to be patient with that long road, fierce battle, going toward a final celebration.

WE START IN LIGHT AND END IN FIRE

1,

Salvation= Light
Redemption= Fire

Saviour= Light-Bringer
Redeemer= Fire-Bearer

Light= God's Face
Fire= God's Heart

Salvation= friendship with God's Face
Redemption= intimacy with God's Heart

Salvation= the past dispensation
Redemption= the future dispensation

The saved of the past dispensation are like their Saviour= Light-Bringers
The redeemed of the future dispensation are like their Redeemer= Fire-Bearers

Light-Bringers= sanctity
Fire-Bearers= holiness

Children of the Light= raised up from down; cleaned, beautiful
Children of the Fire= plunged down to go through; dirtied, ugly

The Light knows your name, but only the Fire knows your heart.

The Salvational Way of Light in Christianity is similar, even though not identical, to other Eros religions. The old Metta Prayer of Buddhism=

“May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe.
May all beings awaken in the light of their nature. May all beings be free.”

Free 'from' illusion and delusive craving-- but free 'for' what?

The Way of Light cannot answer.

The Way of Fire answers-- with its very life-blood.

It recognizes the necessity of crucifixion.

2,

In the Light of Love, Eros, we are 'liberated' from all unreal, deadening attachments, so as to be available for all real, life-giving attachments.

In the Fire of Love, the Daemonic, we are made 'obedient' to the burning in God's Spirit which descends into the hell where our human fire has failed. At the very point where human passion hits the wall, the 'wailing wall' in Jerusalem, Christ's deed in the abyss renders the wall into a door, the gateway for our passion becoming divine-human.

The resurrection of Christ inaugurates the New Age to Come, the Age of the Second Covenant.

But have Christians, East or West, made a start in this New Age?

Hardly a start..

Why not?

They have not followed in Christ's footsteps because they have not consented to let the Spirit of God ignite and enflame their heart's existence in this world. The same Fire that powered him through his deed is needed to power us through our deed= to 'commune with' his deed is thus to 'participate in' the Spirit of Passion, the Spirit of Fire, driving it.

The Spirit took him through hell, and so we need the Spirit to take us through hell.

3,

Modernity is looked at askance by many religious people, especially the fundamentalists whose reactionary reversion to a supposedly divinely sanctioned absolutist authority seeks to undo its 'rebellious freedom.' But from a Jewish perspective, there is no going back..

Modernity has seen the collapse of the Western Medieval Religious System; it has also inaugurated the beginnings of a Daemonically driven existential crisis for all humanity. The religious floor boards have fallen through. God must be refound in a different way, authentically, existentially, through the heart, or remain absent forever. This is make or break.

Modernity is a watershed in human history, which gives us a chance to begin the Second Covenant. We are, in the wake of this watershed, in a more Daemonic moment, a time more horrible yet more empowering for the embrace of the Messianic. No church tradition, however beautiful and rich, is sufficient at such a moment.

There is a huge change in the heart of humanity. We cannot go back to the simple duality of 'purity versus sin.' We moderns have plunged deeper into tragedy, where wheat and tares are mixed, but this makes possible a deeper turning, the turning only possible in hell.

This watershed -- which Dostoyevsky portrays in his novels, and Berdyaev comments upon -- is the real spiritual meaning of 'modernity.'

Pre-watershed= the church and its tradition provides a structure which answers the distress and underlying disquiet of existence in a falsely premature, and non-existential way. So those who are religious feel they have an answer, and those not religious in the distress, in the tragedy, are tacitly sneered at= they too could be safe in the structure, so it is their fault if they do not grab the opportunity.. This attitude is why Christianity is dying.

Post-watershed= we are all in the tragedy together, and nothing churchy and traditional will advantage some as against others who are left out and disadvantaged.

4,

If -- as many people currently sense -- some great Catastrophe is coming to the entire world, then this is the world's Kismet, and it will happen in order to Daemonically spark the world's redemption. A terrible fate can resurrect from abysmal failure the truest destiny.. This is what Christ's Cross, Descent into Hell, Resurrection, reveals.

It depends on us, our heart, our passion. Will we learn the Daemonic meaning of suffering? Will we, by giving our brokenness to God, join and participate in the mystery of Christ in hell, and thereafter reach the resurrected passion for existence? Will we let ourselves be raised by the Daemonic to join and participate in its paradoxical way of over-throwing the Evil One?

These questions bite into more and more people today, though not many are in any of the religions, which have for the most part not discerned the new summons in the all or none change brought by modernity. In the future, however, once the Daemonic Kismet hits the planet as a whole, these questions will bite into everyone.

Yeshua the Mashiach [John, 12, 24-28]=

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone;
But if it dies, it brings forth a rich harvest.
Anyone who loves his [worldly] life will lose it;
Anyone who hates his [worldly] life will keep it for everlasting life.

If any man serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

If any man serves me, Yahweh my Father will honour him.

Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?

Father, save me from this hour?

But for this cause I came to this hour.

Father, glorify thy name.

Then came a voice from heaven, saying, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'

Yeshua answered [after people speculated on the voice], and said, this voice came not because of me but for your sakes.

Now sentence is being passed on this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [on the Cross], will draw all men unto me."

The Jewish Bible says God has a 'soul' and a 'heart.' The world is built out of the soul. The world is upheld by the heart.

The heart of God is not above the world, in heaven, but below the world, in the abyss.

The question the Daemonic puts to our heart is, will we truly cleave to the heart of God in those depths, to forge an alliance at the only level which can make a difference to the world= which can redeem the world.

IN DARKNESS= A Polish Holocaust Film

1,

Yesterday we saw a foreign film that has had little release in London, stumbling on it virtually by accident.

"In Darkness" [2011], a Polish film directed by Agnieszka Holland, is a true history about Nazi-occupied Poland in 1944--1945. The film tells the story of Leopold Socha, a sewer worker in the Polish city of Lvov [now Lviv in the Ukraine], who uses his knowledge of the complex tunnels in the city's sewer system to hide a group of Jews from the Nazis. The invading German army have decided on a new policy of 'emptying' the city's Jewish ghetto -- either by murdering men, women, and children, en masse, and seemingly at random, or by chucking a few survivors into the local concentration camp [festooned with the famous catch phrase= Arbeit Macht Frei]. Socha has to move the Jews three times in the 14 months during which they are hiding out. A group of about 12 Jewish people survive to the end of the war [though only one is alive today] thanks entirely to his action.

What makes this film work so well, and end up so moving, is that Socha starts off as a real shmuck, but as circumstances force him to either bail out or 'go to the end of the line', some heart in him he never knew he had, and certainly never used, slowly step by step comes to the fore.

At increasing risk to his wife and seven year old daughter, as well as to himself, Socha cares for the Jews, having to do more and more for them. He grows into it. The external circumstances get harder, not easier, and paradoxically it is this intensifying Daemonic jeopardy and difficulty, and its unrelieved pressure, that brings out the deeper human being in this seemingly un-heroic man. He steps up, and he sees it through to the end, not funkng the challenge by backing out. A younger sewer worker, a friend helping him, does back out fairly early on. Ironically, this young man is hanged by the Nazis for a crime he did not commit..

As the story begins, Socha is not nasty or cruel, not in any sense wicked, but he is small and self-serving, a petty thief robbing abandoned Polish homes, and generally an opportunist making the most of any and all the opportunities the German invasion of his country affords. He is like a jackal scavenging among the debris of other people's tragedy. Nothing touches him initially. His attitude is a mix of indifference to all the human suffering around him, Polish and Jewish, and a certain toughness about 'having to survive.' Rick in "Casablanca" is similarly non-committal at the start of that film, and the changing circumstances thrown at him force him to finally take sides, but Socha seems an altogether more limited human being.. A sewer rat indeed. His ostensible Catholicism is only a cultural garment worn lightly.. He mouths all the usual prejudices against Jews, and is shocked to learn at a certain point that Jesus was a Jew. He is neither educated nor cultured.

In fact, this film is so good because it neither idealises nor romanticises either Socha or the Jews. Both are portrayed in a very human but pretty negative light as the story starts to unfold. The 'self-preoccupation' in Socha looking for the main chance and in the Jews looking to survive is the same 'material', the same heart, that later will grow and change under adversity.

The Jews change towards him, coming to realise how much he has done for them [which he never even tells them, but keeps secret], and Socha changes towards them, coming to respect and love them, and giving more and more of his heart to their plight.

At the outset, there is no love lost on either side of this ugly historical divide. Neither party likes or trusts the other.

At the end, they are 'his Jews', for whom he has become willing to sacrifice everything. To the Jews, he is one of the 6000 Righteous among all the nations.

Ironically, yet fittingly, though his action of heroism made sure the Jews in his care survived until the victorious Russians drove the Germans out of Poland, he was killed pushing his daughter out of the path of a Russian truck driven by a Red Army soldier who was very drunk. Such was his fate. Somehow, it makes a terrible sense that only the Russian 'liberators' could make his sacrifice complete.

The story of this man who 'changed sides' tells us a lot about the human heart and the true nature of what the Jews call Righteousness. It has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with keeping the Law, or even being moral. Socha was neither. Righteousness is rooted in the heart, and in the heart that takes a chance with the mystery of the heart. Righteousness is rooted in faith, the true meaning of faith as gambling on the unknown, and awakening to the whisper to the human heart of a strange summons. Socha was called, in the heart, and he came.

This is heart. This is Righteousness. This is faith.. The rest is all horse shit, as we can see from the futility of religion every day.

No one chooses the Daemonic. But when the Daemonic chooses you, what you do next is make or break for fulfilling or betraying the mystery of the human heart that only you can, in your own heart, reveal.

Socha is like the sinner David. He is nothing like Moses. May everything religious die, if that is what it takes, for persons of heart like Socha to step up. This is a day of trouble. It is no different to then. The summons to the heart is the same today as then. Righteousness as faith in the God 'behind', 'within', and 'ahead' of, the mystery of the human heart has not changed.

Watching the film, I understood something new about the God who underwrites the human heart with a promise, a vow, a commitment-- and then seems to abandon our heart to a fate that is absurd in its woundingness.

2,

We see Socha living off the misery of others.

We see the Jews, who know their ghetto is about to be 'swept clean', scrambling unceremoniously for a way out.

One family in an old house digs under the floor boards and succeeds in opening up a hole down into the sewers; they allow some other Jewish families, probably living in the same house, to use the escape hatch. Their aim at this moment of crisis is just to avoid the Nazi death squads; what their next move will be, they do not seem to have considered. There is a lot of fear, jostling and shoving, among these escaping Jews as they hastily clamber down into the labyrinth below. Once in the underworld, terror of the dark sets in, and of course nausea at the smell.. They have escaped. Yet they are now lost. What next? One young woman endangers everyone because she cannot stand the confined space, and will not stop crying; she turns back and ends up in the concentration camp.

By accident, Socha and his younger workmate are in the tunnels, where they hide their ill-gotten loot, and see the Jews. A deal is struck, after much mistrust on both sides is voiced sotto voce. If the Jews will pay Socha so much money a week, he will lead them into a safer part of the complex sewer system, and regularly bring them a little food, to keep them going. At this point, Socha is making money, and the Jews are barely surviving their ordeal. There is no natural leader, and they are fragmented among themselves.. There is little mutual trust, or solidarity in suffering. The group is further split by class rivalry, and jealousy due to a husband's adultery with a younger woman whom he insists on making love to within an arm's distance from his sleeping wife and child-- and obviously they wake up and watch the spectacle. At a certain moment, some of the group object when a religious Jew tries to pray aloud. 'God is not here' they tell him with fierce anger.

We see tensions in the Jewish group. They cling on to life in impossible conditions. We see Socha making hay while the sun shines. There is nothing glorious.. It is just human.

Soon, however, pressures mount on Socha. He runs into a Ukrainian friend -- with whom he had been in prison -- now a Nazi officer. This man wants Socha to check the sewers for any run-away Jews! The Germans will pay good money for every Jew caught.

Socha panics, and goes underground to the Jews, telling them he can only protect a smaller number in a smaller, and more remote, part of the sewers. This causes outrage and consternation among the Jews, understandably. Who will stay? Who will go? Three men in the group had already made a run for the countryside previously-- and later we learn they were killed. Those not going to the new place likely will die as well.. At any rate, Socha is looking out for his own skin when he moves a smaller group of about 12 Jews into a

more cramped place only accessed through a small turning off a main tunnel which would usually be overlooked by anyone not knowing it was there.

About this time, his young workmate bails on him. Socha continues, ostensibly for the money. But there is a sense, deeper down, that he is on a journey that he has no conscious understanding of, but is like a train that, once it has left the station, he does not want to jump off.

A second, and worse, near miss occurs. Other Jews are killed in the tunnels, and when Socha learns of it, he has to rush his group to an even more unlikely place. It is accessed only by a very narrow passage hard to crawl through and is right under the town's main church.

By this time, the Jewish group has begun to knit together, and Socha is bringing them books, toys for the children, and candles and the elaborate Jewish candlestick with which to pray. A tragedy happens. The mistress of the adulterous man -- one of the three men who ran away and were killed -- gives birth to their baby. The group says they are all the baby's parents, and the mother jokes that one set of parents is bad enough.. However, the baby won't stop crying, and so to save the group, and out of exhaustion and despair, the mother kills the baby. Socha had persuaded his wife that they should take him, so when he shows up and finds the new-born dead, he is very upset. He leads the group out to a hillside, where he insists the baby has a proper burial. Socha, and the Jews, both pray for the dead baby in their respective ways.

By this time, the money has run out, but Socha gives the weekly amount to the Jewish professor who pays him in front of the group. In this way, pride on both sides is maintained.

A final crisis happens when a great rainstorm strikes, and the sewers fill up with rain water. Socha leaves his daughter's first communion in the church just above the Jews because he knows they will all drown. Going into the sewers, he is waylaid, and nearly killed, by the Ukrainian 'friend' who has figured out what he is up to, but the floods of rainwater washes the quisling away, and drowns him. Socha is also nearly drowned, but his last act before going under the rushing water is to knock open a key drain-cover on a street that allows the flood waters to pour out.. The Jews later tell him it was like a miracle, for just as their cramped compartment was nearly filled up, the water just receded.. Even here he does not tell them what he did.

The game is now up. Socha has had to show his hand. Everyone knows what he is doing.. But again fate intervenes strangely. The Russian tanks roll into the city and the Germans flee.

3,

There is more incident to the film. This is the merest sketch.. The last scenes are very touching. Socha guides the Jews up into the light in what looks like the backyard of the church. The Jews can barely see. They are dazed..

Everyone is in tears. Socha proudly introduces his wife Wanda, who has made cake for the survivors. Some of the Polish people walking by stand and gawp. Socha tells them to move on! He tells them, happiness and tears bursting from his chest, 'These are my Jews. This is my work.' He did not want to hide it any longer. He wanted the world to know he had changed sides.

In almost Plains Indian language, he was announcing, I came here, I did this.

He wanted witnesses. There must always be witnesses to the heart deed that came to a hard place, on a day of trouble, and did an action of heart beyond the ordinary, and indeed partaking in the mystery.

'I came here, I did this' declares a fact truthfully, but it does more, it also declares a truth factually. It points to a mystery which has been made real.

It says, I came to a hard place on a day of trouble, and instead of letting that excuse me, I staked myself to this ground on this day, in order to trust the mystery of the human heart.

I came here, I did that, means, I accepted a summons and leaned on a promise. My heart found it was real.

I grew from small heartedness to this. I trusted a mystery, and it proved real.

4,

Watching the film, and going through all the hells of heart it depicted, I realised with terrible force why we feel abandoned by the God who forged our heart in fire, and calls our heart to live that fire in the world that is cold to it.

On one level, the heart is indeed abandoned by the one who made it, and gave it to us. Each heart is in hell. All hearts are in tragedy.

My personal detestation of religion is because that 'simple fact of life' is denied, and its deep pain in us dismissed as if it did not matter. It does matter. It matters more than all the rest..

You don't need the callous cruelty of six million dead Jews to tell you this. You have the callous cruelty towards 100 million dead Indians in the Americas to tell you this. As Ivan says in 'The Brothers Karamazov', the callous cruelty towards just one innocent child, made to suffer unbearably, tells you this.

The pious say, God never punishes anyone. That misses the whole point. Where is God when the punishing of humans is carried out? Why doesn't God stop it?

Then something hit me, as I watched Socha grow in heart, at first slowly, and then by leaps and bounds.

God does put humans into the hands of other humans. But there is more to it than this. God does not intervene= a breach is opened. There is no one. We feel abandoned.

But that is too easy. It suddenly hit me, very hard, that God steps back, and opens up a breach for us to step into. By stepping into the breach, we become God in that situation.

It seems impossible, far too daunting, until you do it.

When you step into the absence left by the God who is not present, you become the presence of God, and becoming that, against all odds, you know, and the people you give and sacrifice your heart for also know, God is present. The mystery of the heart is not abandoned by God.

But you do not know that until you act.

If you do not act, the mystery of your heart remains abandoned.

When you act, in stepping into God's absence, you answer a call, and you prove the presence of God's heart in the mystery of the human heart exceeding its limit.

This is what it means, I came here, and I did this.

In this hellish place, on a day of trouble, I trusted my heart in the absence of God's heart, and in trusting my heart, I proved God is present, in me, with us.

These are my Jews. This is my work.

Thank God for Leopold Socha. Only when we thank God for the Righteous can we give thanks to God for his presence.

Do not tell me you lost your faith in God because of the six million Jews, because of the 100 million Indians, because of the one innocent child tortured and murdered in its cot.

It comes down to you much more personally in the mystery of your own heart.

Where did you go, what did you do?

Did you go to the hellish place, on the day of trouble?

You will find out there is a God of heart, and that he is present in your human heart, only when you step into the absence, and become the heart present for others hurting from the absence of all heart in a punishing, cold, callous, world.

If you are waiting for personal reassurance before you make your move, you are going to wait a long time.

I came here, I did this.

It means, when I acted from the mystery of the human heart, for the first time I entered the real world, a world of glory and grief, a world whispering my name and summoning me to an absence of God where I am the only heart that can make a difference.

Hetchetu yelo.

THIS VERY HOUR

Martin Buber ['Between Man and Man', p 68]=

“Certainly the relation of faith is no book of rules which can be looked up to discover what is to be done now, in this very hour. I experience what God desires of me for this hour -- so far as I do experience it -- not earlier than *in* the hour. But even then it is not given me to experience it except by answering before God for this hour as *my* hour, by carrying out the responsibility for it towards him as much as I can. What has now approached me, the unforeseen, the unforeseeable, is word from him, a word found in no dictionary, a word that.. demands my answer to him. I give the word of my answer by accomplishing among the actions possible that which seems to my devoted insight to be the right one. With my choice and decision and action – committing or omitting, acting or persevering – I answer the word, however inadequately, yet properly; I answer for my hour.”

And [pp 69-70]=

“God tenders me the situation to which I have to answer; but I have not to expect that he should tender me anything of my answer. Certainly in my answering I am given into [God’s] power.. but I cannot measure heaven’s share in it, and even the most blissful sense of grace can deceive. [In coming to an answer, I am ‘touched’ by my own conscience], “but not.. the routine conscience, ..the play-on-the-surface conscience, [but] the unknown conscience in the ground of being, which needs to be discovered ever anew, the conscience of the ‘spark’.. The certainty produced by this conscience.. is uncertain certainty; but.. the.. person who is addressed.. answers.

“[This] has nothing to do with ‘individualism.’ I do not consider the individual to be either the starting point or the goal of the human world. But I consider the human person to be the irremovable central place of the struggle between the world’s movement away from God and its movement towards God. This struggle takes place.. in the realm of public life.. Yet the decisive battles of this realm as well are fought in the depth.. of the person.”

We are free. God stands back and awaits our choice and decision and action. He will join with us in this, helping us, if we ask for that assistance [power, guidance, inspiration].. But even then God will not ‘do it all for us.’ Even when we play the best childish ‘victim card’ ever, refusing to take responsibility for our hour because we are supposedly so very hopeless and helpless, God will not disrespect us by rescuing us..

God will never overwhelm our freedom, by shows of magic, by demonstrations of miracles, by intemperate fits that threaten to punish us unless we kow tow, by displays of majesty, omnipotence, dominion. God even withdraws the holiness of divinity from us, so as not to humiliate us in our fragile self-belief-- which in truth contains more self-disbelief than any real trust in our own nature, soul, spirit, heart. God is not out to cow us into

submission, even by impressing us. Occasionally, as a concession to our weakness, God reveals a little of the divine marvellousness, we get a few ravishing glimpses of the eternal beauty more sublime than the oceans, as Plato put it, we get a few intoxicating drinks of the divine bliss more ecstatic than any release, orgasm, joy, known in life..

This is not the point.

God wants a partner, a friend, a co-worker, not a kicked dog, nor an arrogant cur. This is why we are free. God requires our heart, and we can only give our heart freely.

It is more than that.

God finds a beauty hidden in the soul, and a worthiness still smouldering even in the ashes of the burned out furnace of the heart.

In our rush to value God, we forget he valued us, he held us in his love, before we loved him.

This is the point.

In God's love -- in God's delight that our soul lives, in God's grave respect that our heart beats -- we must come, finally, to the proper belief in our soul's 'bearing fruit that will last', and to the necessary trust in our heart's risk-taking passion.

That God will not do it for us is because he wants us to have the flowering and the honour.

He wants to celebrate what we can do.

He wants not only a partner, a friend, a co-worker, he wants a heart divinised, even as his heart was humanised in the very imagining of us before we were made.

God first comes to us as Light, and this is the Face.

God finally comes to us as Fire, and this is the Heart.

Face to face, and Heart to heart; this is the point.

Thus, face it, and use your heart. Do not be afraid of yourself. Do not refer everything to God. By believing in your soul beauty and by trusting your heart worthiness, you love God because you give whatever you have for God. It won't be perfect, but then it need not be so, because it is yours. It is your gift to God, it has your signature on it, and that makes it precious in the sight of God who desires you to flower and intends you to prove true.

Thus do you glorify God in your action, and thus in his Spirit, God glorifies you.

Self-doubt, self-hatred, and the despair in which we turn against the self and repudiate being a self, and whoever or whatever put these poisons in our depths, must be overcome, expelled, digested.. This will take time, work, tears. It will remove from our depths that entire and deepest assumption that God wants ruin for us. This judgement is of the devil. We will not clarify, at depth, our confusion over the devil and God until we break through to the knowledge that we are loved by God.. Then, however much we are negated by the voice of the devil, the ultimate 'inner saboteur', that voice will lose its power, because it will come from outside, trying to go within. But it will not get within, it will be expelled from within, since God alone will be within. When we know we are loved, believed in, trusted, by God, nothing 'hinders' us anymore, and many things become possible.

Our soul is also the Temple where God dwells, and our heart is also the Abyss where God toils, and the Furnace where God burns away dross and uncovers gold.

Yes, love God. But, forgive yourself-- only then will you realise God forgives unreservedly. It is forgotten, wiped out, as if it never happened, both what was done to you and what you did as consolation, revenge, self-solace. It did not ruin you. Only in the devil's eyes were you ruined, and you let that false seeing become your eyes. It takes time, work, tears. It is nothing facile, glib, easy. None the less, at the end of it, as you emerge, you will see both that neither are you ruined, nor are any of all the others ruined. The errors, the tragic betrayals, are terrible, but they are borne in God's love. We have to make him suffer. It is right. We have to force him to go deep. It is right. He does this, not because it is right, but because it is radical love. He will not, even in this tragedy, remove our freedom. But he will join us, and even subject himself to us, to bring us through.

Obviously, in forgiving ourselves, we forgive God. This is more than right; it is love.

God remembers our primal beauty, before it was ruined, as we recall with aching tenderness our children before they entered the world. God also foresees our final beauty after we have come through. What ruined us, for a time, will add to that final victory, for all time, world without end.

When you begin to understand, you will realise that the most wonderful thing of all was being given an hour, because it was *your* hour.

Use it, and know you use it with God's blessing. Do not be hindered, within, by the Adversary. It is enough that you will have to meet him, without, but that too is fated, and you will overcome even that ordeal, when you call for help from the Mashiach who broke the power of the devil in this world. The Redeemer never defended himself, and this is the open secret.. The ruin from

which we are defended has got us in its grip. Paradoxically, it is when the ruin is an open wound, within and without, that it can be changed.

This is the point.

You are given your hour, and this is the hour God blesses and is moved by, filled by the pathos of your vulnerability and generosity.

TESHUVAH= The Way of The 'Turning' in Hasidism Becomes The Way of the Cross in Christianity

PRELUDE

According to Hasidism, the Judaism of the Torah [Law; Instruction] divides creation, and the world, into the duality of 'what is permissible' [unbound=redeemable], and 'what is forbidden' [bound=irredeemable]. The permissible can be handled by humanity, its sparks of divinity released by our good deeds; the forbidden cannot be handled by humanity because no human can release its sparks of divinity. Such is the traditional duality.

However, a Hasidic master points out that, according to the Jewish sages, in the Way of 'Teshuvah', The Return, this duality disappears, because the person who Returns grows closer to God through wrestling with evil than through obediently doing good. Doing good= remaining under God's Law to be restored and completed. Returning= doing evil, then turning away from it and turning toward God, in the very deeps where evil takes hold of the human heart, brings that person closest to God of any religious path.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe says that the Way of Returning is only for a few people.. This Way is spiritually dangerous, because you cannot hold evil at arm's length, you must come 'through' it in the very midst of its power to overwhelm and strangle you, which means you could really go under to evil. None the less, he adds that the closeness to God attained on this 'Round About Route' which does not go straight to God but takes a profound detour into depths of evil and depths of love most people avoid, means that the 'returned one' finally stands in a place with God not attained by any zaddik [elder, geron, staretz, guru, master]. "In the place where the baalei teshuvah [returned ones] stand, utter [advanced] zaddikim cannot stand."

This Way of The Returning exists in Hasidism only because Yeshua was the Mashiach. For Yeshua as Mashiach followed the route into terrible abysses poetically described in the Four Slave Songs of Isaiah, and in the most heart-rending and gut-wrenching Psalms of David, and by doing that, he made this Reversal Way that can lead to perdition or to intimacy with Yahweh's heart the very path of everyone in the Post-Messianic Age. The Messiah went where no spiritual figure ever went, and did in that hellish place what no spiritual figure ever did, by the power of the Spirit of Fire.

The Way of Return is another description of the Cross.

1,

The Way of Teshuvah is more than a Pre-Messianic foretaste of the Way of the Cross. It has roots far back in Judaism. But it is in reality a Post-Messianic manifestation, and version, of the Messianic Way of the Cross in the Judaism

influenced, not outwardly but inwardly, not blatantly but secretly, by the Messianic Spirit.

It does not matter what people say= look at what they do. Without the Spirit of Fire, there is no Messiah. Yeshua is 'in the Spirit' by some special dispensation of God that enables him to become the Messiah. Yet, once his deed of being reversed by evil in order to reverse evil is finished – this is why he utters on the Cross, 'it is accomplished' -- the Spirit will sow the Road of Return wherever, and among whoever, he chooses, irrespective of whether it fits their self-description or alters it fundamentally. It will arise among Hasidic Jews, among Tibetan Buddhists, among those of no religion. This is too profound to be a matter for arbitration by flags of identity. This Messianic Mystery is not owned by any tradition, because the Reversed Messiah made this Road of Reversal open to all of humanity. It is the only universal pathway, because it is for those who have failed human existence, religiously and secularly. It is for those with no hope. It only starts where hope, religious and secular, has been well and truly shredded.

2,

The Zaddik of Lubavitch calls the person who will return 'a man in the desert.' In a different sense, this person is existentially ruined in the World and thrown into the Wilderness of the Spirit alone and bereft. He does not realise it, but the Spirit is his only ally in that desolation and dereliction.

THE MAN IN THE DESERT

These are the rules -- about permitted/unbounded and forbidden/bounded -- that govern our existence and our service of God. One who lives by these rules, establishing them as the supreme authority over his behaviour, attains the status of zaddik ['perfectly righteous']. Yet our sages tell us that there is an even higher level of closeness to God..

The zaddik is one who has made the Divine will the very substance of his existence. Everything that becomes part of his life -- the food he eats, the clothes he wears, the ideas and experiences he garners from his surroundings -- are elevated, their 'sparks' divested of their mundane nature and raised to their Divine function. And he confines himself to the permissible elements of creation, never digressing from the boundaries that Torah sets for our involvement with and development of God's world.

The baal teshuvah, on the other hand, is one who has digressed; one who has ventured beyond the realm of the permissible and has absorbed the irredeemable elements of creation into his life. His digression was a wholly negative thing; but having occurred, it holds a unique potential: the potential for teshuvah, "return."

Teshuvah is fuelled by the utter dejection -- the plunge into hell -- experienced by one who wakes to the realization that he has destroyed all that is beautiful and sacred in his life; by the pain of one who has cut himself

off from his source of life and well-being; by the alienation felt by one who finds himself without cause or reason to live. Teshuvah is humanity's amazing ability to translate these feeling of worthlessness, alienation and pain into the drive for rediscovery and renewal.

The baal teshuvah is a person lost in the desert whose thirst, amplified a thousand-fold by the barrenness and aridity of his surroundings, drives him to seek water with an intensity that could never have been called forth by the most proficient well digger; a person whose very abandonment of God drives him to seek him with a passion the most saintly zaddik cannot know. A [heart] who, having stretched the cord that binds it to its source to excruciating tautness, rebounds with a force that exceeds anything experienced by those who never leave the Divine orbit.

In this way, the baal teshuvah accomplishes what the most perfect zaddik cannot: he liberates those sparks of Divinity imprisoned in the realm of the forbidden. In his [heart], the very negativity of these elements, their very contrariness to the Divine will, becomes a positive force, an intensifier of his bond with God and his drive to do what is true.

This is teshuvah, "return," in its ultimate sense: the reclaiming of the 'lost' moments [or days, or years] and energies of a negative past; the restoration of sparks imprisoned in the lowliest realms of creation; the magnified force of a rebounding [heart].

GOOD AND EVIL

But what of the "bindings" that imprison these sparks? If the zaddik were to employ a forbidden thing toward a positive end, he would fail to elevate it; indeed, the deed would drag him down, distancing him, rather than bringing him closer, to the God he is presuming to serve. From where derives the baal teshuvah's power to redeem what the Torah has decreed "bound" and irredeemable?

In its commentary on the opening verses of Genesis, the Midrash states:

At the onset of the world's creation, God beheld the deeds of the righteous and the deeds of the wicked... "And the earth was void and chaotic..." -- these are the deeds of the wicked. "And God said: Let there be light" -- these are the deeds of the righteous. But I still do not know which of them He desires... Then, when it says, "And God saw the light, that it is good", I know that he desires the deeds of the righteous, and does not desire the deeds of the wicked.

In other words, the only true definition of 'good' or 'evil' is that 'good' is what God desires and 'evil' is what is contrary to his will. The fact that we instinctively sense certain deeds to be good and others to be evil -- the fact that certain deeds are good and certain deeds are evil -- is the result of God having chosen to desire certain deeds from humanity and to not desire other

deeds from humanity. We cannot, however, speak of good and evil 'before' God expressly chose the 'deeds of the righteous.'

Therein lies the difference between the zaddik and the baal teshuvah.

The zaddik relates to God through his fulfillment of the Divine will expressed in the Torah. Thus, his achievements are defined and regulated by the Divine will. When he does what God has instructed to be done, he elevates those elements of creation touched by his deeds. But those elements with which the Divine will forbids his involvement are closed to him.

The baal teshuvah, however, relates to God himself, the formulator and professor of this will. Thus, he accesses a Divine potential that, by Torah's standards, is inaccessible. Because his relationship with God is on a level that precedes and supersedes the Divine will -- a level on which one "still does not know which of them He desires" -- there are no 'bound' elements, nothing to inhibit the actualization of the Divine potential in any of God's creations. So when the baal teshuvah uses his negative deeds and experiences to fuel his yearning and passion for God, he brings to light the sparks of Godliness they hold.

TO BE AND TO BE NOT

What enables the baal teshuvah to connect to God in such a way? The zaddik's ability to relate to God through the fulfillment of his will was granted to each and every one of us when God gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai. But what empowers the baal teshuvah to reach the "place where utter zaddikim cannot stand" and tap the "pre-will" essence of God?

The thrust of the baal teshuvah's life is the very opposite of the zaddik's.

The zaddik is good, and the gist of everything he does is to amplify that goodness. The baal teshuvah had departed from the path of good, and the gist of everything he does is to deconstruct and transform what he was. In other words, the zaddik is occupied with the development of self, and the baal teshuvah, with the negation of self.

Thus the zaddik's virtue is also what limits him. True, his development of self is a wholly positive and Godly endeavour-- he is developing the self that God wants him to develop, and by developing this self he becomes one with the will of God. But a sense of self is also the greatest handicap to relating to the [heart] of God, which tolerates no camouflaging or equivocation of the truth that "there is none else besides him."

The baal teshuvah, on the other hand, is one whose every thought and endeavour is driven by the recognition that he must depart from what he is in order to come close to God. This perpetual abnegation of self allows him to relate to God as God is, on a level that transcends God's specific projection of himself formulated in His Torah.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

This is God's perspective on sin: sin as the facilitator of teshuvah. [The other ways in Judaism] are all part of a reality polarized by good and evil; they can perceive only the damage inflicted by sin, or, at most [as in the case of Torah], the manner by which it might be undone.

God's reality, however, is wholly and exclusively good. 'No evil resides with you' sings the Psalmist. In the words of Jeremiah, 'From the Supreme do not stem both evil and good.'

From God's perspective, there is only the positive essence of transgression-- the positive purpose for which he created man's susceptibility to evil and his capacity for sin in the first place. As viewed by its Creator, transgression is the potential for a deeper bond between himself and humanity-- a bond born out of the transformation of evil into good and failure into achievement."

3,

To go beyond 'God's will for the creation' means something so extraordinary, it is almost too daunting to voice it. Thank God for the Jews! They voice matters of the heart about which everyone else in the world is stultified and silent.

We go beyond God's will for the creation to reach intimacy with God's heart, where there is a supreme Love not conditioned by the duality of morality.

The prodigal son who went against the father, and then struggled to return, has fathomed something about the father's heart which the son who stayed at home, and always did as the father asked him, will never reach.

The stupendous meaning of the Way of Return is shocking.

The returnee has fathomed the depth of God's heart, in the terrible struggle in the deeps of his own heart.

In a paradoxical and almost morally offensive way, risking evil is the only way to provoke and evoke the heart beyond 'good and evil'= deeper than evil and greater than good.

No other religious path achieves intimacy with God's heart.

God's heart is the love prior to 'good and evil.' Good and Evil is a narrow straits we pass through, to raise us from amorphousness and undifferentiation, into a dynamic shape necessary to our human progress toward God, but the bond with God won out of 'the transformation of evil into good and failure into achievement', is the final leap. Thus we meet at the end of our perilous and arduous path the love in God prior to 'good and evil', but this love has been existentially tried out and tested, and has proved itself the only way through, and beyond, the dualism of good and evil.

We become the heart like God's heart= deeper than evil, greater than good.

Such is our transition from innocence to experience to innocence-regained= the final holiness. The child's innocence is an ikon of God's love prior to good and evil, the adult's experience is the tribulations and strivings within good and evil, and the innocence-regained of holiness comes 'at the end' as the 'seasoning' of the love prior to good and evil by the very way it passes through good and evil to the land of heart beyond it.

4,

Moses= the Way of the Bounded, the Forbidden. Following God's will= development of self.

David= the Way of the Unbounded, the Permitted. Breaking through to God's Heart= negation of self.

The returnees expel evil in the heart, at a depth of heart, that reverses the very grounds of the heart they stand on in existence, but by this reversal, they come to understand evil as a way, and they understand the Holiness that counters it. They really comprehend evil's whisper, evil's appeal, evil's deal, to the heart. They come to understand, in the heart, the heart's susceptibility to evil. They understand, in the heart, the heart's tendency to use evil as a foundation laid down against the abyss.

By coming 'all the way down' to the real foundations of the heart, by undoing 'the abyss of sin', the returnees understand the human heart, and let God come into it dynamically, heart to heart.

Thus mysteries of the divine heart are revealed to them which are 'forbidden' to everyone else.

It is not possible to speak of the heart, human or divine, from outside it, speculating on it, as a matter of curiosity. You must 'suffer' its way, in the Old English sense wherein to suffer is to accept. To undergo. To go through. To search in deeps and be searched in deeps. The human deeps are so close to divine deeps, a thin sheet of paper cannot be inserted between them. Nothing stands behind, or underneath, the human heart except God. It is this very nearness of human and divine, in the heart, that the devil's evil seeds and sparks try to obscure. The devil sows a radical and fundamental Lie in the groundless ground of the heart, to prevent God from 'getting in.' The devil says to the human heart= if you take the leap of passion into the abyss, you will fall. God will abandon you in your heart's extremity, like a mother who does not bond with her child, like a father who does not mentor his child. The abyss will not uphold the heart that risks its bottomlessness in its action in the world. Thus does the heart want to conquer the outer world to reassure and empower itself, thereby losing the real power of the Spirit acting in and through its interior and abysmal deeps.

Consequently, mysterious movements in the heart such as faith, trust, love, speak of a fundamental shift in humanity's leaning upon the ground-without-ground in the heart.

Martin Buber= "...in every man is a force divine. And in man far more than in all other beings it can pervert itself, can be misused by himself. This happens if he, instead of directing it towards its origin, allows it to run directionless and seize at everything that offers itself to it; instead of hallowing passion, he makes it evil. But.. a way to redemption is open: he who with the entire force of his being 'turns' to God, lifts at his point [in existence] the divine immanence out of its debasement, which he has caused" ['The Way of Man', pp v-vi].

5,

Martin Buber [chapter 5, pp 25-26] translates the Hebrew Teshuvah as 'The Turning.'

"..turning stands in the centre of the Jewish conception of the way of man. Turning is capable of renewing a man from within and changing his position in God's world, so that he who turns is seen standing above the perfect zaddik who does not know the abyss of sin. But turning means here something much greater than repentance and acts of penance; it means that by a reversal of his whole being, a man who had been lost in the maze of selfishness where he had always set himself as his goal, finds a way to God, that is, a way to the fulfilment of the particular task for which he, this particular man, has been destined by God. Repentance can only be an incentive to such active reversal; he who goes on fretting himself with repentance, he who tortures himself with the idea that his acts of penance are not sufficient, withholds his best energies from the work of reversal.."

The Turning is a deep turning away from evil, and turning back to God, in the very interior stronghold where evil has its groundedness in the heart. By embracing evil, then repudiating it, in the heart, the heart comes to understand not what suppresses evil from above, by superior force, but what undercuts evil from below, by deeper truth. When it is realised this truth will uphold the action of love in the world, the heart loses all constriction on boldness for love, all temptation for power rather than love, and it leaps into the abyss unimpeded.

Peter had reached this by the end, after all his misunderstandings and betrayals of Christ, when crucifixion came to him, and he asked to be crucified upside down.

6,

How is the Turn Around even possible? As we go deeper into evil, so its grip upon us intensifies. How does anyone come back from that?

There is something in the abysses of the heart still free, not taken over, though heavily influenced and hedged in, by evil.

This mysterious core of the heart 'turns', and when it does, evil is by no means immediately shuffled off like an ill-fitting suit of clothes. Rather, the deepest intent of the heart, its true passion, aims at God, as the true target of its dynamic impulsion, and therefore rejects evil as that goal.

But, much in the heart, much in the body, much in the mind, much in the soul, is still carrying the results of evil-doing and evil-intent. An example from dieting. You eat and eat, weakly, sloppily, self-indulgently, giving way to food. You get fat. One day, after desiring to be thinner availed nothing, after knowing you are too fat and it is slowly but surely killing you availed nothing, something in your heart decides 'enough.'

This is not the Western 'free will.' It is the heart's passionate intentionality, the 'doing of the heart.' It includes the will, but is in reality the most mysterious and abysmal 'grounding' of passion. It is our 'spirit.' It is personal [hypostatic], free, but impassioned. Intentioned, dynamic and actively driving. It is the hidden man of the heart= he who draws the arrow back in the bow and, re-aiming it, shoots the missile toward the different target.

There is no name for this.. This deed of the turning cannot be stopped in any human heart. It is what worldly and religious authority fears so much= that the passion of humanity, once engaged, once committed, once given all or none to God for the world, cannot be stopped, intimidated, pushed off course. Such intent is 'pure' in the exact sense that nothing dilutes it, or deflects it. It is 'straight' to the point. This is the 'singular' heart in action. Desiring has an opposite= this deed of the heart has no opposite.

This is the real 'wildness' in human beings which God respects.. Mostly it is quiescent in most human beings. The devil fears its rising, and piles many obstacles upon the heart to make it believe it cannot 'move' under the obstruction. Yet, in the strange liberation of the moment of the Turn Around, the heart moves, despite everything pressing down on it. When Yeshua shouted at Lazarus in the tomb to get up, and come out, he addressed this most God-like part of Lazarus still nascent in the tomb, like a flame burned down but not out, still glowering in the ashes.

7,

As with dieting, your decision to stop over eating, or eating self destructively for a quick fix, a brief consolation [the nourishing food the parents never provided], is all or none, but you do not just get immediately thin.. You cannot simply shake off the results of years of over eating. You live with that damage, and only slowly does it start to leave you, and then your real shape – William Blake's 'fine wirey line of creation' – starts to emerge.

But, as St Paul testified about this, when the heart turns around, when the heart is reversed, in a way so radical it exceeds even repentance, humility,

truthful acknowledgement of doing evil, it cannot immediately take everything else in heart, in body, in mind, in soul, with it. The heart that has changed in foundation still must carry the load of years of damage done to itself and to the immediate world surrounding it; so too must it shoulder as a burden the not yet turned parts of the composite personhood. The odd thing, the peculiar thing, is that one part of us, really the most significant part, can be close to God, yet the rest of us is not yet there, has not caught up, is lagging behind. This is the rationale for the much misunderstood mantra that we must 'forgive ourselves.' We must have patience with ourselves, as sometimes we stumble under the load, and revert back. Then we must dust ourselves off and get back to it.

As this is not a conservative path of staying within the boundary of the rules, so too it is not a liberal path of indulging whatever fancies seize the heart as it is changing, and still stumbles, still reverts, still gets fed up with what it must still put up with. It still is tempted, and it still has falls, yet slowly, and surely, it is standing firmer, and winning through. Truthfulness in the inner parts is needed to not get above oneself, or ahead of oneself. The liberal path which is weak, sloppy, self-indulgent, telling the heart it can return to pleasing itself, will both squander the accumulating strength of the heart, and peddle to the heart a phoney bill of goods about what the heart is doing. "It will all be fine" ..

Evil, if we turn away from it even in the coils of its encompassing power, and turn to God, brings out the real heart.. Evil tests and clarifies the heart, as good cannot. This is the Way of The Return.

But it is easy to get too familiar in handling forbidden, unbounded, things. Then we fall from the narrow ridge, and may be dragged back a long way.. We can still return, if we then make a stand there.

The Way of the Turning is very free, but if it becomes 'anything goes', we lose the 'inner line' that leads through Hell to the other side. There is a comprehensive brokenness in the place in the heart of the Turning, yet just there is the tension that builds and drives the advancing inner line 'through.'

There is a truth of heart in every human situation which becomes our high wire over a gorge that we must walk, not falling to right [fleeing to rules] or falling to left [going back to the undiscerned heart that laxly can do everything it wants].

St Paul warned the first wave of Christians not to abuse the freedom from the Law granted to them by the Cross of Christ as licence. As we pass through good and evil, as we pass beyond good and evil, through love, we cannot lapse into 'everything is permitted because there is no good and evil.'

That is just another route back to Hell.

Remain in Hell, but do not throw in the towel, and let the Spirit guide you through. This takes more honesty, more truthfulness, toward the 'inner parts.'

8,

Yeshua was, is, and will forever be, the Mashiach who brought this Reversal Way of the Messianic Mystery into the world. The Reversal which is key to Redemption means nothing is irredeemable, everything is redeemable. Only the Cross accomplishes that.

Only the Round-About-Road goes direct to God's heart.

This Way is what is beyond righteousness, when righteousness retains its footing in the Law. This is the Jewish attempt to articulate passion in its Messianic radicalness.

This Way converts evil into something extraordinary, something far better than good.. Such is the real meaning of the Messiah's 'acceptance' of evil= the change of evil into love, the passionate yet wounded love that becomes greater than good and deeper than evil.

The person of the Way of Return is in reality the person whose tragedy in the abyss of the heart precludes him or her from following the Law, and obediently doing good. At the deepest level, all humanity is in exactly this predicament, and thus all of humanity is precluded from any other way than this way of the baal teshuvah.

The only way through the human tragedy, the only way through Hell= this is the Redemption of the Cross, Descent into Hell, and Resurrection.

Christ took on humanity's final separation from God on the Cross= "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", although he is without sin and has not fallen. He suffers this as something laid upon him to show us the way through it. Up to this moment, Christ had never experienced any sundering in his 'direct wire' into God. At this moment, the plug is pulled. He plunges into the sundering from God basic to the human heart, and enters our heartbreak.

Yet, just in this nadir, he activates the Love prior to good and evil at its most Fiery in how it bears and endures, carries and pays for, the ordeal of the human heart in the trial of good and evil. He passes on to us, in his own coming through that ordeal, the secret of how the heart can be reactivated in the fearful depth where it is defunct.

Such is the power and wisdom of the Cross, awaiting us in hellish abysses, through the Messiah's deed in that God-forsaken, desperate extremity.

Christ on the Cross= the way of the baal teshuvah, the Way of Return to God's heart through the hells in the human heart.

9,

It is for the most stupendous End.

Martin Buber [chapter 6, pp 32-33]=

“Rabbi Pinhas, witnessing the terrible impoverishment of human existence, cried, ‘Let us draw God into the world.’

“God’s grace consists precisely in this, that he wants to let himself be won by man, that he places himself, so to speak, into man’s hands. God wants to come to his world, but he wants to come to it through man. This is the mystery of our existence, the superhuman chance of mankind.

‘Where is the dwelling of God?’ This is the question with which the Rabbi of Kotz surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him.

They laughed at him: ‘What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world [including the universe and nature], full of his glory?’

Then he answered his own question.

‘God dwells wherever man lets him in’.”

THE HEART GOES ON

“Wherever you are, I believe the heart does go on..”

1,

The susceptibility to wounding of all beings thrown into this uncertain and unsecured existence takes on a terrible poignancy, a haunting pathos. The Daemonic tenderness for the passing of the goodness, beauty, virtue, of everything passing is a sharp aching.

When the hope in any afterlife is undone, when the meaning and point of this life is spent and wrecked, ‘the heart goes on.’ This is passion.

2,

According to Hasidism, Four False Ways to pursue the Jewish religious path of having to accept being ‘thrown into the world’ are already evident from the time of Moses [Exodus, 14, 13-15].

[1] Isolation from the world= pillar hugging in the Temple; a purity that is too purist, too non-involved in the world; too indifferent to the fate of the world and too concerned with one’s own [present and especially future] bliss; harshness toward people= they could join what we are in, and get the benefits, so if they stay outside, they will suffer the consequences of that wrong road of living, and therefore it is their fault.

[2] Subservience to ‘the way things are’ in the world, keeping your head down= making religion private rather than public, focusing on religious issues that are individual not collective, within the person not between persons; keep to religious rules rather than having any genuine ethical concern for the way people are getting hurt in the world; ‘what can I do?’; worldly power and threat, the fallen way of everything, is far too big to fight and impossible to overcome, therefore to ‘not rock the boat’ of what is afoot in this dangerous situation is best. ‘I cannot do anything..’ Thus, ‘I will do nothing; anything for a quiet life..’

[3] Militaristic ass-kicking of the world= of fellow Jews as well as non-Jews, both of whom are religiously wrong; putting the world to rights; aggressivity in religion; self-righteousness rampant.

[4] A spiritualising other-worldliness= we can do nothing in action to relieve the suffering world, so all we should do is pray; prayer and other spiritual practices, even if confined to ourselves, radiate outward, and make a spiritual difference, even if no material difference is evident.

These 4 positions can be given more nuancing, and each can be identified by a host of names, but they are perfectly recognizable from the present day, in conventional ways of religion and in new age ways of spirituality.

[1] indifference to neighbour and world, dressed up as fidelity to all the many things of religion which easily take up all our time and energy;

[2] cowardice toward neighbour and world, dressed up as humility and modesty, but really manifesting a crushed spirit;

[3] rivalry and judgementalism toward neighbour and world, a competitive urge to out-do them religiously, and a tyrannical tendency to bully and oppress what cannot be won;

[4] fear of and hostility toward neighbour and world, out of the desire not to be limited or besmirched by 'otherness', thus a secret but fundamental preoccupation with 'self.'

Or, to sum it up.

[1] RITUALISM= to avoid contaminating contact with this world.

[2] SUBMISSION= to get through this world without mishap, by adopting a posture of subservience and pretending this is 'holy, and self-effacing.'

[3] FUNDAMENTALISM= to dominate this world, deploy religious authority like a weapon.

[4] OTHER-WORLDLY SPIRITUALITY= to rise above this world, into a succour that allows any immediate or ultimate disaster to befall it without disturbing one's 'spiritual' equanimity.

3,

The interesting thing is that these 4 wrong options arise at the precise moment when the Jews find themselves 'between a rock and a hard place.' Though liberated from Egypt, that 'release' is but a beginning, not an ending, a question, not an answer, for soon after the Pharaoh's army is in hot pursuit from the rear, and they are confronted by the huge obstacle of the Red Sea blocking their onward movement. If they go back, slavery; if they go forward, death. They are in a trap.

The Jewish people, initially in panic, ask Moses to implore God to 'save' them. God rejects the whole manner of framing this request, and says something unexpected, and indeed extraordinary, given the seriousness of the context.

God replies to Moses = “Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they should go forward.”

The secret of the heart is hidden in this bizarre statement by Yahweh.

Moses is leading the Jews to the mountain of Sinai, after two centuries of enslavement in Egypt, and suddenly all movement toward the event of revelation for which they are leaving this exile seems beyond reach. The trap tightens..

The Midrash claims the Jewish people had split into four camps=

[1] Let us throw ourselves into the Red Sea.

[2] Let us return to Egypt.

[3] Let us wage war on the Egyptians.

[4] Let us pray to God.

Hasidic commentary provides its own illustration of the 4 False Ways in Judaism=

[1] The Zaddik in a Fur Coat=

“There are two ways you can warm yourself on a cold winter day: you can build a fire, or wrap yourself in furs. When the isolationist zaddik is asked, ‘Why do you think only of conserving your own warmth? Why don’t you build a fire that will warm others as well?’, he replies, ‘What’s the use? Can I warm the entire world?’ If you persist, pointing out that one small fire can thaw several frozen individuals, who may in turn create enough fires to warm a small corner of the universe, he doesn’t understand what you want of him..”

[2] The Slave to the World=

“..the submissive Jew [argues] this is the world in which God has placed us, and our mission is to deal with it.. We’ll just have to lower our expectations a little. This Exodus thing was obviously a pipe dream. How could we presume to liberate ourselves from the rules and constraints that apply to everyone else.. So, we’ll do the best we can under the circumstances.. making sure not to antagonize our neighbours.”

[3] The Soldier of God=

“A third response to an uncooperative world.. understands it is wrong to [be isolated from] the world and equally wrong to submit to it. So he takes it on, both guns blazing. [This] Jew strides through life with a holy chip on his

shoulder, [putting to rights] sinners, apostates, Jew-haters, un-Jewish Jews, and non-battling Jews. ..he knows that his cause is just, that God is on his side, that ultimately he will triumph. So, if the world won't listen to reason, he will knock some sense into it."

[4] The Praying 'Spiritual' Jew=

"Finally, there is the Jew who looks at the world, looks at the.. three camps, shakes his head and lifts his eyes to the heavens. [This person believes that religion should] make peace in the world. [When the other three camps admonish him], 'you hope to peacefully change the world? ..when was the last time you looked out the window?', the Praying Jew says, 'You're absolutely right. Realistically there is no way it can be done. But we are not subject to this reality you are so impressed with. [There is] a higher reality [which we inhabit]. Ours is the world of the spirit..' 'So, basically', the other three camps counter, 'your approach is to do nothing.' The Praying Jew replies, 'you are employing the standards of the material world, a world that views spiritual activity as "doing nothing." But a single prayer, coming from a caring heart, can achieve more than the most secure fortress, the most flattering diplomat, or the most powerful army'."

It is important to realise that God rejects all 4 of these 'solutions' to the trap. A Jew is called to better the world, not abandon it, but he cannot do that in any of these 4 stances. It is important to realise, right at the off, God rejects all these ways of dealing with the existential bind.

Egypt= the evil of the conscious sphere, the evil in the world; the Red Sea= the evil of the unconscious sphere, the evil in ourselves. The blocks outside us, the blocks inside us; between these it is checkmate.

Or is it?

Is it over before it really begins?

4,

God's reply to Moses is truly staggering. He rejects that the help needed in this existential crisis can come from Moses as leader; yet, equally, he rejects that the help can come from God's power bestowed on the people like a parent giving comfort to an infant who is passive, helpless, hapless.

The people want God to save them, by removing the bind they are in. God won't do this. Neither human leadership, in and of itself, nor Divine Intervention, in and of itself, is how this works.

The Way that is beyond the 4 False Ways is cryptically referred to as, 'tell the children of Israel to go forward.'

No rescue by the great leader. No rescue by the High God. The leader may still guide, the God may still intervene. But prior to either of these, and what makes them effective, is something far more mysterious.

The people are told by God they are not going to be rescued by Moses, the people are told by God they are not going to be rescued by God. They are told, go forward.

Drive on. Keep moving.

The mystery is in the people, neither in the leader as exterior to them, nor in God as exterior to them.

The mystery is in the heart, in each of us, in all of us.

When all hope is gone, when it is all over bar the shouting, the heart goes on. This is passion.

Indeed, its real passion, its truest passion, only really ignites when everything else is defunct.

The heart goes on, even when it cannot do anything.

What is this mystery?

It is for the sake of this mystery that the Jews, and we, go forward.

For the sake of the mystery not of the mountain heights nor of the ocean recesses, but the mystery buried in time and only dug up in time, the mystery of what the heart is for.

In every crisis, in every situation, there is a two-fold rock and hard place of the trap, and there are the Fourfold False Ways, and there is the true way that trusts and ventures the heart to go on.

“My heart will go on” is true, because the heart will not give way until it has found what it is, and why it is, and how it is, the heart cannot really be stopped.

This is what God will augment and empower= the mystery of the power in each of us, in all of us, of ‘the heart that does go on.’

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Daniel, 3, 52-56, addresses four spheres of the operation of Yahweh=

- [1] You are blessed in the firmament of heaven.
- [2] You are blessed in the temple of your glory.
- [3] You are blessed on the throne of your kingdom.
- [4] You are blessed who gaze into the depths.

Eros as Salvational= heaven, temple.
Daemonic as Redemptive= throne, depths.

All Christians, East and West, are using [1] and [2] as defense against [3] and [4]. This blocks the Second Covenant taking the time it needs to reach fulfillment in the Apocalypse.

Malachi, 3, 1-2=

“I send my messenger to prepare the way for me..
But who can endure the day of Yahweh’s coming, and who can stand when he appears?”

The Apocalypse of John of Patmos, 19, 11-16=

“And I saw heaven open, and a white horse come out, and he that rode him was called faithful and true; he judges with integrity, a warrior for justice. His eyes were flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns; the name written on him no man knew, but he himself. His cloak was soaked with blood; he is known by the name, the Word of God.. From his mouth came a sharp sword, to strike the nations sunk in the life of greed, lust, possessing; and he will rule them with a sceptre of integrity; and tread out the wine of Yahweh’s fierce anger. On his cloak and on his thigh there was a name written: the king of kings and lord of lords.”