

# **THE WOUND OF EXISTENCE**

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# **THE WOUND OF EXISTENCE**

Volume Two:

THE HEART IS DEEP

## **IV: PASSION AS THE FIRE OF TRUTH**

1,  
FIGHTING FOR TRUTH – THE WARRIOR KING (VOL 1)

2,  
LIVING TRUTH – THE SACRED CLOWN, or HOLY FOOL (VOL 1)

3,  
DECLARING TRUTH – THE PROPHET, or ELDER

### [3]:THE PROPHETIC ANGER AND SADNESS CALLING THE WORLD BACK TO TRUTH

The priest Amaziah said of the prophet Amos, "...the land is not able to bear all his words."

"My zeal has consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words."  
Holy Saturday Matins on Friday Evening of Passion Week.

"Peace, peace, they say, when there is no peace."  
Prophet Jeremiah

"I am reading Princeton professor Cornwell West's new book 'Democracy Matters' and he takes American Imperialism, and the evangelical right wing which is affiliated with it, [as a] Christianity which has sold out the prophetic element that stands for the poor and dispossessed, and has allied itself with the very forces of the Beast [called 'worldliness in the New Testament] whose symbols are power, possession, privilege – the very elements that killed Christ because he had passion."

Letter from my friend Stephen Muse

"I hate, I despise, your feast days... I don't want your burnt offerings... Take away from me the noise of your songs... But let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."  
Amos, 5, 21–24.

"We find the most terrible form of atheism, not in the militant... struggle against the idea of God himself, but in the practical atheism of everyday living, in indifference and torpor. We often encounter these forms of atheism among those who are formally Christians."

Nikolai Berdyaev

"Genuine heroism for mankind is still the power to support contradictions, no matter how glaring or hopeless they may seem. The ideal critique of a faith must always be whether it embodies within itself the fundamental contradictions of the human paradox and yet is able to support them without fanaticism, sadism and narcissism, but with openness and trust."

Ernest Becker

## Dostoyevsky As Prophet Of Depth Spirituality

Berdyaev says it is very instructive to compare the three ages of [1] Dante, [2] Shakespeare, and [3] Dostoyevsky. Dante represents the classical world of antiquity; Shakespeare is post-Renaissance humanism stretching all the way into modernity; but Dostoyevsky is the step beyond modernity, which was taken by the existentialists as well, but very few others. This step is a third way beyond the polarisation of opposites that happened as a consequence of modernity's collapse: both reactionary 'fundamentalism' [a totalising and combative absolutism] and sophisticated 'post-modernism' [an ironic and playful relativism] are reactions against modernity that presuppose it, but Dostoyevsky blazes a different trail out of modernity. For, instead of a depth position that is merely psychological, Dostoyevsky inaugurates a depth that exceeds the psychological because it is spiritual.

This was anticipated in antiquity by a few very depth oriented spiritual people; for example, St Macarios of Egypt= "The human heart is an unfathomable abyss" [or= "has unfathomable deeps"]. But in a vital sense this is what the whole Biblical anthropology of 'heart' was wrestling with, without realising it. For already in the Psalms, David says "deep cries to deep."

Berdyaev:

"For Dante, man is an organic part of the objective order of the world, the divine cosmos. He is one of the grades in the universal hierarchy: heaven is above him, hell below; God and Satan are realities belonging to the universal order, imposed on man from without... [Man lives in] an objective divine order.

When the humanist era was established... ..an infinity of worlds was opened. There was no longer a single cosmos with an ordered hierarchy... [Man] turned inward to himself, entering the [psychological] realm... This is the humanistic period of modern times, in the course of which man's creative forces have been played out. He is no longer bound by any objective world-order, given from above: he feels free. This is the Renaissance, and [Shakespeare's] work set forth for the first time the [psychological] human world, endlessly complex and varied, full of emotion... strength and energy, boiling over with the play of man's powers. [This] was... the humanistic conception of the world, ...directed towards its [psychological] and not its spiritual aspect, away from man's ultimate spiritual self...

[In the] modern age... human freedom and man's powers were given full opportunity, but at the end of that period this experiment in liberty was carried over to another plane and another dimension, and it is there that man's destiny is now working itself out. Human freedom abandoned the [psychological] world in whose daylight it had existed since the Renaissance and plunged into the depths of the spiritual world. It is like a descent into Hell. But there man will find again not only Satan and his kingdom, but also God and Heaven; and they will no longer be revealed in accordance with an objective order imposed from without but by way of a face-to-face meeting with the ultimate depths of the

human spirit, as an inwardly revealed reality. All Dostoyevsky's work is an illustration of this."

In modernity, the human breaks away from what had contained it, and tries to fly with its own wings. This spawns all the grand systems, from Freud through Marx to Darwin, trying to investigate the human as to what its 'underlying' ultimate is; this ultimate is not recognised as spiritual, but simply as the 'basis' to the expansive powers of the human [intelligence, creativity, vitality], and thus the key to removing the problems blocking that expansion [psychological neurosis, social disharmony, physical illness], so that it can proceed in an unending 'progress.'

But as modernity fails in this quest, so both the crusading of fundamentalism and the ennui of post-modernism give up on the human, albeit in converse ways. Dostoyevsky does not give up on the human, but grounds it in the deeps where a mystery other to yet undergirding of the human encounters the mystery of the human; in this encounter the heart meets God and wrestles in its passion toward the meaning of being thrown into the world.

Berdyayev's three ages – antiquity, modernity, beyond modernity – clarify that 'depth', 'passion', 'spirit' are so closely related as to be one and the same. The depth that is spiritual and announces itself through its impact on passion brings apprehension, anguish, torment, trouble, to the human heart; but this same depth also inaugurates realities of the coming kingdom in the very midst of its mysteries, paradoxes, ambiguities, contradictions, contentions, absurdities. Reversal is basic to depth spirituality: nothing is as it seems, and everything that seems will be overturned. The great will be made small, and the small will be made great, by this reversal. The broken will be made whole, the whole will be broken; the lowly will be exalted, the exalted will be brought low; the sated will be rendered hollow and empty, the thirsting and hungering for life and truth will be filled. The happy and contented will sorrow and mourn, the savagely pained will be brought to a wholly inconceivable, dark joy.

Dostoyevsky, and 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, constitute the only tradition within Christianity where depth rather than height is the spiritual focus, and where this focus entails the heart and passion are make or break.

Passion gives the heart to the spirit, or withholds the heart from the spirit, in the depth. This then becomes decisive for the quality, temper, nature, of the heart passion that is offered to the world. A new enworlded heart and a new enworlded passion become the arena and battleground of Spirit.

Nietzsche= "The world is deep."

# THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF DEPRESSION

## Melancholy and Accidie in Desert Tradition

“The heart of the wise are in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth” [Ecclesiastes, 7, 4].

### PREAMBLE

This statement presents not a medical, nor a narrowly psychiatric, understanding of depression. The spiritual meaning of depression to be explored here is that which is implicit in the story of David in the Psalms. David underwent both kinds of depression; there are Psalms where struggle with melancholy occurs [Septuagint: 68, 87, 41], while there are other Psalms where struggle with accidie occurs [Septuagint: 101, 60, 88].

We should understand and heal the process of depression in the same way that is evident in the troubled and turbulent experience of David, who was not only [Eros inspired] poet and lover, but also [Daemonic dynamised] warrior and king. Melancholy is the disease that poisons the soul of the poet and lover. Accidie is the disease that flattens the heart of the warrior and king.

### [I] The Spiritual Dynamic in Depression

1,

Depression undermines soul life and heart activity on the outside and drags us, kicking and screaming, back to the inside, and plunges us down into the deeps, to the foundations and bases of all life and all activity. Where before we walked on the surface of existence, seemingly on solid ground, suddenly in depression we are plunged into the cave of the soul or into the abyss of the heart.

We *either* get stuck in this place of inside and of deeps, unable to die to the old way of soul life and of heart activity, yet prevented from returning to it due to its being undercut and stricken; *or* this process of interiorisation and deepening undoes us and remakes us in the bases and foundations of soul and of heart.

We are undone to be remade vis-à-vis:

- God.
- Humanity and the World.

Depression is an invitation to fall into the hands of the living God, and to really rejoin the human race, by rejoining the human tragedy.

2,

The cure for depression?



There is no cure. The very word 'cure' expresses our clinging to the old life and old activity, demanding it be restored to us. In depression, God wounds us to take this away.

There is no cure, but there is a healing, for depression. The healing is paradoxical. The healing of the wound of existence is to be harshly stricken by it and go farther into it.

We are healed by a wound.

## **[II] The Fallen Passions**

1,

The Desert Tradition of Eastern Christianity speaks of 8 'fallen passions' in the human mind, soul, heart, and spirit. These are deeply lodged in us. They are not just behaviours performed in the external that can be externally altered by pressure, manipulation, inducement. These are inherent states of mind, soul, heart, and spirit, and it is their 'lodging' in us which has to be changed. So long as they dominate our inward ground, they act as compulsions which drive us; they rob us of freedom and love. Without choice, we are forced to manifest unloving energies towards the world.

Yet, the fallen passions of soul and heart are not evil per se, but simply the distortion of something good and true.

The soul: created as a Vessel of God's Goodness. The soul longs for the Goodness of God. Symbolically, this Goodness is life-giving waters. I thirst, said David.

The heart: created as a Vehicle of God's Truth. The heart suffers and fights for the truth of God. Symbolically, this Truth is sacrificial fire. I came into the world to kindle fire, and how I wish it were kindled already, Christ said.

In the Old Testament, it is never a matter of suppressing the bad behaviour, or even refusing to entertain the cognitive phantasy that accompanies it, but the challenge is to change the deeper lodged motive. For example, God's 'righteousness' does not refer to behavioural or cognitive manifestations, but to what is in the heart. The heart contains the basic intent. Only God sees into the heart. To become righteous, we must see into the heart, so as to change its intent. This is far harder than changing behaviour or phantasy.

Thus, Goodness is of the soul, and God sees what Goodness is or is not in the soul. Truth is of the heart, and God sees what Truth is or is not in the heart.

2,

The nous searches, the soul desires, the heart fights, according to St Maximos. A soul that cannot desire the Good is in a kind of Hades, a heart that cannot fight for the Truth is in a kind of Hell.

The later Latin tradition [Gregory the Great, 590-604] reduced the 8 fallen passions of the earlier Greek tradition [gluttony, greed, lust, hatred, dejection/melancholy, despondency or accidie, vainglory, pride] to 7: by collapsing pride and vainglory into one, called "pride"; adding "envy"; and collapsing the two kinds of depression into one, called "sloth." It was John Cassian who brought Evagrius [375-400?], and the entire Desert Tradition, of Egypt and Palestine to the West.

The Latin word 'sloth' isn't very helpful as a designation for depression, but it does make clear that neither the anguished grief, nor the devastating incapacitation of life and activity, within depression is sinful; the sinful element is 'spiritual laziness': passivity, the unliving and inaction – the soul not 'living' the goodness of life and the heart not 'acting for' truth. In depression, we turn against the energies that animate soul, and that move heart: we remain in unlife and inaction, and thus fail to live and do what we were put into this world to live and do. We make no contribution to this world, nor let it contribute to us. Yet in reality this is a tragedy. Why be born at all if only a deadened life and a paralysed action is our lot in this world? Thus the Desert Tradition makes no hard and fast distinction between sin and illness. Depression is a sickness – we can borrow from Kierkegaard to describe it as "the sickness unto death" – but within this sickness is the potentiality of a dying and rebirth, a greater healing than 'how happy we were' before we fell into depression.

But just here we come to a more nuanced understanding of spiritual laziness: what it really refers to is not just the tragedy of our never living to the full and never acting to the full, but something more subtle. In order for the turnaround in the deeps to occur, through a death that is a rebirth, we need to do some inner, and depth 'work.' The spiritual laziness in depression that is sinful is not the pain and paralysis in the condition that destroys our old life/activity, and its inability as yet to give birth to a new life/activity, but our passivity toward the opportunity provided by the depression – our refusal to do the work in it, psychological and spiritual, which will co-operate with and facilitate the inner, and deep, dying that leads on to rebirth. There is no way 'out' of depression, but there is a way 'through.' Spiritual laziness is refusing to take up what the Chinese 'I Ching' calls "work on what has been spoiled" – work that will help the way through to emerge; instead, we passively remain in the tomb of depression because something in the depression is compensating us for what the depression has taken away from us.

The inner, depth work we do in depression is to examine our life and action at root, and to allow both damage and error to come to light; but it is more fundamental even than this. We must let go of the old foundation, by letting the soul be emptied and the heart burnt to ashes: we must embrace God's wound. In depression we are wrestling in this dilemma: something in us is resisting the Daemonic blow of God, refusing it and solacing ourselves for it, which creates the dynamic phenomenology, or experiential process, of the depressive state; while something else is embracing the wound and being healed by virtue of embracing it.

The wound that befalls us, like a fate, heals us of shallowness, hurt, error, if we work with it, and allow its process to go all the way in undoing us to remake us. We have to die to be reborn.

In short, the cave of soul and the abyss of heart either becomes a place of death and rebirth, or it becomes our tomb.

### **[III] The 2 Depressions in Desert Tradition**

1,

Since melancholy afflicts soul, and accidie afflicts heart, it is necessary to say something more about them.

What does the desire of soul really desire?

Eros.

Eros: God's fullness and richness, God's power of fruition and creation, which plants heaven in earth, making a Garden and Wellspring of Goodness.

Eros: the Good and our union with it. Joy.

From the point of view of the soul, God created to bestow his Goodness on us as a gift.

What does the passion of heart really want?

Truth.

Truth: God's promise and vow – the Pillar of this world, that carries it like a load. The load is a suffering and it is a burden.

Truth: the Sacrificial and our trust in it. Hope.

From the point of view of the heart, God created to take a terrible risk, a deep gamble, that heart truth can uphold and finally redeem the world.

In the Desert Tradition, the two different kinds of depression are called in Greek 'melancholy' and 'accidie.' Melancholy originally breaks down into two parts, "melan": black, and "khole": bile. 'Black bile': something dark and heavy in which one is stuck. Experientially, melancholy is 'wet' and 'heavy', a swamp. Accidie also originally breaks down into two parts, "a": not, and "kedia": to care for others, as you would in burying the dead. 'Not caring about anything: even leaving the dead unburied.' Experientially, accidie is 'dry' and 'enervated', a desert.

In melancholy, the soul is sucked into a sludge of water and earth, swallowed in mud. In accidie, the heart is trapped in a furnace of sun and earth, baked to dust.

2,

Melancholy and accidie will now be looked at in more detail.

**[1] MELANCHOLY** = a sickness of the soul's desire and imagination [appetitive faculty]. "DEJECTION" [de: down, jectere: thrown; literally 'thrown down'; to be downcast, one's spirits lowered, or pressed down; David speaks of being under the waves: unable to come up for air]. A gloomy, brooding, vinegary, vexed, rancorous Sadness, which Longs for something Unobtainable.

BIBLICAL= This melancholy overwhelmed the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, causing them to fall asleep as Christ underwent his battle with himself, before he battled the devil for the world. That the disciples could not stay awake because of melancholy is evident in the text, for it says when Christ returned he found them "sleeping for sorrow" [Luke, 22, 45]. St Paul refers to a holy sorrow which leads to fundamental change, but he also distinguishes holy 'lype' from a worldly sorrowing that deadens the soul [2 Corinthians, 7,10]. The deadening is a kind of sleep, a sleep haunted by dreams of bitterness and yearning.

PRE MODERN= Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' [1621] – a protest against loss, a twisted sadness that can find no joy in the world, and seeks for what desire has lost, or cannot have, in phantasy and dreaming; yearning for the unreal replaces any satisfaction with the real. Often seen as resonant with profundity, the stigmata of artists and philosophers. Samuel Johnson said melancholy is the sickness of one "separated from his fulfilments." Freud repeated the older understanding when he noted that melancholy arises out of mourning, as a distortion of grieving, and that the complaints in melancholia are really complaints: 'life has let me down, not given me what I so thirst for.'

DESERT WAY= the "deprivation of desire." Resentment for not getting our desire, and a longing that fixates us to the lost, or unrealisable, object of that desire, in imagination. Hence nothing real satisfies us. All love for life is gone: there is no Eros outside our imagination. The phantasies and dreams of imagination soothe us, but take us further and further from reality. We are never satisfied: we turn from what we do have, because it is never good enough. Real life pales, and our life becomes drawn into an unreal domain of longed for but never to be found fulfilment. In Shamanic terms, our soul is sucked into the land of the dead [compare with St Paul's 'worldly sorrow' that leads to deadness, 2 Corinthians, 7,10] – because it seeks an unrealisable life, and won't let it go. We sulk, we are sullen, we brood; we have no gratitude for what we do have.

HASIDISM= "The world looks brightly illuminated for those who don't want it – and gloomy and dark to those who seek to possess it."

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL= all images must be surrendered, not just worldly but also sacred, to come to God qua God.

1,a = Basic Description – *DISCONTENTMENT*.

1,b = Healing – *Acceptance* of the *Loss* in existence.

**[2] ACCIDIE** = a sickness of the heart's will and passion [incensive faculty]. "DESPONDENCY" [de: away from, spondere: promise; literally 'to give up on one's promise'; to lose heart, loss of courage, loss of hope; David speaks of his vital force turning to ashes: burnt up, burnt out].

A desolate, forsaken, wasted away Listlessness, given to restless Wandering, to avoid an unavoidable Burden.

BIBLICAL = This Accidie rendered David desperate in the Psalms: "A prayer of one suffering from 'akedia' and pleading before the Lord" [Psalm 101]. David exposes his illness honestly; he is 'gutted' – a vitality extinguished, like smoke easily blown away; a heart stricken and withered; a hunger too wasted away to eat his bread: "I eat ashes like bread, and mingle tears with my drink"; he is awake long hours with terrible lucidity, unlike the melancholy in which we cannot wake from the heaviness of sleep and its yearning dreams, but in his lucidity all he can see are 'the cracks in the pavement.'

DESERT WAY = The "noon day devil", under whose too harsh demands and challenges we wilt, thus "abandoning our post."

EXISTENTIALISM = alienation – the world is absurd, the person a hollow and burnt out shell. Nothing matters, and even if it did, no human being can make any difference to it. Apathy: disinclined for exertion of will, and lacking any energy of passion with which to go out toward anything meaningful, valuable, purposive. This contains a huge negation thrown at life and the self, a way of saying to both 'this is beyond help.'

2,a = Basic Description – *DISCOURAGEMENT*.

2,b = Healing – *Trust* in the *Risk* of existence

#### **[IV] Final Conclusion**

We have to Accept the Loss and Trust the Risk that calls us into a new basis and foundation, and therefore provides for us a new soul life and a new heart activity, after we die to the old and are reborn to the new.

1 –New soul life and new heart activity towards God: Poverty [blessed are the poor in spirit].

The soul is emptied to be made full of the water of life, in its Erotic Goodness, Beauty, Wisdom, Joy; the heart is burnt to ashes to be kindled by the fire of truth, in its Daemonic Ardour, Courage, Generosity, Fervour, Hope. We acquire, from poverty of soul and heart, the soul and heart indwelt by God, and able to be the soul vessel and heart vehicle God intends for our soul desire and heart fight in and towards the world.

2 –New soul life and new heart activity towards Humanity and the World: Mourning [blessed are those that mourn].

2,a

We become a new Wellspring of water of soul life and a new Pillar of fire of heart action in the world: a new eros shared and given away to the world, a new passion serving, protecting, sacrificed, for the world.

2,b

But this happens paradoxically.

This paradox is evident in the life of a famous Hasidic Zadik – this word means not 'master' or 'elder', but 'tested and proved', or 'checked out' – called Rebbe

Barukh, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement. Unlike other Zaddiks who were gentle and kind, Rebbe Barukh was sad and angry, pouring onto his followers both his fierce grief and his fierce anger.

He taught: In a world where love is absent, love is not enough. Sadness and a certain Anger "blessed from above and below" is needed. How can one not despair of this unredeemed world? Love does not lessen the tragedy of existence, but love prevents this tragedy from being vacuous and pointless; love makes this tragedy noble and profound. But it does not remove the tragedy.

He said: The tragedy of this world means that there are Existential Questions which interrogate us. We must not avoid these questions, we must not turn our gaze away from the abyss. Look into despair, even if it remains until the last breath.

He also said: To help another human, we must confront the same peril they do, and be bruised by the same dark flame that bruised them.

Rebbe Barukh was sad, and angry, because he cared, because he had 'Ahavat Israel' – concern for the people. To risk our life for someone else's life, to risk our faith for someone else's faith: this was Rebbe Barukh's understanding, and practice, of Ahavat Israel.

He told a young disciple who had lost all faith and was contemplating suicide: "I know there are questions that have no answers; there is a suffering that has no name; there is injustice in God's creation – and there are reasons enough for man to explode with rage. I know there are reasons for you to be angry. Good. Let us be angry. Together."

2,c

We can enter the wound of existence, the tragedy of the world, to give something redemptive to it, only if we are truly wounded by it. Thus, like everyone else, and like Christ on the Cross, we must mourn for this world, mourn for life drowned in illusion and action burnt up in futility.

Our mourning with people is a recognition that God has not yet redeemed the world. This is why in our mourning is both Sadness and Anger, even Despair: for the world and God are not yet, and might never be, reconciled finally. Thus, for Christ to give God to the world, redemptively, he had to share the world's genuine existential emptiness/sadness and the world's genuine existential dereliction/anger. Christ had to know disappointment of all joy, and forsakenness of all hope, just as we know it. He had to cry with us to God, why have you abandoned the world?

When we are solid with the brother and sister in their deepest and most authentic existential sense of loss and sense of failure, then – and only then – do we really share the bad together and give the good to the bad, and really shoulder the burden together and give strength to weakness. We must sorrow with those who sorrow, to give God's joy to their human sorrow; we must be

angry and despairing with those in anger and despair, to give God's hope to their human discouragement. There is no joy resurrected from sorrow that is not in inconsolable sorrow first; there is no hope resurrected from dereliction that is not in irremovable futility first.

Indeed, Rebbe Barukh was right: Love is not enough.

Love operates through a Wound.

We are wounded by God, emptied of fullness and burnt to ashes in the poverty of the first beatitude, in order to rejoin the human wound at its most true and savage and raw. There is no depression in the mourning of the second beatitude, only the real soul thirst and heart hunger, the soul's sorrowful sigh and the heart's anguished cry, in which "deep cries to deep."

We must cease being religious boy and girl scouts, pretending God has remade us in such a way as to be absolved from, or lifted out of, the common human destiny. No! In our poverty, we are unmade and remade for God, in order to rejoin the human wound, the sighing and crying of all the world, to experience its hurt more deeply, more purely, more inescapably, so that by being wounded by the world's condition, we can give God to it to work in the deeps like a seed that dies and sinks down into the ground, but can thereby transform the deeps from within. From the deeps emerges a joy born of sorrow, from the deeps emerges a hope born of despair. This is Christ's process – of crucifixion, descent into Hades and Hell, before resurrection – and it must be ours.

We must be Sad about God and Angry with God because of the world's abandonment, to be solid with people in sadness and in anger. To rejoice with those dancing with joy, and fight with those fighting from Hope, is part of our solidarity, but more deeply, we must also sorrow with those in sorrow over God's absence from the world, and be angry with those who are in anger over God's impotence toward the world. We must share the existential suffering and struggle, by ourselves being hurt by it, if we are to stand with the brother and sister in this, and give them something redemptive from God.

The mourning that will be comforted is only this:

Be Sad about God and Angry with God – together.

Go through the tragedy together, and emerge together.

This is the mark our mourning is God's mourning for the world. In our poverty where we put God first, we learn to mourn together, and to rejoice and take heart together as the mourning is comforted by God.

We must enter and embrace the common fate, of the abandonment by God, to meet this tragedy as God does, giving joy to sorrow, hope to despair, to redeem it.

2,d

The healing of the wound of existence is to be harshly stricken by it and go deeper into it, so that we can reach poverty in God, and by virtue of that, reach mourning for the world.

God wounds us to place us differently in the wound of existence.

We are healed and heal by a wound.



## PASSION in Biblical Hebrew

As in Greek, there is no single word in Biblical Hebrew that encompasses all of 'passion', but a family of terms. Just as Greek needs 'PATHOS, PATHIEN, PENTHOS, PATHIAZOMAI, THYMOS', etc, to state what the single term in English 'passion' implies, so too the Biblical Hebrew uses a family of words.

None the less, there is a single root from which all the Jewish passionate words emanate. In Biblical Hebrew, SAVAL [s-b-l] is the root meaning "to carry a load." This can be an actual load [Genesis, 49,15] or metaphorically, a spiritual load [as when Yhwh 'carries' the remnant of the house of Israel, Isaiah, 46,4].

There are two main things that passion carries as a heavy weight: "Pain" [Isaiah, 53,4], and "Burden" [Ecclesiastes, 12,5]. Each of these root meanings seems to give rise to a host of related words. Not just humanity, but Yhwh also carries pain and carries burden [especially in Isaiah].

### **[1] Carrying PAIN, SORROW, SUFFERING**

SEVEL can mean carrying 'pain, struggle, suffering.' Carrying it implies to 'bear' it [for example, we bear our ancestors' sins, Lamentations, 5,7].

SOVLANUT is usually translated 'tolerance.' Tolerance here means not indifference to the fate of another, but rather, conveys the connotations of 'acceptance.' Tolerate it means accept it, as in the Old English: "Suffer the children to approach", "Accept the children to come." Thus to carry suffering implies that we must tolerate, accept, or bear it. However severe the pain, or deep the sorrow, we bear it. There is another sense to Jewish tolerance: it also has connotations of accepting otherness, unknownness, mystery, difference, variety, as opposed to insisting on things being as we map and plan them. This meaning of tolerance veers into 'respect' for what is other and different [to what we are familiar with], respect for the sheer 'isness' of things [as opposed to what we would like them to be]. Tolerating could also imply 'bearing the brother', in as much as we must put up with suffering [and burden] to assume the weight of the other person.

SAVLANUT is usually translated 'patience', which implies that what we bear we also 'endure' over time and circumstances. This, in turn, is close to persistence, fortitude, not being premature but 'seeing it through to the end.'

Hence 'to suffer, to tolerate or bear, to endure', is one major theme of passion in Biblical Hebrew.

### **[2] Carrying BURDEN, TASK, DUTY**

SEVEL can mean a load or burden, as well as pain. It is cognate with SOVEL, which is usually a metaphorical burden [such as 'oppression', Isaiah, 9,4], and also close to SIVLOT, which means burden in the sense of a 'task.' This notion of task links passion to doing one's 'duty' in the world, for God; a duty which is heavy and hard, not light and easy. Duty has the connotation of what Martin

Buber terms humanity's 'calling' in the world, for the sake of the world, which comes with a gift from God to do something that needs to be done. This illumines, for example, the nature of the sin of 'accidie', where all passion dies because we refuse our duty to the world, and thereby lose our authentic calling and the gift needed to fulfil it.

But, there are other meanings in the 'passion' of Biblical Hebrew. Though carrying a heavy weight or load, both as pain/suffering/sorrow and as burden/task/duty, are essential to the Jewish understanding of passion, two other extremely important connotations should be mentioned.

### **[3] Carrying in the sense of DRAGGING ONESELF ALONG**

In the Hithpael passion means to 'drag oneself along.' This is what we mean when we refer to life, or a given challenge, becoming a 'hard slog.' All we can do is drag our heart along, slow but steady. Passion can suddenly break through, but it can also be bogged down, barely able to move. Sometimes 'progress is slow', and all we can do is 'hang in there', and 'keep going', at a snail's pace. The Desert Fathers speak of times when the spiritual life is all about dragging ourselves to do things, and in the doing of these things, just barely able to continue and feeling our heart as a heavy stone we must drag 'reluctantly' towards where we are going.

### **[4] Carrying in the sense of PREGNANCY**

In the Pual passion can mean 'pregnancy.' This is probably why Christ occasionally refers to himself in maternal imagery vis-à-vis the Jews, and by extension, humanity. Passion must suffer, accept, tolerate, bear and endure, 'undergo', hard, and wounding things; it must carry a tremendous burden, task, duty in what it is called to do, and thus make an extraordinary 'exertion' and 'effort' in terms of what it must 'pick up' and 'assume'; yet, paradoxically, this very woundedness and burdenedness is what makes passion carry the possibility of new life at the end of its travails. In effect, it is all the Old Testament "sufferings and raptures of the spirit" of passion that can become pregnant with The Christ, pregnant with His resurrected life through His death. Only passion can win heaven from hell.

## **COMMENTARY**

1,

The root of passion in Greek is suffering that befalls us as a fate we cannot change. The native Greek speaker who first translated the Greek word 'pathos' for me said that it implies 'a suffering that cannot be escaped, like a room of no exit.' Though it is not necessarily evident to any Greek speaker from language alone, the black abyss of suffering contains the possibility of generating the red pillar of spiritual fire. 'Thymos', as the other pole in passion, has the root meaning of 'spiritedness, aliveness, passionateness', rather than just 'anger': hence 'angry for truth', 'intensity of aliveness', 'vehemence of passion.' No theory in psychology, nor any vision in theology, has addressed this basic paradox about passion, which encompasses both a 'passive' and an 'active',

an acceptance and an assertion, a crying and a burning. How can grief give birth to ardour? Many people cannot make this link in their experience because they are active when they need to be passive – they try to resist fate by seeking to subdue it, rather than embracing it – and passive when they need to be active – they subside into quiescence once fate bites, rather than wrestling with it. Thus they go from the invulnerable master over fate to the equally extreme helpless victim of fate: from ‘power over’ to ‘in the power of.’ What passion can attain, if it passes from black to red, is ‘power with.’ If passion cannot move beyond innocent enthusiasm, or idealistic eagerness, once the Daemonic strikes, we fall into despair, cynicism, bitterness, revenge as compensation for defeat, or the self-suicide of apathy.

Biblical Hebrew also contains the link between the passive suffering and the active deed of passion, but if anything, this link is more evident in the close relation between ‘sevel’: suffering and ‘sivlot’: burden, task, duty. What connects ‘being affected’ and ‘affecting’ in Biblical Hebrew is the root common to both, which signifies carrying a weight, like a heavy load that has to be picked up and shouldered. There are many mythical images of this. Atlas carries the globe of the earth on his broad and strong shoulders, and he is an old Daemonic giant, not one of the newer charismatic, Eros-expressing gods and goddesses, none of whom would have the ‘heart’ for this ‘job.’ Another mythical image is the figure of Christopher, a travelling man who one day at a river offered to carry a child across to the other side. The child was small, and the man did not expect any problem. But once on his shoulders, and out into the fast flowing currents, the child mysteriously increased and increased in weight, to the point where Christopher’s shoulders began to buckle and he thought both he and the child would go under the waves. But the child is revealed as the Christ, and only with the child’s help can the man make it to the far shore. It is then that Christopher realises what the Christ, as the Chosen One, has been born to carry. Not only the original existential weight that the human heart was asked by God to carry, but the secondary and added weight of the human heart’s failure to carry this primary weight, is put on the shoulders of the Christ. He is to pick up and carry the weight we put down, and can no longer shoulder.

What is this weight only the heart, not the nous, not the soul, can carry? It is instructive in this regard to recall that Buddha, when abandoning the palace of delights, abandoned not only his rich, protected life, but also abandoned his wife and child. This child he called ‘The Burden.’ However far Buddha went in the Eros of nous illumination and soul philanthropy, he never picked up the burden the heart was forged in a furnace to carry. He left the burden where it had always been, from almost the beginning, in some terrible and holy brokenness of heart that undergirds human existence. Even Buddha’s teaching about replacing the suffering engendered by ‘attachment’ with the enlightenment engendered by ‘non-attachment’ contains the connotation of the burden he left behind, and which the other saintly travelling man could not assume by his own strength alone, since under it he was crushed. For ‘dukkha’, the Sanskrit for suffering, means precisely ‘to burn’, ‘pain’, ‘torment’, and this burning, this pain, this torment, is nothing other than the passion which is staggering under and struggling with the weight the heart must carry. To transcend this burning, pain, torment, in passion is to never even try to pick up

the weight, but like Buddha, to leave it 'un-raised.' This means, in turn, that the heart fails to carry the load in existence that will have a redemptive power toward the world.

God's heart carries the weight. The suffering of passion initiates us into our own carrying of the weight. By carrying the weight, the heart can do unbelievable things. This is what it really means 'to have a heart': it means to take things on that most people avoid, it means to not back off when most people buckle, it means to carry on when most people give in and give up. It means to be always ready to stand with the brother when most people have run away, and left him to the killers when they come. This is, literally, the strength of the heart, but it is also the real manifestation of its warmth and ardour, its fervour and vehemence, its unstinting and unrelenting dedication, its bearing and enduring, its patience and persisting, its coming through and its stepping up. My brother Duane Martin, chief of the Cante Tenze, once told me: "Passion knows what the heart can do."

Only passion knows what the heart can do. The human tragedy is, we don't have the passion to know what the heart can do.

Thus, by putting down the weight only the heart can carry, we have put the heart down, and thus we have no weightiness, we have no sand for doing anything from the heart; we are lightweight and blown away by all manner of swirling and pointless winds and waves that render existence full of 'sound and fury signifying nothing.' When things that really count arise, and need the doing of the heart, we are not available, we melt away like morning mist under the fierce midday sun.

The heart backs down when passion does not rouse it to what it can do.

2,

Two conclusions stand out from studying the Biblical Hebrew for passion.

**[1]**

I have heard many Christians, West and East, urge a wrong uniqueness for Christ, as if he were some Cosmic Rescuer dropped into the mire and silt here below from the peerless height far above, to pluck us up and away. But this is not the way it is. There is a fundamental similarity between the passion of Christ and the passion of humanity. If we are fearful and dismissive of human passion, then what relevance can Christ's passion have for us? Is what Christ did 'for' us just a deus ex machina, totally divorced from us, and consequently imposed upon us? The real situation is that human passion, despite its failure to hit its mark, is not so far from the divine-human passion of Christ. The weight God put on our passion from its inception means it was always called not just to humanness, but to the divine-human. God creates the human ingredients of passion in the image of, and capable of growing into the likeness to, his divine passion. Thus God creates the predicament wherein passion is stretched [angst comes from 'angine', which in Latin means 'squeezed and strangled'], God sends the suffering that initiates passion into depth, God moves passion to the

faith that takes a chance with risk, God forges the truth that empowers passion to stand over the abyss, and become on fire.

These ingredients are the Tree of Life.

These ingredients are taken up by Christ and taken farther. But it is these ingredients he respects, even venerates, and refashions to reconnect them to their origin and end. This is why he prefers the title 'Son of Man' to the title 'Son of God.' It is more important for us that he is the Son of God, it is more important for him that he is the Son of Man.

This is why Christ is universal; he addresses the tragedy in all of humanity and the redemptive possibility still hidden there, like the pearl of great price buried far down in dark ground.

This is why no church, no tradition, is big enough to contain, to do full justice to, Christ; he addresses the suffering and burdened heart in everyone, and for all our sake assumes what we all have put down, that we all can assume it again. This deed has no patent, no logo of ownership, on it because it is for everyone, whether they recognise it or not, whether they are religious or not, whether they are in this religion or in that religion. Christ's deed is unique because it is unconstrained, and too incredible to define or limit or explain or justify. It exceeds all this human-invented limitation. The Christ who made the crucial turnaround in the heart is a gift to everyone, and thus belongs to no one.

## [2]

God's promise, delivered via the Jews, is to give humanity a new heart. But this new heart is not going to descend from the Above, top-down, but ascend from the Below, bottom-up. God required the Jews to pass through all the spiritual errors of passional existence in this world for the sake of a relation between the old heart and the new heart more complex than some surgery to take out the old and replace it with the new. The old heart must be redeemed, it cannot just be replaced. This is the doing of the Chosen One, the Redeemer, the Christ. Through him the new heart emerges from the old heart. Most other religions, most other spiritualities, pursued nous and soul, and left the heart in its brokenness. But the Jews shoulder the tragedy in the human heart because they look to its redemption.

Greek and Biblical Hebrew senses of passion, even if their respective emphases are a little different, are united in the same paradox: the heart is made to undergo something deep because it is called to undertake something great.

God's Spirit whispers, on the wind, trust this. Go with it. Let it sweep you along. Don't bail out. See it through to the end.

3,

Christ brings virtually nothing new to nous, or soul; what is unique about Christ pertains to the heart, and its spirit; what is new in Christ is passion.

This is already prefigured in the Old Testament, because the pattern there is that God inflicts upon the poor clay of the human heart a terrible and holy, fearful and wonderful, suffering/pain/trouble and burden/duty/task by insisting it carry a great weight. Yhwh puts a wound and a burden into his people, Israel, but then he joins their struggle to carry it, carrying it with them, thus upholding them in the struggle to carry it. This was in anticipation of what Christ would have to carry for us, after we put the weight down. He picked the weight up so that, through him, we could assume it again, and assume it for its true purpose: to redeem, not judge, the world.

It is clear the passion of the human heart is thrown into a long journey and an arduous battle; that it carries something heavy and deep ['heavy' often means 'deep' in everyday parlance], carries something heavy and momentous ['heavy' also means 'weighty' in significance in everyday parlance]. Passion is our great heartedness, broken, lost, defunct, derailed, yet redeemable and indeed capable of being transfigured, to become pregnant with The Christ. Only passion wins the strange, and final, victory – not for each of us alone, but for all of us, all things, in all times and places, forever. Passion is the loss that produces greater gain, in the end.

He who slays us becomes He who is slain for us.

# THE BIBLICAL HEART

1,

Though the Old and New Testaments refer to 'mind' quite frequently, they refer to 'soul' far more; and though they refer to soul a great deal, they refer to 'heart' by far the most. According to a Romanian Orthodox scholar I met, heart is mentioned 739 times in the Old Testament, and 169 times in the New Testament. This is because heart is central to the physical, psychological, and spiritual life of humanity. To lose heart is to be sorely sick, but to cease to have a heart is to be dehumanised. 'Heartlessness' is hell for us, because it means we have totally 'lost the plot'; we don't have any inkling why we, or everyone else, is in this world. It is to lose heart for history, time, space, matter, activity: everything that bestows meaning on being thrown into the world. Through nous and soul, we discover the world as 'already meaningful'; but the Daemonic God preordains that this 'already meaningfulness' must be put at fundamental jeopardy, and can only be regained through a different kind of meaning, one that is only won where it seems lost. Nous: light; soul: water; heart: fire. Syriac Orthodox Christianity speaks of the world created by God in two ways: [1] the world is a "a book of light"; this is what the nous sees; [2] the world is a "sea of symbols"; this is what the soul lives. But St Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the world in a third, more existential way when he says: [3] "The fire hidden and stifled under the cinders of this world will burst forth and divinely set alight the crust of earth." This refers to the world as the provenance of the heart: the world is crusted over because the fire is extinguished in the heart. Fire will finally break through that coldness and stasis in the world because it will break through in the heart. Heart is the fire called to warm and dynamize the world. Heart is in a triadic relationship between itself, God, and world. This trinity cannot be broken. Judaism announces it by making love of neighbour the flip side of the love of God. But Christ ups the ante in both, by the third, new commandment to love as we were loved by him, and thus to love the enemy as well as the friend. Both are the brother.

In the modern world, mind is preferred to soul, and soul is preferred to heart. This should alert us to the fact that despite the heart being the centre of our existence, yet it is heart we most evade. We neither want to understand, nor act from, the heart. Our views of what the heart is are sentimentalised, romanticised, idealised, but not real. The heart is very real, because it engages with what is most real in existence.

Biblically, though the soul is the life breath that makes the body animated, as opposed to being a dead machine, the heart is the engine of action at the centre of our being. It is the most vital bodily organ, because everything goes out from the heart and everything comes back to the heart. Everything passes through the heart. Everything exists in the heart.

Themes of heart found in the Bible include the following [but this is not an exhaustive summary]. This list is in no particular order, and maybe some themes could usefully be combined, but this is how I recall the Romanian's work:

1] Change in one's destiny comes about through a change of heart. [Arabic's core metaphor for heart is not 'centrality', as in Greek, but the idea of something that can change radically, like seeking to 'turn over a new leaf', or 'pass across to the other shore']. Heart is changeable, not fixed; in dynamic movement, not static. God promises mankind, through Israel, that he will give them a new heart, to mark the End of all Time, in the Eschatological Age to Come.

2] If we want to truly know someone, we must see into their heart, beyond their face and outer appearance. Only God really sees the heart, sees our intentions and hidden motives [1 Samuel, 16, 7; 1 Chronicles, 28, 9].

3] A person's hidden good or evil intentions are always stirring within their heart. Thus one person can ask another, 'is your heart true to my heart, as mine is true to yours?' God asks us the same question: not so he will know, which he already does, but so we will know, by looking within, and honestly searching our most hidden motives. Christ refers to the good and evil treasure of the heart. Thus good and evil are a matter of what the heart values. What the heart treasures or values is what it seeks, and thus what it becomes. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" [Proverbs, 23,7].

4] Help causes hearts to knit together and be cheered up [Colossians, 2,2].

5] Rejoicing happens in the heart= through it we forget evil-doers. [Joy for the heart, like hope, is born of victory in remaining in struggle and contention.] The Old Testament says: "A glad heart is an excellent medicine" [Proverbs, 17, 22].

6] Serve God with a whole heart and a willing mind [1 Chronicles, 28,9].

7] Sacrifices of all kinds are brought forth from the heart: and offered freely.

8] Temptation strikes the heart. The heart is labile, changeable, influenceable. It is vulnerable, as well as strong. If its vulnerability were removed, it would cease being a heart. Strength without vulnerability is 'heartless.' Vulnerability opens us to the short cut, the easy answer, the deceptive fraud. But if we were not vulnerable, we would become 'hard' of heart, and hardness of heart is the condition of demons. This is why to be fully human, we must be open both to existential victory and defeat, we must be capable of resisting temptation and giving in to it. If we armour ourselves in the wrong way, we lose a softness of heart that the Old Testament calls 'the heart of flesh', and instead we become hardened, toughened, brutalised, and operate out of the Old Testament 'heart of stone.' A stone heart is deaf to the suffering of itself and of its brother: generosity and mercy, kindness and tenderness, patience and forbearance, will never trouble it. In a sense, by closing ourselves to evil in the wrong way, we cease to be reachable by any good. We must be human before we can become divine: thus the paradox is that God works not through the stony, inflexible, fanatical, infallible heart, but through the fleshy, flexible, humble, fallible heart. Religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, damning people to hell, arises from the heart of stone. It is better to repent of one's failings than pretend one cannot have failings by putting a hard shell of correctness or



rectitude around the heart. The way of the heart of flesh is paradoxical, and contains the whole story of mankind's slow and difficult redemption, from the Sacred Garden of the Beginning to the Holy City of the End.

9] God tries the heart, and has pleasure in its uprightness. Uprightness of heart is linked to 'righteousness.' God tests the heart [1 Thessalonians, 2,4].

In the Old Testament, it says that the Holy Spirit 'tests the deep things' of God and of mankind. Trying and testing is to purify, but existentially it is more than that: it is to risk the heart – to see what it is made of, to try or test its mettle; but even more radically, it means to try out the heart and let it struggle to hit the mark, so that heart depth can be tested, in God and in mankind, by really using it. This is where trust, faith, truth, 'passibility', comes in. We use the passible, and pass through it, to the far shore. That passing through the passible, reaching a good end with it rather than it being defeated midway, is what 'heaven and hell' refers to, and what the victory of God in humanity is all about. The heart is affected and affectable; spirituality will not rise above this affected state, but will purify it, strengthen it, and by its sufferings and strugglings, its carrying of burdens, prove its worth. The final heart, that has come through, is golden= the gold colour signifies tried and tested, really used, checked out in full, and having passed every trial and having passed every test. Found worthy. Up to it. Finally, despite missing all through, coming through and hitting the mark. We finally repay the trust God put in us, and vindicate the risk he took with our heart.

10] The heart is inherently 'directed' toward God, but must keep certain thoughts and purposes consciously before it, lest this direction be weakened or deflected. Hence the heart 'keeps' the words of God – the promises ['testimonies'] and commandments – "that I might not sin against Thee" [Psalm 119,11; Psalm 118,11].

11] All great decisions for the glory of God are taken from the heart [2 Chronicles, 6,7].

12] God shows his might, or power, on behalf of those whose heart is blameless towards him [2 Chronicles, 16, 9]. Our hearts tremble before the majesty of God and are bound to it.

13] Through hope the heart looks to heaven and brings the divine providence closer. God becomes the heart's strength and defender, because in him the heart trusts; thus is the heart helped by God, and this causes the heart to 'exult' [Psalm 28,7; Psalm 27,9].

14] The heart wavers, and fails: "My heart fails me" [Psalm 40,12; Psalm 39,17]. The heart becomes faint: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint" [Isaiah, 1,5]. In this condition, the heart must cry out to God as to "the rock that is higher than I" [Psalm 61,2; Psalm 60,2]. Human passion prevaricates, but God's passion is firm.

15] God will help the heart that surrenders humbly to him and cries out to him: "...pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" [Psalm 62,8; Psalm 61,8].

16] The heart is like the sun in the middle of our body. [For the Chinese, the heart is the king or emperor, and is likened to the warmth and fieriness of the sun shining upon all the earth from a clear sky.] The heart has many kingly properties in terms of its fairness, justice, truth-upholding, mercy, kindness, tenderness, generosity.

17] "Wisdom will come into the heart" [Proverbs, 2,10].

18] "The heart of the wise are in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth" [Ecclesiastes, 7,4].

19] "Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life" [Proverbs, 4,23]. "A tranquil heart gives life to flesh" [Proverbs, 14,30].

20] "A man's face will reveal his heart" [Sirach, 13,30].

21] The heart is an abyss: "You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart... how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things?" [Judith,8,14].

22] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" [Matthew, 5,8].

God cannot be seen, by mind or soul, so this carries the extraordinary implication that only heart can penetrate the wall of separation between God and humanity, and see deep into God's hiddenness. In effect, the human heart becomes able to see God's Heart. This seeing is the "eye of fire", when the heart finally 'knows' and need not 'seek' any more. It knows God's Heart, and it sees the world as God's Heart sees it, seeing no person as profane, condemning no one, seeing all as good however far from that they have wandered.

23] "Out of the heart comes evil thoughts" [Mark, 7, 21-22]. "They are a people who err in heart" [Psalm 95,10; Psalm 94, 11]. "This people knows me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" [Mark, 7,6]. Proverbs says men think they are 'right' in their own eyes, 'but God sees the heart.'

24] The kingdom of heaven is always ready to descend into the heart [Old Testament], or is already present but undiscovered in the depths of the heart [New Testament].

25] God lays a task on the human heart from its very inception: "Work heartily" and "serve God, not men" [Colossians, 3, 23]. The Messianic and Eschatological hope in Redemption for all of mankind is the ultimate burden laid upon the human heart by God [Acts, 1,24]. The heart's deepest energy, motive, urge, in serving God, is directed towards the world. For, the heart's ardour, its most fervent and zealous burning, is "that all people may be saved"

[St Paul, Romans, 1,10]. This really means that the venture shared by God and humanity, through the heart, will be redeemed, will come good in the end.

26] Be thankful to God: sing praises to God out of the heart [Colossians, 3,16].

27] "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" [Romans, 9, 2].

28] "Comfort your hearts" [Colossians, 4, 8]. This does not signify comfort as laziness or ease, but has the Old English sense of to 'strengthen.'

29] The heart has key sins that betray its mission, and among these is greed, avarice, meanness [2 Peter, 2,14]. "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" [1 John, 3, 17]. St John also says that if anyone claims to love God, but hates their brother or sister, that person is a liar. If they cannot love those human beings right before them, whom they see, how can they love the hidden God whom they do not see? If the second commandment is lost, then the first commandment is rendered vain, and cannot be fulfilled. Also seriously derailing the heart are "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition" [James, 3, 14]. Pride and vanity are attributed to the heart, as well as hate, hostility, malice, vengeance, judgemental accusation.

30] Eastern Christian Tradition says, 'there is a saving cry that destroys all despair by its vibration.'

It is the heart that 'cries deep to deep' to God in the psalms of David. The depth of the human heart, in a certain sense, is God; for, without God assaulting our heart, dragging it out of the shallows where it pleases itself – serving nothing, doing nothing, sacrificing nothing – we would have no depth of heart. "The heart that has become calm through knowledge sees [in itself] a deep abyss" [Mark the Recluse]. Or: "The human heart is an unfathomable abyss" [St Macarios of Egypt].

31] St Maximos says, "It is the natural beating of our heart to want to conquer the world. This has to be purified, so we conquer by love."

32] Terms and metaphors applied to the heart include:

- weighed down and heavy heart,
- foolish heart,
- conscience of heart,
- troubled heart,
- steadfast heart,
- opened heart,
- innocent heart,
- righteousness and firmness of heart,
- shining of heart
- wide and broad heart,
- a heart dwelling in God,

- a heart darkened in understanding and alienated from the life of God due to blindness of heart [Ephesians, 4,18],
- togetherness in heart,
- guidance or instructions that direct our heart,
- refreshment comes to heart; rest the heart,
- the heart is strengthened by the power of God,
- a deceived heart has an unbridled tongue,
- the day star arises in our hearts.

2,

The prophet is one of the key figures of heart passion, and the prophet is moved and inspired by the Spirit of God; not surprisingly, then, there is a particularly close connection of the Holy Spirit and human passion. Though every person has their own 'spirit', we were designed to be 'possessed' by the Spirit of God, and this distinction between human spirit and God's Spirit is not always clear cut. More important, Biblically God's Spirit is explicitly portrayed as God's Passion.

Jewish prophets deliver both the promises and judgements of God; they reveal the dynamis and dynamics of God, they announce the divine heart that is disposed toward humanity in a particular way. The Spirit of God is called 'Ruach' in Hebrew, and this Ruach is a mysterious presence in the creation, making it strange. He is the breath of life that grants us aliveness, but he also does two other things: he inspires, and he influences. Particularly relevant to passion is that the Ruach influences both nature [the special interest of Shamanism] and history [the special interest of Judaism]. The Ruach is God's Active Agent who shapes the events of Israel's history: a divine dynamism, always 'moving' mankind through their hearts, in their passion. He is called an east or west wind – the parallel with the bad black road of Lakota Shamanism is obvious – because the Ruach can be beneficial or harmful according to God's will, or God's disposition, in a given situation. Thus the Ruach conveys both the Erotic and the Daemonic sides of God.

The Word of God, later called Logos by St. John, rests in the Ruach and is carried by the Ruach. Without the Ruach, the Logos is just a letter to us, its spirit is missing, and so we grab at it in the mind but do not understand it with the heart. Biblically, we 'understand' holiness, and thus it is the heart that understands. Without the Spirit of Holiness, the heart cannot understand anything about God or itself, or the world. Literal interpretations of the Bible, as in Evangelical–Fundamentalist Protestantism, are lacking in inspiration by the Ruach, and therefore do not understand from the heart: the mind merely 'calculates' the 'letter', but misses entirely the 'spirit.'

The Word's economy is to 'manifest' God, but the Ruach's economy is to remain invisible yet to 'bring to life' God in us: to 'touch' like a caress does to a body, to 'move' like wind does to sail, to 'ignite' like fire does to wood. The Word is a clear declaration of God's intent, but the Ruach is the warmth of love in that declaration that melts us like wax in heat, and reforms us to become a candle not only lit up but actually on fire with that same love. Thus to be a Spirit-Bearer is to be God-Bearer.

A Russian Orthodox theologian points out that by 700 BC, the Ruach implied humanity's spirit, as the seat of our dynamism: our deepest disposition. Hence the heart's passion is the heart's 'spirit.' At this point in Jewish religion, no very hard and fast distinction between the Ruach as God's Spirit and the human spirit is drawn; thus Ruach designates 'the seat of all human passions', as in Genesis, 41,8, when we hear of Pharaoh's "troubled spirit" or in Genesis 45, 26-27, where we hear that "Jacob's heart fainted" but "his spirit recovered" [or "revived"]. This means that in Jewish anthropology 'heart' and 'spirit' are almost interchangeable. It is God's Spirit who is always probing and dealing with the secret heart of humanity and its basic disposition, its passion. It is Biblically clear that this most ultimate 'disposition' in the human being is not of the nous, and is not of the soul, but is of the heart. This is why the human spirit in Judaism is identified with passion, and by virtue of that, can be affected by existence, especially its anxieties, crises, worries and pains. These are 'troubles' of the spirit: troubles in our spirit because of what they mean for what God's Spirit is doing with our spirit.

All spiritualities, Oriental or Western, that transcend these troubles of existence, rising higher above them, leave behind the heart, and thus lose the truest spirituality; they lose the spirituality of heart passion. This is not Jewish, and therefore it cannot be Christian.

The human heart, and its passion, is the true vehicle of our human relation to God. This is what the Ruach of God, the Spirit of Mystery, the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Fire, reveals.

A letter from an Orthodox Bishop: "What occurs to me is what Christ himself said about the heart in Matthew, 12, 35: 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart bringeth forth evil things.' That is to say, the heart is the source of all energy and activity, transcending both the good and evil that we do. It is God's primary point of contact with man, the deep point of our existence, behind which stands only God."

# THE DAEMONIC GOD

## 1= UNDOING

I cannot now recall when I first started using the phrase ‘the wound inflicted on the deep heart by the Daemonic God’, but I have used it for years and years in trying to describe ‘passion’ as the flickering flame of humanity penetrated and indwelt by the constant Divine Fire. I did not resort to it from reading other people who have also used this old Greek term, but it found its way to me only when God laid waste my own life; in the words of a deacon friend, who has been through this very recently and is still in the thick of it, the Daemonic refers to our ‘undoing’ by God.

God slays and destroys us, leaving nothing standing, so our existence can be dug up from the foundation, and rebuilt from the rubble. We are ‘overturned’ so that, deep down, we can ‘turn over’ a new leaf. The process of undoing is savage, fierce, terrible: in its throes we lose everything, not only bad or indeed evil things go, but also all the good things go, including especially the religious and spiritual things. We lose it all. We lose God, and we lose our life, and we lose our self. Once we really let it all go, this is a tremendous relief, and liberation. But in the throes of it we despair, and go into an abyss beyond any comfort; a place beyond despair: a place of dereliction and ruination and abject failure on all levels, and a place of mourning where tears, though never ending, become exhausted. Sometimes this is a place of screaming, in protest, or of crying out, in pain. Often, it is mute. It is beyond everything. All pious hopes, certainties, images, are burnt up. We are stripped, left naked, and raw. There is nothing left... It is all gone. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" we read [Hebrews, 10, 31] – and dismiss, until it happens to us.

Aeschylus was speaking of the Daemonic in these words: “He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God.”

Only at the end of this long dark night and burning desert, may there be a coming to acceptance: "the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord" [Job, 1, 21]; but this cannot be uttered from within the midst of this process while it is still reducing us to nothing. In this process, the whole Voice of piety, of obedience, to God sickens us, and we want to spit it out. It is not even that we hate God. We simply find God wholly incomprehensible. Given what has happened to us, and to those we love, and to that in the world we value, then no ‘god’ makes sense, and to continue being pious and obedient is to falsify and lie about our heart’s dwelling place, and our heart’s truth in that place.

## 2=DUENDE

Perhaps the most significant echo of this struggle and suffering inflicted upon the heart, which deepens it and either strengthens and forges it in that depth, or unravels and utterly derails it there, is in F.G. Lorca’s writings on the

'duende' of flamenco which produces 'deep song.' He explicitly identifies the Greek word 'daemonic' with the Gypsy word 'duende.'

Before Lorca, I encountered Socrates speaking of having a 'creative spirit', whom he called his 'daemon', dynamizing and driving the inspired condition of his life's work; to this daemon he felt both indebted and duty bound, which is why he preferred to be put to death by the authorities and still keep his daemon, to abandoning his post and retaining his life, but a life no longer stabbed/inspired by the daemon.

The 'Daemonic' haunts Greek culture as much, or more, than the 'Erotic.' The 'paradoxes' of Heraclitus are all Daemonic; similarly, the Dionysic mysteries which Nietzsche contrasted with the calm cosmic order of the Apolline in 'The Birth of Tragedy' is another account of the Daemonic:

"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 the 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 Olympus. [By contrast] ... the tragic hero shoulders the whole Dionysic world and removes the burden from us. ...this hero readies himself, not through his victories but through his undoing."

The Daemonic is a shattering and wounding event, but it is also a spiritual power, a presence, that brings and indwells such events, and can indwell us if we will wrestle with and indeed be killed by this power. The duende is a process, and a work. The duende is a spirit who destroys, yet raises, our spirit: our spiritedness of passion. It is this spirit being referred to when the Bible says, "Jacob's heart fainted, but his spirit recovered."

The heart is fated to be wounded by the Daemonic in this existence.

Faint heartedness is the fate of a heart that flees and refuses this fate.

In the way of the Lakota, the Daemonic is Wakinyan Tanka, the spiritual guardian of the west in the Sacred Circle. He is the spirit who sends the thunder, lightning, and storm; his is the place of danger, mystery, and the power of life and death. He is the patron of the road of the warrior, who not only 'hungers and thirsts for righteousness' and justice, but is asked to 'protect the sacred origins' of all existence. The power that fights is also the same power that heals.

There are also uses of the word 'Daemonic' which falsify and distort its meaning. These are too legion to mention, but C.G. Jung's usage of this word – which should be reserved for the terrible and holy – is usually either Neo-Platonic, or Gnostic, and thus is inherently false. For example, what Jung terms 'the archetypal' is not in any sense 'Daemonic.' Archetypes belong to the soul, even as thoughts belong to the mind. The Daemonic is beyond all

thought, all images, all creedal belief. Certainly, it is not of the soul any more than it is of the mind; it is of the heart. Most false notions of the Daemonic are false because they fail to realise the central point: that the Daemonic is the fate the heart is created for. For the heart, it is curse and blessing, its providential pain, its burden and honour.

Martin Buber evokes the Daemonic without ever naming it: "The world is not divine play, it is divine fate. That there are world, man, the divine person, Thou 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. Revelation is encounter's pure form."

It would seem that there is no Hebrew word that exactly translates the Greek 'Daemonic', or the Gypsy 'duende.' The Daemonic God nevertheless completely overshadows the Old Testament. This God forces Jacob to fight for a blessing, then only grants this through a furious wound. This God sends huge Daemonic troubles and torments to the innocent Job. He sends to Saul, to drive him mad, his own 'evil spirit' [who is not the evil spirit Satan or Lucifer, but an aspect of God]: "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee" [I Samuel, 16, 14-15]. One of [several possible] translations of 'Isra-el' is 'he who fights with God', or 'the God who fights.' Fights for what?

Fights for heart.

Fights for truth of heart, only won from depth, a depth only opened by a wound.

The God of the Jews is the existential God, the risk taker, who must fight, suffer, and make an ultimate sacrifice, to redeem the risk he took with his creatures.

He must not only join them in that risk, but let it bite and pierce him.

Only when we know how deep is the Daemonic wound in God, for our sake, do we ever 'reconcile' to the Daemonic God's wounding of us, and indeed, not only accept its terrible loss for the sake of an ultimate gain, but praise this God as the ultimate lover, the ultimate existential hero.

No Greek experience really engaged, and committed to, this Daemonic God as totally as the Jews did. Yet he is a total enigma. He is the 'Unknown God' whom the ancient Greeks acknowledged on the hill where Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle taught, but in Judaism he is even more shrouded in divine darkness. He is personal, yet this makes him more mysterious than if he were some abstract, universal, impersonal, 'essence', for it his precisely his dispositions and ways as a person that are so impossible to discern; 'where he is coming from' and 'what he is up to' fits no pattern, and is beyond any thought, any



image, any creed. The Jews are always being wrong-footed by this God; they repeatedly get him wrong, fail, and always totter on the brink of destruction. As soon as we think we have him safely pinned down as a cruel taskmaster he suddenly becomes a soft touch, but as soon as we settle into that he changes again into something new. It is precisely as person, as relating to his people personally, that he is not merely unknown, but unknowable. He is the hidden God, even the absent God, and always the paradoxical God, savage and tender at once. No God is harsher and no God is more gentle. Only faith in this God's personal will and love toward us – personal faith, not doctrinal faith – allows us to endure all that he does to us. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways', he declares, and this is why reconciliation to his will and his love toward us puts us humanly in extremis, on a rack, stretched to breaking. This enigma, this unknown, this absence, this paradox, is the true father. His real name cannot be spoken among the people who took the chance, and trusted him. The only name that can be voiced is 'I Am', or 'He Who Is.' But his more secret name, only revealed to those in hell and in death who yet know he is the only God of the deep, suffering heart, is this: 'he who inflicts a wound in humanity, and will not remove it from us, but joins us in it and is wounded by it.' This Daemonic God who is our only father has the more intimate, passionate name: 'he who wounds, and is wounded for our sake.' Only those in the abyss of passion, in the lost place of deadness and hell, can break down far enough to break through, to this secret name of God. Only these really 'know the father.' To these he reveals all the secrets of the deep heart, in God, and in humanity.

What was the risk for? What was ventured, lost, and regained only in its lostness?

The heart.

The truth of heart that could only be reached through a wound.

The truth of heart that had to be fought for.

The truth too strange, and deep for us, but the truth about us the father insists on: that we should have a heart like the father.

A heart great and deep. The heart that holds all things, suffers all things, carries all things, for the sake of making good on a risk and keeping a promise.

The Daemonic God is the God of sacrifice. Judaism's central truth is that God created the world in deep passion; thus Christianity's central truth should be that the world can only be saved from utter deadening and hellishness, and redeemed in its possibility, by deep passion.

### 3=THE TEST

The Daemonic creates in us rage, despair, fear, heartbreak, inexplicable black pain, and an incomprehension so far-reaching, it cannot even be expressed in words.

We are being tested so something can be proved. The test and the proof is existential. It is of the heart: only passion can enter and sustain, keep going to the end of, and finally come through, this test. In Hasidic terms, we are being 'checked.' We are being checked out deep within, and checking something out deep in the world.

To kick against the daemonic process, to object to it morally and rationally, does not help get us through it to the other side. It is a waste of breath.

The person who stays with it is changed by that. Courage, strength, compassion, wisdom, is its legacy in us. Heroism is its own reward. Such a person can suffer for the world, carry the world, include the world, in their heart. Henceforth they fight for the world, and will not leave the fight, unless dead. This person is the Christlike 'suffering servant', ready to give away his life for the world.

Only by Daemonic wounding is passion deepened to the point where its fate and the fate of the world are tied together. Love will suffer for what it loves, when it is radically enworlded= staked to the ground, and no more wanting to flee, or rise above on the wings of a dove, but willing to stay in it and willing to see it through.

#### 4=SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS

In summation, it can be asserted that the Daemonic has multiple functions in human existence; these are only some of the main ones.

1 –It rebukes and chastises us: correcting us, calling us back from folly and error, showing us our road is bad, and requiring us to change that road by changing our bad heart. "The Lord chasteneth those whom he loveth."

2 – It purges and purifies us: burns us to ashes, in a furnace. Abu Sa'id: "Realize that you know nothing and you are nobody. It is no easy thing to attain this realization. It doesn't come with teaching and instruction, nor can it be sewn on with a needle, or tied with a thread. This is a gift from God and a question of whom he bestows it upon and whom he causes to experience it."

3 – It makes us laugh: the Daemonic not only causes us to grieve but also is the cause of our laughing. Laughter is truthful, and punctures pompous lies of every description, whether religious or secular, whether invented by humans or invented by the devil. Zen Buddhism has not accommodated itself fully to the Daemonic. Yet the relationship to the Daemonic it does have is often revealed through the power of Zen stories and teachings to release in us that great belly laugh in which truth is flushed out of its hiding places. Humour reflects the power in the Daemonic to reverse things, to show that what is riches to men is poverty to God and what is poverty to men is riches to God. Similarly, what is wisdom to men is foolishness to God and what is foolishness to men is wisdom to God. Isaiah, 45, 24-26: "Thus sayeth the Lord your redeemer... I am the Lord who made all things... who turns wise men back, and makes their knowledge foolish..." The Daemonic is 'the Reversal.'

This is why expressions of the Daemonic are also the sacred clown called 'heyoka' in Lakota, or the 'holy fool' of Syriac, Greek, and especially Russian, Traditions of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, or the Celtic 'court jester' to the king who could not only depotentate the king's enemies by his humorous barbs, but could also use them to prick the conscience of the king. The Daemonic is the Spirit of Truth, and truth often works by reversing the fundamental order of things we take for granted. Thus the Daemonic is surprise. When the Staretz Zosima prostrates to the eldest Karamazov son Dimitri, this shocks all the pious Russians who witness it, because a holy man bows to a man of turbulence and sorrows; but Dimitri, not Zosima, is the Christ-like figure in the novel.

Such turning upside down, or inside out, is especially needed in religious contexts, where any fixed expectation about God robs him of freedom, and condemns us to losing the need for personal, not credal, faith. The Daemonic pulls the carpet out from under our feet, with humour and surprise; another example, from Zen, is when the spiritual leader, near death, appoints the lowly cook as his successor, to the consternation of his more 'advanced' students. As my friend Miles Stryker once put it to me, 'trying to figure out how God cuts the pie and how he serves it up is impossible.'

4 – It tests and proves us, and existence, as to our and its truth, and real worth; it can only do this by risking value to nullity, risking meaning to pointlessness, risking purpose to futility. It checks us, and forces us to check out what really is life and death, heaven and hell: every edge, gap, cross-roads, Koan and Cross, by which existence is marked.

The hero is forged, but must also forge something true out of his own being forged. What is 'true' of heart is a 'mettle' that is being burnt, tried out, and in the end confirmed – or disconfirmed. In a novel by André Gide, one of his characters says: "I [want] to ring true"; such ringing true is no abstract idea of truth, but the authenticating of truth in concrete living; only this grants a person authoritativeness. What is deep emerges, and what gets us through depth is tried and discovered.

Thus, only the truth is left standing at the end of the existential testing. Everything else is consumed, proved unreal or inauthentic. What is true, deep, real, of heart is checked, and revealed. Like the 'infernal printing method' invented by William Blake, the acid of the Daemonic burns away falsity, to reveal 'the fine wiry line' of truth in our entire existence in this world.

5 – It strips us, and strips the world, leaving us and the world naked, raw, exposed. Our basic heart truth and the world's basic heart truth is dramatically revealed – by clashes, crises, crashings. The Daemonic sweeps away the soap opera dramas of the petty heart, but reveals the deeper drama of heart in which each of us personally and all of us communally is involved. The Daemonic reveals the Real Story. The Daemonic is dramatic: it is the author of dynamic 'tension points' in dramatic stories of every description, and more especially, it is the drama of the world's story in history. Thus the Daemonic brings the tower of our wrong aspiration to construct a different story from human existence crashing down, to reveal the pit beneath. This is both

dramatic and dynamic: it not only exposes, but exposes in order to change, to move things on in the real direction God and we are going. The Daemonic causes things to overturn: so we can turn over to the other side. The protagonist in drama is the only person prepared to 'go to the end of the line', but the Daemonic is taking everyone, like it or don't like it, all the way. The Daemonic never leaves persons or communities 'in peace', but chases all humans in our places of hiding, dragging us out into an unwanted light. When we are not true to the Daemonic's truth, we cower in fear, shame and guilt. This is existential: it is not the helpless child expecting punishment from a cruel parent who bosses him and threatens him with 'tow my line or else.' Rather, it is the self knowing in the heart that it gave up trying to be a heart. We can fool other people about how it is with us in the heart, but we cannot fool ourselves. Each of us knows.

6 – The Daemonic wounds us to reveal the primordial and deeper wound pervasive in everyone. Only the killer of the false can be the healer for the true.

7 – The Daemonic is mystical as well as existential; it 'grounds' us in the depth of the heart, where only what is true can 'stand' in the heart's unfathomable abyss.

8 – The Daemonic is not, as the Gnostics contend, the 'shadow' of God, the evil in God that complements the good in God, making God a bipolarity of opposite forces. Why does God not have a shadow? Because creating the world is an act of gratuitous, pure goodness, an act of love. It has no shadow. This means that though God 'does' both good and evil to us – he announces this plainly in the Old Testament: "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who do all these things" [Isaiah, 45, 4-7], though this embarrasses Christians and they have to pass over it all too quickly – his evil, like his good, serves the more paradoxical love that is at work in the creation.

Hafiz, the Sufi poet of Persia, understands the love at work in God's evil to us, though he expresses it with humour and aggression rather than grieving over it:

"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 contend within yourself, dear one  
And with others.  
Causing the world to weep  
On too many fine days.

God wants to manhandle us,  
Lock us in 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."

Rumi, the Sufi poet of Turkey, also understands the Daemonic is the ultimate love:

"There is an animal called an ushghur, a porcupine.  
If you hit it with a stick, it extends its quills and gets bigger. The [heart] is a porcupine, made strong by stick beating.

So a prophet's [heart] is especially afflicted,  
because it has to become so powerful.  
A hide is soaked in tanning liquor and becomes leather.  
If the tanner did not rub in the acid,  
the hide would get foul-smelling and rotten.

The [heart] is a newly skinned hide, bloody and gross.  
Work on it with manual discipline,  
And the bitter tanning acid of grief,  
And you'll become lovely, and very strong.  
If you can't do this work yourself, don't worry.  
You don't even have to make a decision, one way or the other.  
The Friend, who knows a  
lot more than you do, will bring difficulties, and grief, and sickness,  
as medicine, as happiness,  
as the essence of the moment you're beaten, when you hear Checkmate,  
and can finally say, with Hallaj's voice,  
I trust you to kill me."

The Daemonic is both creative and destructive, but it destroys in order to create what is real to the paradox of love.

This understanding of the Daemonic as love is also present in a print by William Blake of God creating Adam. It is, if anything, more extraordinary than either Sufi poem, since as a Christian, Blake is more heart oriented than Sufism, which is usually Eros-soul in emphasis. Some Jewish Hasids teach that God departs from his fullness to create a space for a world to arise, a world that stands in relation to him, and thus has its own freedom and its own capacity to love. In limiting his fullness, to make room for an Other, God must open a wound in his own being. This wound signifies commitment to us, despite our Otherness: being tied to us, whatever we do with our freedom and

love. Thus even if we were to end up in hell, in a place of final failure of God's project in us, God would be in hell with us. He gives us a piece of his heart in creating us with a heart. All this is iconically present in Blake's painting.

Unlike Michael Angelo's effete touching of fingers between God and Adam, in William Blake God hovers right over Adam, seizing hold of him forcefully. When I look at this, I am struck by the obvious suffering in each party, though the suffering differs. Adam's suffering is more being in the hands of a fate he cannot change; it happens to him, he struggles in it, because it agonises him. It moves him deeply: it is the prime mover in his depths. But this is because he cannot change what is placed upon him by God. The wound of the Daemonic father which dignifies him and raises him from unconscious 'participation mystique' in nature, in the great mother, is irresistible, and inescapable. It happens. Adam's is a passive suffering, he is in its grip and there is no escape, and there is no alternative. Nothing else is on offer. This is it. This unavoidable happening that befalls Adam as a fate may open up certain possibilities, but no other fate is possible, and simply to be free of fate is impossible. Thus it is love, or perdition; freedom is the acceptance of this fate, and thereafter we discover that love is what truly liberates us, what sets us truly free. The freedom to choose this wounding way of love is not ours: such freedom is illusory, part of our primal ignorance or primal fallenness. We have no choice. It is the way it is, and our 'liking and disliking' is irrelevant, because it changes it not one jot. God inflicts a greater passion on us, on our paltry creaturehood, and we have no say in that primordial event at all, no freedom to tell God not to do this. Our only freedom is in how we meet it, what we make of it, what we do with this wound which is a blessing, but which we can turn into a curse. We can rise to its challenge as a gift, or fall down under it.

Thus William Blake captures a subtle difference in the suffering of the Creator as contrasted with the suffering of his creature. God also suffers yet there is a calm, a profound peace, as he 'makes his move', as he dynamically and Daemonically takes hold of Adam in his divine passion, to inflict its wound. Mankind agonises in the grip of divine passion, over whether to let it excite, or raise up, the human passion in reply; God does not go in for any agonising. He is serene in his suffering, because there is no freedom to choose, there are no alternatives occupying his heart. God isn't prevaricating, because God's primal 'choice' is not open to doubts, or revisions. It is what is. God will not have second thoughts, or worry over what he has done in taking this chance.

This decision of God's freedom and love only goes one way. It is the foundation, and it endures all the way through. It is unshakeable, it is unmoveable, and it is staked to the ground of our doubting, our prevaricating, over whether to embrace this challenging gift, or evade it. God won't do anything 'less' with us and for us, that would allow us off the hook of the deepness and greatness his passion bestows upon our poor humanity. This wounding that raises us from our poor human clay is the Deed of God that not only creates us, but upholds us and goes with us all the way, like the cloud of smoke in the day, the fire at night, and the manna from heaven, that led the Jews through the wastelands, in their exodus out of the captivity and safety of Egypt towards the Promised Land [Exodus, 40, 34-38]. On our hard road we

contend with it, sometimes angry with it, sometimes sad because of it, and are only gradually reconciled to it. This reconciliation is protracted.

Humanity, in the hands of the living Daemonic God, must bear what seems to us, from our perspective, inexplicable and unjust. At times we cry to God and he is silent. At times God seems nothing but remote and hostile: where was this God when Christ cried to him on the Cross, echoing David's cry in the Psalms, and voicing the cry in all human hearts: 'Where are you? What are you doing with us? Why do we experience not only the rapture of your closeness, but the gall of your refusal to help when most needed?' We have to know the times of God's failure to act for us and endure this to be restored to the times when God acts through us. Raw faith in a God whose personalness, whose disposition of will and love toward us, we must trust through thick and thin, is all we have to keep us going. It asks of us 'abandonment' to this strange person, to this strange fatherhood. The belief arises in our heart that God is in enmity with us, and in a sense it is so. But we misunderstand this. God is not angry at us for having problems with his way, but with how we lie about these problems, will not face them, will not go through them, and do such lying in order to shelve the whole thing. Evil is flight from the Daemonic blow of reality. This is what God does not tolerate. His wrath is against our pretence we have no problem with him, not against the problem we have with him.

Thus, the real situation is that it is we who are, in our heart, in enmity with the way of heart in this world. God's enmity with us is because we will not be straight about the enmity we have against the heart way shared between God and us. When we are straight, the enmity in our heart changes, it ceases being a fixed stone that is non negotiable, it becomes more open to its dilemma, more willing towards the paradox wherein it dwells, more flexible and supple toward God's manner of helping it find possibilities. The fleshy heart sheds tears that help it accept what God is doing with it.

Hence, William Blake's image of God creating Adam – whatever it means to him in his own mythology – portrays the act of creation as a passionate love, and this passion declares, there is no other foundation, no other way it can go, and work out. This is all there is. This is what is on offer. God is peaceful and serene in the gathering storm because he is not in two minds, or better, not in two hearts, about the Deed he is embarked upon. It is the same for us: it is often only when we stop torturing ourselves with alternatives, with choices, but accept the one thing we can do, and must do, however much a suffering of loss it entails, that we get the courage and strength to 'just do it.' This is because it is for love we act, and love is all there is. We stride into the arena, calm and gathered, ready for tremendous and tumultuous action.

9 – The Daemonic entrusts the world to us, believes in us, helps us in the impossible: the Daemonic ventures something through us, takes a real risk with us, and thus with the world. It encourages and dignifies us in this venture, in this risk. Spiritual power comes only to those who stand in the truth; whereas those who substitute 'force' for 'truth' never receive any spiritual power, inspiration, blessing, for their action. But to those loyal and faithful to this peculiar project that the Daemonic is engaged on with humanity, not only

spiritual power but many spirit helpers come to assist. From the sudden glimpse of a sunset that takes our breath away at the end of a tough day, to the spirit animal who comes in our dream to keep us going by granting help in a specific gift of power, life is full of wonders and moments of blessing and joy and peace in the midst of the journey and battle the Daemonic dumps us into. The heaviness and sorrow we must carry like a load makes these moments of opening in the storm doubly precious. They also function as 'signs' of an obscure providence. Thus they encourage and enrapture us. In the same way, in the midst of necessary harshness the Daemonic can suddenly show us gratuitous, exquisite gentleness.

The Daemonic fights for justice, yet also bears the brother, is merciful, is kind, forgives, and suffers and carries what others have fled and put down. It gathers and includes all on the heart ground common to all. Nothing upholds me, alone; I am only upheld by what upholds all, when I uphold all. In Lakota, this is called 'putting the welfare of the people in my heart.'

10 – The Daemonic redeems the wound it inflicts, by being wounded by it.

The unknowable father is finally revealed in his visible child. He who asked Abraham to sacrifice his human child for God is he who sacrifices his divine child for humanity. This child is 'the lamb slain before the world began', and he is offered up to the child who has gone astray. The straying human child Daemonically suffers to come back as far as he can to the divine father, but he cannot return all the way: it is the innocent child of the divine father who Daemonically suffers to bring the straying child back all the way to the divine father. In the end, not only humanity, but God, 'come through.' This is the victory the Daemonic wins. It is done in time, over time, for all time. It is done in the world, for the world. It is the true story of the beginning, middle, and end, of all things. This story is terrible, dramatic, tragic, and finally beautiful and wondrous. It is a story of the most extreme, moving passion and the most touching, aching pathos.

Neither the light of nous, nor the imaginal colour, multiplicity, and balance, of the soul, can comprehend the harsh ground, the dusty road, the tears, sweat, and blood, of the agonised ecstasy of the deep passion of the heart. Passion is our spirit: passion is the fire Christ said he came to kindle, and wished it was already kindled.

It will be.

The fire is coming.

This is the Daemonic's doing, and it is glorious.

The Daemonic will wipe away every tear. Only by its fierceness will the tenderness of God be finally revealed.

The God we passionately love and hate, hope in and despair of, want and flee, is both tyger and lamb. So are we.



The Daemonic passion of deep heart is bold and vulnerable. So it is for God, so it is for us.

It just is what is.

The Daemonic is what is, in all its terror and beauty, in all its mystery and danger, its dynamism and irrationality.

Let what is be what is.

## THE FALSE PIETY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

1,

There are several kinds of false piety among religious people, betraying and vitiating their witness of God to their fellow humans. Some involve 'father idolatry', some involve hiding in the 'mother church' in such a way as to evade the real father [Daemonic] God; but the worst involve superstition. The reality of religious superstition is complex and subtle. What is clear is simply and obviously that superstition not only distorts real faith in God but also undermines any redemptive outreach of religious tradition towards the world.

But why? The answer to why superstition is so destructive of religion rests in a more basic question, what is superstition?

Superstition is rooted in the child. It arises from the child's desire to be specially loved by God, even if in proving or demonstrating such love, the child is led to the conclusion that God does not love the child's brothers and sisters. In short, superstition allows us to break ranks with our fellow humans in a way that betrays the true basis for our solidarity with and mission to them. As such, it is the worst religious evil.

2,

Here is the extreme example of the danger of superstition; it is from Primo Levi whose experience in the Nazi concentration camp, though he survived, finally led him to commit suicide; none the less he always kept the integrity of his despair.

"I see and hear old Kuhn praying aloud, with his beret on his head, swaying backwards and forwards violently. Kuhn is thanking God because he has not been chosen. Kuhn is out of his senses. Does he not see Beppo the Greek in the bunk next to him, Beppo who is twenty years old and is going to the gas chamber the day after tomorrow and knows it and lies there looking fixedly at the light without saying anything and without even thinking any more? ...Does Kuhn not understand that what has happened today is an abomination, which no propitiatory prayer, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, which nothing at all in the power of man can ever clean again. If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn's prayer."

A commentator says of this, one of the most sacred expressions of the human experience, the mystical dialogue with the divinity, has thus been turned into blasphemy against humans.

It is 'blasphemy against humans' that should not be tolerated as 'religion.'

This is why Christianity has betrayed Christ and become 'comfort for the already comforted', as a bitter Irishman once said [I do not recall his name, but his words went in and never came out].

Solidarity with humans has a price, for God and for us. Everyone pays.

Hetchetu yelo.

## Passion Is The Adult We Do Not Become

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; 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 kowtow 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 profound nothing. What disarms the adult ego is the reality that is outside the game, rendering it unplayable: the Daemonic takes the surface of reality away, like sweeping a carpet out from under the feet of someone who has naively and arrogantly 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 really attacks the adult, stripping them naked of all their protective, defensive and offensive armour. It clatters to the floor in a heap, and their naked flesh feels the full force of the cold winds of reality that reveal the true vulnerability of the human being, the true fragility 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 imperceptibly. This is an encounter: it is a perception, a feeling, a sensation, a realisation. It is what Kierkegaard called Angst. Kierkegaard's Angst is a mix of numinous apprehension and acute agony; inescapable suffering suffused with dread.

Kierkegaard's famous questions express the rawness of Angst: "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?" What does this world mean? Who is it who has lured me into the thing and now leaves me here? Who am I? 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 compelled to take part in it, where is the director? Whither shall I turn with my complaint?"

Pascal [1623-1662] stated, even earlier, the awe and awfulness of Angst: "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 which knows me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there, why now rather than then."

Angst severs all the ties to the everyday world that we take for granted, rendering everything in existence uncanny, odd, threatening, like in Munch's painting 'The Scream.' The moment of crisis depicted in this work happens on a bridge over troubled and troubling waters, but the two companions 'pass over' without worrying, without concern for it, while 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 halfway, not able to go on or go back yet paralysed in some numinously dreadful 'between', and it is more the black below and the red above suddenly screaming at him that evokes his own scream.

When the child has let go of the child's consolations, and when the adult has let go of the adult's consolations, then 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. It is Angst that initiates us into the human condition's deeper pain, and tormented anguish, that the child feels helpless before if it bites too

early, but the adult normally feels 'on top of', and so 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 all trace of it. From then on the adult has nothing and is nothing, having had to embrace the nothing. 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 existence's Daemonic Mystery.

This is where passion starts. Though there is the innocent enthusiasm of the child, and the idealism of late childhood and early adulthood, and even the moral passion of the adult, these accommodate and do not challenge the child self or the adult ego. But there is a passion, a stranger and darker passion, yet ultimately a more glowing and fiery passion, that only is in formation out of the death of the self and the death of the ego.

This is where the real adult emerges after the adult caught in illusion has lost all the egoic meanings so treasured, so preserved, so clung on to. This is where the passion that can properly be described as the province of the adult 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 rarer than hen's teeth, though the future of the world leans on them as it does on no one else. Taking responsibility for the world is their hallmark. 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.

Angst separates us from the world: only by passion can we rejoin it. What the adult passion faces and must delve is the spirituality of passion.

This doesn't happen very much in the modern world because of two obstacles that stand like enormous and seemingly irremovable mountains. One is the mountain of false spirituality, the other is the mountain of false worldliness. But these are really 'twin peaks', because they share the same premise, like heads and tails of a single bad coin: that spirit cannot win the world, that spirit cannot be embodied in matter, that the limitless cannot dwell in the limited. Though these mountains come at this premise from opposite sides, they share its notion of a separation between the spiritual and the world process. This separation is what the Daemonic Spirit rejects, and will not cease from strife against until it is defeated.

[1] The East is against worldliness, but this contains its own danger of other-worldliness. When monasticism becomes body-phobic, and world-contemptuous, it has lost its way.

[2] The other influence obscuring passion's spiritual role in the world is that in the West people have become increasingly prissy, inhibited, without pith and juice, due to being over rationalised; we increasingly rely on thinking, and its abstract systems of formulae, rules, structures, schemes, to 'get us through.' Lev Shestov: a rationalist is someone who wants to live in the categories by which he thinks, whereas an existentialist is someone who wants to think in the

categories by which he lives. The abstracted state in which the mind is uninvolved with and indifferent to any below the neck passion is the third face of evil called Mephistopheles in the legend of Faust. This mind seeks knowledge as the solution to the existential problem. Thus, this is a mind that doesn't see, feel, or care about anything that really matters, because it deals only in disembodied, non-existential abstractions. Only one below-the-neck reality intrudes on the equanimity of this mind: the all-consuming stomach. Thus mental abstractionism fits perfectly like a hand in a glove with Mammon, the devil who worships money, riches, acquisition, possession, in the place of God. Mephistopheles and Mammon run advanced capitalism. We escape in our heads and we fill up our stomachs, and we believe this paltry pair is 'all there is.'

It is in this light that Kierkegaard asserts what our mediocre, bourgeois society needs is more passion. Thus in *The Present Age* (1846) he asserts that:

"our age is essentially one of comprehension and 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."

It is also in this light that Kierkegaard is always pressing for passion against reason: "If you will understand me aright," he explains in *Either/Or* (1843), "I should like to say that in making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses."

But what is the 'pathos' that is the root of choice, as opposed to it being merely the mind and the will?

It is through the Spirit that passion knows something about the unknown that our mind does not know, and indeed cannot know. Passion leaps into the unknown, the dangerous, the unsecured, the pained, the costly – while the mind, and even the will, would reel back.

This is already foreshadowed in the Angst that sparks passion, like flint striking stone to spark flame. For Angst in Kierkegaard is two-sided: it reveals terror at our precarious 'position' in existence, which is summed up in our dread towards death, but it also reveals an open space requiring humanity to act, it opens up possibility, and indeed generates a sense of adventure. Angst is double-edged: mixed in with crippling paralysis is a liberating excitement. As passion goes deeper and farther, so its driving force increases in power because its 'irrational rationale' becomes more clear to the heart. This cannot be explained to people in terms of any of the accepted language or ideas they normally use to make sense of their conduct to each other.

In passion there is a drive toward 'discovering what thought cannot think.' The passion in us pushes us, moves us, drives us, beyond our comfortable,

invulnerable, protective, limits, and yet also accepts to dwell and act within limits. Passion is at once limitless, you cannot predict and you cannot control 'how far it will go', yet accepts the limitless as it enters limits, it 'carries the load' of all the limits within which it operates. The latter part of this equation gives passion its true meaning and stupendous strength: passion is the limitless in the limited.

Passion knows the why. This is why the heart has reasons the reason cannot grasp, as Pascal rightly said.

The only 'why' is redemption. The limitless is in the limited to redeem the world, and all persons, creatures, things, in it. This willingness to lose in regard to oneself for the sake of a greater gain for all, is the Nobility Nietzsche could not understand, but betrayed by his pathetic Superman. The limitless serves the limited, this is its Nobility, for the sake of an irrational purpose, an impossible goal, a task beyond all tasks, and this is to redeem everything and everybody, and this can only be a mixture of giving by the limitless to the limited, yet it also involves a faith in the limited, that it can change, and become different. Through the Spirit's power and promptings, passion incarnates the limitless in the limited, and passion pays for this, paying the cost of it the limited cannot pay. This twofold action is redemption.

Passion's urge, passion's driving force, is to enter the arena of life and death, the arena of heaven and hell, the arena of the abyss as empty forever and the abyss as empty to become full, in order to 'make a difference' to how it turns out.

Why does passion do what it does?

It does this for love.

Only love allows the limitless to dwell and act in the limited.

Only love redeems.

Passion has its own love, but in the Spirit a more total love ravishes it, breaks it, remakes it.

A real adult is someone who learns existentially what love 'really' is, through the Spirit.



## V: DIVINE-HUMAN LOVE

“Only he who learns to love men one by one reaches, in his relation to heaven, God as the God of all the world. He who does not love the world can only refer, in his relationship to God, to an equally solitary God or to the God of his own soul. For he learns to love the God of the universe, the God who loves his world, only in the measure in which he himself learns to love the world.”  
Martin Buber

“He who loves brings God and the world together.”  
Martin Buber

“God wills to need man for the work of completing his creation; in this... is to be grasped the foundation of the Jewish doctrine of redemption. But that God wills this means that this ‘needing’ becomes working reality: in history as it takes place, God waits for man.”  
Martin Buber

## The Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World

1,

The revelation that the divine could be subject to existence's bitter root, to help the human bear it – indeed, the revelation that this bitter root is a risk God takes, subjecting himself and us to it, and thus is a test for God as well as for us – is not only offensive but senseless to any Hindu, or Muslim, for whom God is far Above existential strife and woe and trouble. This is succinctly captured in Yann Martel's novel, 'Life of Pi', where a Hindu boy in India first hears the story of Jesus, and is shocked:

"That a God should put up with adversity, I could understand. The Gods of Hinduism face their fair share of thieves, bullies, kidnappers and usurpers. What is the Ramayana but the account of one long, bad day for Rama?

Adversity, yes. Reversal of fortune, yes. Treachery, yes. But humiliation? Death? I couldn't imagine Lord Krishna consenting to be stripped naked, whipped, mocked, dragged through the streets and, to top it off, crucified – and at the hands of mere humans, to boot. I'd never heard of a Hindu God dying. Brahman revealed did not go for death. Devils and monsters did, as did mortals, by the thousands and millions – that's what they were there for. Matter, too, fell away. But divinity should not be blighted by death. It's wrong. The world soul cannot die... It was wrong of this Christian God to let his avatar die. That is tantamount to letting a part of Himself die. For if the Son is to die, it cannot be fake. If God on the Cross is God shamming a human tragedy, it turns the Passion of Christ into the Farce of Christ. The death of the Son must be real... But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth. The Trinity must be tainted by it: there must be a certain stench at the right hand of God the Father. The horror must be real. Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals? Why make dirty what is beautiful, spoil what is perfect? Love. That was the answer."

The power granted by the Cross is to love without restriction.

2,

Divine suffering does not begin with the sacrifice made by Christ: it begins with a wound God opens in his heart to create mankind, but through Christ, he accepts the final, deepest reach and extent of this wound. For in Christ, God enters our woundedness and shares it radically and irrevocably, for ever and ever, without end. The 'unknown God' of the Greeks and the 'hidden God' of the Jews is the real father. This father consents, should Christ's suffering on the Cross fail to bring us through in the deep place, for his depth to become as deathly and hellish as our depth.

This is prefigured and foreseen in the Psalms. In Psalm 55, David pleads with God to be released from the struggling and suffering, the strife and drama, of passion: "My heart is pained within me... and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove. For then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo then would I wander far off... I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest... For I have seen violence and strife in the city, day and night they go about it... mischief and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof. Deceit and guile depart not from the streets." Yet, it is this same fearful David who comes to the understanding of the real majesty of God: God's heroism of love. For David, pondering his own inhabitation of death and hell by virtue of his own failures of passion, is given to anticipate the Cross of Christ. Thus he utters, if we make our final resting place in death and hell, then God will rest there with us: if our heart ends in death and hell, then in a real sense, God's heart will forever more contain death and hell.

We are wounded in heart for the sake of God's heart; but God is wounded in heart for the sake of our heart. Christ makes good on God's primordial and final promise: to be with us all the way, no matter what.

Thus if we don't come through, God will not come through: his depth will forever contain the scar that disfigures us because the whole project of heart he risked with us has come to ruin in us.

3,

Christ was not passive on the Cross, but from the very depth of its suffering, he enacted what is ultimate in passion. He promised paradise to the repentant thief who courageously and honestly acknowledged his failure of heart and wept over it, showing that the broken-hearted are restored to God; he won forgiveness for humanity who "know not what they do" in repudiating all heart, human as well as divine, and he did this by bearing the consequence and paying the cost of their refusal, showing that the greater heart can carry and pay for the lesser heart; but even more awful and awesome than these deeds of passion's suffering love, he emptied himself and abandoned himself to us in our deepest tragedy of heart when he cried with us to the mysterious father, 'why have you forsaken me?' It does not diminish these words that they were uttered by David in the Psalms [22,1], for anyone who imagines that in this final extremity of passion it is possible simply to parrot someone else's words, for whatever supposed good reason, is not even glimpsing Christ's final act of heart, which is really the final act of the father's heart given to humanity through him. When he joined us, wound to wound, he bound God to our fate in the depths of heart, and by this sacrificial deed, bound us to God's fate in the depths of heart. In Christ, the father who wounded us primordially is wounded by us, and he and we are bound together in the depth. If his heart fails in our depths, then the depths of his heart will forever be what is deepest in our heart: our death and our hell will be his. If we are damned, he will be damned. In the Old Testament, God makes us aware of the high stakes he, and we in

conjunction with him, are playing for in this high-risk game, for he announces: "I set before you this day blessing and curse" [Deuteronomy, 11, 26]; "I call upon heaven and earth to witness... I set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life so you and your descendants may live" [Deuteronomy, 30, 19]. If the blessing and curse God set before us comes finally to a curse, then God is cursed with us. Christ is innocently cursed for our sake, making this curse what secures the blessing for us and for God.

It is as St Isaac of Syria asserted: the Cross is 'the judgement on judgement', the defeat of both sin and moral condemnation of sin.

Being a gambler, God will take it to the wire. The redemption of the risk, the coming through the suffering, the proving of the test, the fulfilling of the promise, only comes at the last gasp, at the very last and dying second of the eleventh hour. At this last gasp, Christ's death wins the victory for all passionate, suffering mankind. He came to prove, by his own undergoing of everything deep that defeats human passion, undermining its true burning and extinguishing it in death and hell, that with God's passion suffering with human passion's suffering, everything changes. Suddenly, just when it seemed on its last legs, it is a new ball game.

Christ took passion to the utter, absolute extremity, to its deepest abyss and farthest outreach, for both God and for us. He came to prove, by his own undergoing of passion's struggle and suffering in the depth, love is deeper than death, love is deeper than hell.

Christ passed through the defeat of life in death, which alone secures the victory of the life only found in death; Christ passed through the defeat of heaven in hell, which alone can secure the victory of the heaven only found in hell.

4,

We cannot know if our passion is for life or death, we cannot know if our passion is for heaven or hell. As St Paul puts it [Romans, 8, 25]: "We must be content to hope that we will be saved... we must hope to be saved since we are not saved yet... it is something we must wait for with patience."

But if we go into the place only Christ ever went, the extreme place in the passion shared by God and us, we will begin to receive the power he had through his crucifixion: the new Holy Spirit he said he would send, but he had to go for it to come, will start to manifest in us. This is the power won on the Cross, entrusted to us, by our Cross.

This is the power to accept, to leap, to stand, to burn, to give away, to make sacrifice.

This is the power to die as a seed that fertilises the ground of all existence.

This is the power to reverse the ringing words written in Arabic on the walls of the Alhambra: "wa la ghalib illa Allah" – no conqueror but God. Now they differ. Now they declare: other than God, only Christ has conquered. Christ has conquered for God, but really he has conquered for us. This new power is the power to forgive, to bear the brother's failure as one's own, in suffering love, so that suffering love will never cease from what has to be borne and what has to be done, if passion is to complete its calling, and come to the point where it can declare, 'it is finished', it is 'accomplished.' Then can it be at peace, and rest.

William Blake speaks of the new love revealed in Christ:

Love seeketh not itself to please,  
Nor for itself hath any care,  
But for another gives its ease,  
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.  
['The Clod and the Pebble', *Songs of Experience*]

Can I see another's woe,  
And not be in sorrow too?  
Can I see another's grief,  
And not seek for kind relief?  
['On Another's Sorrow', *Songs of Innocence*]

Redemption is not of the individual, which is impossible in the Judaism that paved the way for Christ's coming. Rather, redemption is of all of us in our togetherness, as totally inter-related. The way we wound each other is embraced, and transformed, by a different wound, the wound of the Passion of Christ. This universal redemption is what the long march toward the Messianic understanding actually consists of: it is only together we sin, it is only together we can be redeemed.

In Christ's Cross, the anger of God that repeatedly calls the world to account, requiring the examination of its heart motive and challenging it to basic change of heart action, becomes the very fulcrum of the tenderness, mercy, and forgiveness which alters the demand for justice into something more profound: a bearing of each other, that whatever we inflict on one another, still we will all come through together.

This is why we are all called to the same Cross as Christ. He tells us to take up our Cross: what was done to him, both by God and by the world, will happen to us [Luke, 21, 12; Luke, 21, 16]: "they will drag you before princes"; "even your friends will desert you"; "a man's enemies will be those of his own household." But this is so that, like Christ, in making the deepest and greatest give away and sacrifice, we can release the power of that new love which alone redeems and resurrects the way of heart passion in the world. The cup of 'bitter wine' is the give away and sacrifice God established as the foundation of the world, the redeeming and resurrection of passion. This power will not be manifest in us if we refuse the cup Christ drank to its dregs.

He did it to show us we can do it. It is in this sense he is 'the first born of many.'

This is also why it is Christ who proves finally beyond any doubt that we are loved by God and nothing can separate us from God's love. St Paul is speaking of the mystery of what Christ's Cross accomplishes when he claims: "Neither death or life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ our Lord" [Romans, 8, 38-39].

5,

Because Christ came through, we will come through.

We will come through because that in God which comes through our loss of heart will, by this, regain heart for us. His heart will become ours. The joining of wound to wound is not simply a reconciling= it is a mystery of the depth. It is the gateless gate. It is the door that opens a way through humanity's ancient, tear stained, bitterness scorched, despair gouged, wailing wall.

When we have crashed against this wall, and Christ has taken us through its door which is the eye of the needle, then and only then will what we have suffered and struggled to believe in the heart about its passion be vindicated as existentially and spiritually true. Then and only then will we not need to believe because we will know. We will know, in our heart, the heart of God the father.

Christ's deed is universal – it does not belong to Christians but to the whole world – because it addresses the place in passion where everything gambled on in the venture of heart that God created for us is null and void, yet can be refound and reborn= the worst place can become the best place, the place of turnaround. This is the joy born out of great sorrow.

This, in its full working out and working through, is fearful and wonderful beyond words.

We are all the child of God, the lamb of God, slain before the world began [Revelation, 13,8]. At the end we will know why it had to be so and how joyous it is that it is so.

6,

Without Christ's Passion, love fails.

Without the conjoint passion of God in humanity and humanity in God, so-called Christian love does not exist. It has no reality, it does nothing, it changes nothing, it flees the crunch.

Without the conjoint passion of God in humanity and humanity in God, there is no sacrifice, and no descent into death and hell, to retrieve the lost in the worst place of loss, by plumbing the worst and planting the best in the worst, to redeem the worst by transfiguring it into the best.

## THE TRUE FRUITS OF THE CROSS

“God is the life of all beings. He is the salvation of all= believers or unbelievers; of the just or the unjust; of the pious or the impious; of those freed from the fallen passions or those caught in them; of monks or those living in the world; of the educated or the illiterate; of the healthy or the sick; of the young or the very old. He is like the outpouring of the light, the glimpse of the sun, or the changes in the weather, which are the same for everyone without exception.”  
- John Climacos

“Abba Mios was asked by a soldier whether God would forgive a sinner. After instructing him at some length, the old man asked him, ‘Tell me, my dear, if your cloak were torn, would you throw it away?’ ‘No’, he replied, ‘I would mend it and wear it again.’ The old man said to him, ‘Well, if you care so much for your cloak, will not God show mercy on his own creature?’  
- Sayings of the Desert Tradition

“Abba Zeno said, ‘If a man wants God to hear his prayer quickly, then before he prays for anything else, even his own soul, when he stands and stretches out his hands towards God, he must pray with all his heart for his enemies. Because of this action, God will hear all that he is asking’.”  
- Sayings of the Desert Tradition.

“They said of Abba Macarius the Great that he became as it were a god on earth because just as God protects the world, so Abba Macarios would cover the faults that he saw as if he did not see them, and cover those which he heard, as if he did not hear them.”  
- 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’.”  
- Sayings of the Desert Tradition

“Abba Anthony said, ‘I saw all the snares that the enemy spreads out over the whole world and I said, groaning, ‘What can get through such snares?’ Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Humility.’  
- Sayings of the Desert Tradition

“Do not be afraid to hear about virtue and do not be a stranger to the term. For it is not distant from us nor is it external to us; its realisation lies within us and the work is easy if only we want it. The Greeks leave home and cross the sea in order to gain an education, but there is no need for us to go away... For the Lord has told us, ‘the kingdom of God is within you.’ All that is needed for goodness is that which is within, the human heart.”  
- Abba Anthony The Great



It is a Western Christian, mostly Protestant, and mostly Evangelical and Fundamentalist, heresy – a heresy that has arisen due to Satan the Accuser possessing the innards of those who promote it – to contend that God decided before time to save an elect of humanity, and condemn everyone else. The Lamb Slain Before the Foundation of the World is the foundation of the world because this sacrifice of God commits God to redeeming every hair on every head of every creature who ever has, or ever will, live. All human beings are forgiven by the Cross, or none are. The Cross ends the Satanic division of humanity into good guys and bad guys, winners and losers, saved and damned. If I carry you, if I pay for you, as Christ did with me, you will be redeemed, whatever your inability to respond. For as Christ said to the Apostles, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven” [Matthew, 16,19]. Human forgiveness of transgressions, hurts, damage, will not be over-ruled by some supposedly divine predetermination to condemn, or by some divine ‘keeping score’ that takes revenge on human wickedness by divinely punishing it. But the real point is, God has more trust in the human response than we do, and certainly it is the devil’s game to cause us to end up without trust in ourselves. God entrusted the world to the human heart, and God entrusted his heart to the human heart. The Cross declares that both of these foolish trusts in humanity will not be given up on.

Western Christianity has always had the tendency, in its cruellest form, to worship Satan the Accuser as ‘god.’ This is evident in Augustine of Hippo, becomes more so in Anselm and then in Calvin, and reaches its apogee in the Evangelical-Fundamentalist wing of current Christianity. It is not the true Daemonic Father, but it is Satan worshipped in his place who creates the ‘patriarchal’ scenario of the angry, sadistic, murderous ‘god’ out to repay his creatures for defying his dictates; this evil father is only mollified in his thirst for human blood by accepting his son to be punished in humanity’s place – entailing we must either embrace this son as letting us off the hook, or forever remain on the hook, like meat roasting in ever raging flames. As a Greek Orthodox theologian has recently put it, this Western version of Christ’s ‘Atonement’ for mankind entails that in reality it is ‘god’ we must be saved from! The ‘father god’ is out to get us, and by his son taking the heat meant for us, we are delivered from him; he is the real threat to us, not the evil one, not our own foolishness. Speaking of divine love in the context of Western Atonement is simply impossible. The West has always distorted the Jewish Daemonic, making it Satanic.

Eastern Christianity has always had a tendency, in its ascetical and mystical form, to only evade the Satanic patriarchal ‘god’, drooling with glee at the prospect of sending humanity to perdition, by a bias in favour of seeking only the Greek Eros of God: the God who is the Lover of mankind, and seeks union with us. This bias had a vital mission in the ascetical and mystical realm, for it defeated there the Lucifer of false divinisation who is worshipped as ‘god’ in Gnosticism and all the other esoteric and occultist movements, from the ancient world down to Jung. Lucifer inspires us to want to ‘divinise the soul

without first sanctifying it' [Buber's critique of Jung], and therefore this mystical spirituality goes wrong, becoming a love only of the 'god' of one's own being who transforms it into something special and charismatic, far superior to the humdrum horde and needing no one and nothing else: Luciferianism is an ultimate polishing of one's own diamond cold and diamond hard 'Self.' Such a Self never cries or bleeds for any Other. It has everything, is everything, and can do whatever it pleases, for its only law is to express, and be fulfilled, as a complete, extraordinary, Self. To become such a Self is what it means to be divinised, according to Lucifer, for he is himself just such a pseudo 'god.'

Moreover, the Greek Eros that is –as St Dionysus established against the loveless impersonality of Neo-Platonism –personal and loving in its ecstaticness, also defeats Western rationalism, puritanism, moralism: none of these dire disfigurements ever got any hold in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Yet, despite these two important victories won by the real Eros, this Eros still contains a problem, for even if it attains the genuinely divine mysticism, and shines a visionary eye on the creation, it is also tempted to regard that sufficient, and therefore to put mysticism in the place of redemption. Redemption can include mysticism as a smaller part of it, but if mysticism is given the bigger part, then redemption is forgotten. This airbrushes the Daemonic out of redemption history. Redemption cannot work only through the Greek Eros, without the Jewish Daemonic. Why? The Eros of God is never in contention with us, and thus appeals to people frightened of the Biblical teaching that there is a very basic contention between God and humanity that must be reconciled. Love understood through the Daemonic is different to Eros. The Daemonic God is in contention with us because we are in contention with our own heart over its ability to be true and to be false to the more paradoxical and problematic love revealed by him.

What is really at issue in the contention of God and humanity in the heart is shown in the Biblical story of Jacob. Abraham encounters the Daemonic as sacrifice, yet it is Jacob who is hurt and injured by it, but wins its benediction only from this wounding [Genesis, 32, 24-33]. All night Jacob fights with a mysterious stranger he can neither see nor name, and he does not falter even when the stranger hurts Jacob's thigh. At daybreak, this dark presence, clearly exhausted, tries to withdraw, but Jacob will not let go of him until he grants a blessing. The fight stops. The man of no name asks Jacob his name, and when told, says it is his name no longer. From now on his name is 'Israel', because 'he has power with God, and with men, on account of having contended with God, and prevailed in battle with a spirit.' Jacob still demands the stranger's name, but is not given it: instead he receives the blessing he had sought. Jacob names the place Peniel, for he has seen God 'face to face' and not died from it. The whole purpose and meaning of the Jewish people is prefigured in Jacob's wrestling with the Daemonic. This event reveals the Cross of Christ in its true light as the climax of the entire Biblical history of the wave-tossed and fire-burnt Jewish relationship to the Daemonic God.

We should well understand, in the heart, that this Daemonic God who respects our contending with him, and indeed encourages it, is not prepared to let us play fast and loose with it, but requires us to be honest about it. This is not the Satan who tolerates no deviation from himself, but lays down the law as an action of imposition, and tyranny, over the Other, whom he wants to dominate. Equally, the Daemonic contending between God and us is nothing to do with any Luciferian self-stroking and self-generating that follows its solitary path of 'the alone with the alone', which renders the Other irrelevant.

Christians, West and East, need to respond to both the right hand of God, Eros, and the left hand of God, the Daemonic, not split them, and not distort each arm by denying its relationship with the converse arm. The Biblical teaching honours both, but it makes the left side primal, and the right side dependent upon it: through the fight in the Daemonic, the marriage in Eros.

Eros: A light that beautifies what it embraces is itself beautiful.

Daemonic: A dark that destroys what is destroyed to remake it is the supreme love beyond all words, for which no gratitude is adequate.

Kazantzakis on Eros: "I said to the almond tree, 'Speak to me of God', and the almond tree blossomed."

Kazantzakis on the Daemonic: "The doors of heaven and hell are adjacent and identical."

In Hebrew, 'justice' [tsedaka] is related to 'mercy' [hesed], and both to 'fidelity' to truth [emeth]. This is the heart of God that fights the heart of humanity – to make humanity stand up, and grow to God's stature.

# THE HEART IS DEEP

## Chosen/Unchosen Suffering; the Cross; the Descent into Death and Hell

### PRELUDE

This piece of writing was inspired by the Good Friday ceremony in Passion Week where Christ, having gone through the Cross, then descends into death and hell. It is only the place of death and hell that can become the place from which life and heaven are resurrected.

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### **1= The Deep**

In the Psalms David utters, “the heart is deep.” St Macarios of Egypt says “the heart is an unfathomable abyss.” The Psalms, the Desert Tradition of Eastern Christianity, the religious existentialists, such as Kierkegaard and Buber, and the 19th century Russian Christians, exemplified by Dostoyevsky and Berdyaev, all speak of the heart’s depth as an abyss that ‘cannot be plumbed.’

Heart depth is what everyone knows but few live.

We do not start deep, we have to be deepened, and depth only comes through a wound.

The Daemonic is God’s wounding of the heart, to deepen it. The Daemonic drives us out of the shallows, where we suffer from a superficial happiness, whether religious or secular, into the existential deeps where we encounter the real suffering of the human condition, and enter the wrestling with it which will be decisive for how we stand or fall in the world, for how we act for or betray our calling to the world.

The deep heart in each of us connects us with the common heart of all humanity, and connects us with the mysterious heart of the world. This last is the ‘existential arena.’ Black Elk calls it “the place where the two roads, the good road and the bad road, cross”; he says “it is the Great Mystery who has made these roads to cross, and the place where they cross is holy.” In Christianity, this place is Golgotha, the desolate waste ground beyond the walls of the city where Christ was crucified.

Jewish-Christian redemption requires the human depth to be fought for so that the depth of the world can be fought for. In Jewish-Christian redemption, the heart is called to a deep place both inside itself and outside itself in the world. Both deep within and deep without is what the heart is 'fated' to meet, fated to suffer in, fated to battle with. In Jewish-Christian redemption, the heart is called to a deep place of ultimate import for humanity and for the world.

We all have a shallow heart, dominated by our egotism, phantasy, and emotional demand. The shallow heart is easy. The deep heart comes through a wound, and is a burden. In the depth the heart struggles.

It is God who does this to the human heart. God did it to us even before our creation, for we also partake in the existential mystery of the 'lamb slain before the world was made.' Thus, the struggle in the depth is not a consequence of nor a punishment for our fallenness. In the garden of our beginning, the soul [Eve] was pre-eminent, and the heart [Adam] had an untroubled time. That would never have lasted. The way God set up existence [freedom, contingency, and similar 'existential exactions'], and the evil spirit waiting to dissuade us with the terrible cost of having a heart, determines that existence in the world is and would always have become a real challenge. The question God asks us is, 'do you want a heart?' really, it means, 'will you be deep?'

This is the question God asked Adam immediately after the Fall= where are you? Where do you stand?

Passion is required to fulfil the inner and outer call that God has put on the heart.

Passion is the energy of the heart, its motive and intent, its willingness and self-giving, its spirit of the heart, which steps up and takes on all that God has laid upon us.

The human heart was created to bear the divine heart, and be the divine heart's representative and engine in the world for the sake of the world. The heart is tied to the world because the heart is called to be the redeemer of the world.

All this can seem like a curse, yet it is a blessing. For it signifies God's great honouring of, trust and belief in, us.

Christ came to take on the wound and the burden we put down, seeking secular/materialist and religious/spiritual escape; Christ came to undergo the test and prove the deep things of God and of humanity: the divine depth tested and proved in the human depth.

God's question to us is: will we assume the human depth, and will we assume the divine depth operative in the human depth?

This is a question of terror and beauty, of grief and glory, and it fills the heart with what Kierkegaard called 'angst' – an apprehension and anguish that subliminally reveals to us the precariousness of the situation we are in and the magnitude of what has been put at risk in this situation. Angst is a choice: do we face it and act, or do we turn away and run? In Psalm 55, 5-6, David calls this stabbing compunction 'fear and trembling', and pleads with God to be allowed an exit from the world which is at the same time an exit from the heart; David asks to be allowed to fly up and away, 'on the wings of a dove.'

But God will not allow this. Uncertainty, trouble, strife and tumult – the whole drama God made of existence because of what is at stake in it – cannot be transcended, left behind, avoided. We flee depth not only in 'secularist, humanist, materialist' worldliness, but also in a certain strain of 'ascetic, mystical, spiritual' other-worldliness which disfigures every religion.

In Jewish-Christian redemption, the heart is called to a hard place.  
In Jewish-Christian redemption, the heart is called to a dark place.  
The heart must go to the deep place, in itself; the heart must go to the deep place, in the world.

This is what Christ's passion did, and what ours, if our heart follows his heart, is called to do.

## **2= The Wound of the Daemonic**

'Philokalia', volume 3, p 35:

"Suffering deliberately embraced cannot free the soul totally from sin unless the soul is also tried in the fire of suffering that comes unchosen. For the soul ['heart' would be better] is like a sword: if it does not go 'through water and fire' [Psalm 66, 12], that is, through suffering deliberately embraced and suffering that comes unchosen – it cannot but be shattered by the winds of fortune."

The 'wounding by the Daemonic' encompasses the suffering that is unchosen. It has the power to destroy not only our secular but also our religious existence: it tries us in rushing water and in a raging fire that overturns all our hopes, material and spiritual, to reforge us in some manner we cannot as yet even imagine. It requires existential trust to undergo the Daemonic wound like Job, neither attributing it to an angry, even sadistic, God who punishes us for the transgression of being alive, nor cursing God and dying in a bitterness that finds being alive ridiculous. Because the Daemonic plunges us into a hurt for which we have neither defence nor explanation, most people react with either moralism or nihilism.

We want happiness, and in a certain sense at the end we will obtain it. God created us to share in his goodness. God offered us a soul to participate in his manner of being. But, God did something else which mostly is avoided and falsified, secularly and religiously. God put his and our happiness at ultimate risk, for the sake of what the Bible calls a 'fearful yet wonderful' purpose; he

established between himself and us a venture with no guarantee, a suffering with no protection, to 'try' a deep passion of God in us and make it our deep passion too. God offered us a heart to enact his deed of sacrifice.

The Daemonic wounds us to give us a heart that is human, and the Daemonic wounds us to make that humanity divine.

Hence our passion must bear two wounds, a lesser and a greater, to fulfil its calling from God. We must allow God to wreck the life we have made in the shallows, in order to plunge us into the deep: this is the small Daemonic wound. Then we must enter the real agony and ecstasy of humanity, which is to journey, battle, suffer, in the depth for our own and the world's redeeming, despite the cost both inner and outer: this is the great Daemonic wound. Thus our passion, in its love of God, in its love of the world, is ambivalent at depth: the heart wants to assume the way of passion but it also wants to put this way down. The way of passion was hard to bear, primordially, and has grown even harder after the Fall. Yet the Fall did not eradicate it. In one sense it has given up and given in; yet in another sense it still holds out and still tries to fulfil its calling. This divided state of the deep heart of humanity, both against and for the heart of God trying to be born in it, is the contradiction at the core of the human condition. In depth, our heart is in a Koan, and on a Cross.

#### – HUMAN CHARITY

The smaller Daemonic wound restores us to our fuller humanity, because it sweeps away the pinched heart that looks after itself and its own, but has no wider calling to the world and to humanity. The shallow heart is inhuman because it is parochial, suburban, caring about those who care for it, but not open to stranger or enemy. It looks after its own, and guards its little patch. It has no interest in anything at stake for the world and for humanity.

#### – DIVINE CHARITY

The greater Daemonic wound is that situation described by the Bible: 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' This restores our humanity to divinity, a divine heart in the human heart. This is 'the Christ.' The human heart was created to become a Christ, and it is from this we are fallen away, and it is to this we will be restored. Only God, incarnate in humanity, and going through the Koan and Cross where we are stuck and heart-broken, can help us take up what we have put down, yet still yearn to carry. The Messiah, the Christ, who is God come to assume the human condition as we humanly experience it, restores us to our deepest Daemonic wound, to redeem the whole gamble, the whole agony, by which God wants us to become the heart of existence.

What, then, of the two kinds of suffering of which the Philokalia speaks? The first voluntary suffering does not accept the Daemonic in full. Only the second unchosen suffering accepts the fullness of the Daemonic. The former burns out what is false to the heart, but only the latter really tries, and is tried in, the fire of what is true to the heart at its deepest.

The first suffering is necessary to any and all authentic religion.  
The second suffering is decisive for Christianity.

In Christianity, the first must lead to the second: the suffering deliberately chosen has no other justification than to point the way to and help us with the suffering not chosen.

In Christianity, what we embrace willingly is, and must be, no more than a bridge into what we embrace only unwillingly, with severe difficulty.

This is why there are those who, involuntarily thrown into the suffering that is not chosen, are closer to the spirit of Christ than many who voluntarily suffer for Christ but will not allow the Daemonic to take them where it took him.

The Daemonic took Christ out of the ascetic desert and out of the worshipping temple into the deep place, in the heart, in the world.

### **3= The Suffering Deliberately Chosen**

The first suffering is taken up voluntarily, as an act of self-offering motivated by love. It is our attempt to approach more closely to God. We accept to be disciplined, in order to be a disciple. We seek to keep God's instructions, we seek to walk in God's statutes. If we do this seriously, we discover we cannot do it; we realise the will cannot govern the source of resistance to God that is a part of our heart. At this point we accept a more radical kind of first suffering than that of following the law. We turn to asceticism, to wrestle with the inherent resistance, by flushing it out of its hiding place in, and challenging its hold over, the heart.

'Suffering deliberately chosen': this refers mainly to asceticism.

#### *1, The Need For Asceticism*

In asceticism, we rein ourselves back, to discriminate what is genuinely of the heart from what distorts the heart. Asceticism refuses that romanticism and idealism whereby we justify all that the heart does simply on the grounds it came from the heart. Christ said [Matthew, 15, 19] the heart is the source of every fallen passion we enact in the world, from pride and vainglory, through greed and lust, to envy and hate; the heart is our biggest and our smallest, the origin of malice, viciousness, and sadism as well as of nobility, gentleness, and tenderness. Hence, asceticism is realistic: to get the true out of the heart, its falsity must be purged, as happens to metal when heated to molten conditions and the impurities that weaken its native strength are burnt out.

#### *2, The Danger of Asceticism*

But the Philokalia rightly puts a limit on how far we can go in the heart with asceticism, saying the suffering that is deliberately chosen cannot totally free the heart from sin: it cannot change the deep death and the deep hell within us, at root. All the first suffering can do is to make sin captive, and weaken its compulsion on the heart, but sin is not fully removed from the source where it



is lodged in us. In the second suffering, which comes like a flood, a storm, an earthquake, the heart is forced into the depth where sin is wrestled with existentially: only here can the existential way to overcome it be found. Here it is do or die – trust the heart to God, or see the devil defeat the whole venture of heart between God and humanity. In the deep place, Christ was in a battle for the ultimate, and when the suffering not chosen drives us into the deep place we are thrust into the same ultimate battle. At that extremity, we either tough it out alone, which invariably fails, or we turn to God. Only the God who created the heart can be with us in the deep ultimate: Christ is the last battle of that God.

God respects what the heart gives up when it holds back, but God also knows only what the heart gives when it dives in can change anything fundamentally.

Therefore, asceticism is necessary, but not sufficient, to the Christian calling. It has a vital limitation. There are steps the deep heart must take that are beyond the strictures and practices of any and all asceticism. With our heart we have to risk God's heart, with our heart we have to suffer God's heart: this is the passion beyond asceticism. All steps of passion, from when the infant first comes into the world 'piping loud', to the day of final decision when we bind ourselves to the sticking place, there is a giving of love and a zeal for the truth of love that has to be trusted if it is to be tried. For only in our passion can we follow where Christ went in his passion – the place of crisis: the garden of Gethsemane; the place of sacrifice: the hill of Golgotha; the place of redemption: the pit of death and the furnace of hell.

Because of its emphasis on the fallen passions, and the need to curb these so that they will not totally dominate and compel our being and action in the world, asceticism has only a poor grasp of the inherent passion that, though fallen, is not destroyed, and has to be revived and freed, if we are to walk the road Christ went down. We have to use the heart, and cannot be assured that in using it we will not make mistakes, or stumble, again and again; for the world requires our loving heart to act, despite the co-existence of the unloving heart, long before the heart is pure and able to live and act with wholehearted passion. The passionate Peter, not the contemplative John, nor the intellectual Paul, is Christ's rock precisely because Peter was impulsive and took chances. He kept getting in over his head, out of his depth, but some sincerity of heart enabled him to repent as he went along, and to shed the false as he took the chance of using the true. This wave-tossed and fire-scorched passion of Peter was ascetically disciplined by existence, by living, but it seamlessly melded with interior and exterior heart action. The heart has to venture something in action toward the world= it has to love, through passion. That leap into the unknown, without security or guarantee, is faith, not perfecting ourselves in such a way we never give in to false passion, but also never act the true passion.

Zorba the Greek showed true heart passion when he intervened, at danger to his own life, to save the village widow whom the men wanted to kill with knives because they could not handle their own sexual urges toward her. Zorba the

Greek showed true heart passion when he married a washed up old French prostitute, to save her from final despair. It was true heart passion when mother Maria Skobtsova allowed Jews to shelter in her monastery in Paris at the time of World War Two, a deed that cost her and her friends their lives at the hands of the Nazis. It was true heart passion when my adopted Lakota brother, at the age of nine, was confronted by Frank Fools Crow, the last of the great holy men [wicasa wakan], and charged with the impossible task of carrying on the tradition of the warrior society called the 'Strong Hearts' [Cante Tenze], and this boy took to heart the responsibility placed on his shoulders, vowing his life to it, no matter what. It was true heart passion when Peter wept for his three betrayals of Christ. Contrition of heart is necessary; but God also will accept an existentially 'troubled spirit' and 'broken heart' [Psalm 51, 18].

The problem of ascetic self-mastery when misused is that it becomes a means of sneering at others' endeavours. It becomes an excuse for adopting a life stance of small heartedness where the person 'buries their talent in the earth' [Matthew 25, 14-39] rather than risk it might not remain 'intact' but might get 'wrongly spent.' This parable of Christ is clear= when the master who gave the talent returns to the person who buried it, the person says, 'I knew you were a stern master, so I did nothing with the talent you loaned me, in order to return it to you just as you gave it.' Far from being praised for this scrupulous guarding, the master says to the person, 'you could have put it out to usury, so I would have had my increase.' Usury was a sin to the Jews, thus the master prefers that the talent is spent even if that process of trying to produce a return on the original investment includes sin rather than it is not spent at all. Asceticism, if not carefully nuanced, promotes quietism and pietism, a prissy correctness, with no passion for the interior depth in us and no passion for the exterior depth in the world. Bad asceticism kills the heart. In the name of purging the heart's errors, it fails to ever use true passion of heart.

A life spent restraining love in order to uncover its purity, but never letting love off the leash because the purity might become soiled, is like an actor who rehearses meticulously but never goes on stage for fear he will forget his lines, or an athlete who trains faithfully but never enters the race for fear he will drop the baton.

The people whom asceticism affects like this would be better off eschewing it entirely, and letting their life be the mixture of 'tares and wheat' that we all are from the start. Some attempts to improve on this mixture, in short, are for the worse, not the better. Christ referred to this when he spoke of a man whose purification casts out one devil, and seven new and worse devils come to take up residence in his 'spotless house.' He is dried out, and swept clean, but "the last state of that man is worse than the first" [Matthew, 12, 43-45].

### *3, The Way That Is Not Of Christ*

Christ remains a scandal not only to secular but also to religious people, of every ilk: he offers the redemption no one wants because no one has faith it can work. Christ refuses to 'rescue' anyone from anything; rather, he takes everyone to the depth of everything, to redeem it all.

In Buddhism, the highest status is afforded monastic asceticism, but this is justified, since the Buddhist ascetical yoke really does lead to almost the entirety of what Buddhism calls its followers to seek. In fact, the comparison between Orthodox monastic asceticism of the 'height-seeking' kind and Buddhism is even closer. Though the spiritual terminology is a little different, the following passage by Ignatii Brianchaninov is identical in ethos, in 'spirit', to the Buddhist goal of enlightenment:

"Christian perfection consists of a pure heart to which God appears and in which he manifests his presence through diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit. He who has attained this perfection becomes the bearer of light and fulfils the commandment to love his neighbour not by any material service, but by the service of the spirit, guiding those who seek salvation, setting them up again when they fall and healing their wounded souls" [quoted by Father Sakharov, Sourozh, 99, 2005, p 41].

There is a hidden betrayal of the world in this spiritual stance, and also there is a hidden individualism; rather than joining with the brothers and sisters who are in the world, this spiritual path stands back, rises up, finds light, offers light to those still down, and draws a few up to its higher place. But this is not really Christian, though it might be adequate to Buddhism. Why? Because it does not really radically join with people at their most lost, and it does not become a radical sacrifice to their lostness.

In this very Buddhistic passage of Brianchaninov there is a failure to grasp what Christ is really doing on the Cross and in his subsequent Descent into Hades and Hell, for Christ was no Buddha reaching down and raising up those relative few who can be uplifted by his light. Rather, Christ joined with and was wounded by his brothers and sisters in the world, himself becoming the seed that must 'die into the ground' in order to 'bear fruit': the fruit of redemption of the ground of existence. Rising up into light, but leaving the world intrinsically unredeemed in its dark, hard, suffering depth, is not the Christian path.

#### *4, Christ's Way*

The matins service of Holy Saturday, celebrated on Friday evening in Passion Week, tells a very different story of redemption from that sought by those seeking to preserve the best in the height from the worst in the depth:

'O life-giving vine, thou wast lifted up from the earth, yet hast Thou poured out the wine [of thy blood]. I glorify thy passion and thy Cross.'

'O Christ, ..the angels were amazed and glorified thy self-abasement.'

'Foreseeing thy divine self-emptying upon the Cross, Habakkuk cried out marvelling: "Thou hast cut short the strength of the powerful, ..and preached to those in hell".'

'To earth hast thou come down, O master, to save Adam: and not finding him on earth, thou hast descended into hell, seeking him there.'

'O Jesus, my Christ and king of all, why hast thou come to those in hell? Is it to set free the race of mortal humanity?'

'O life, how canst thou die? How canst thou dwell in a tomb?  
Yet thou dost destroy death's kingdom and raise the dead from hell.'

'He who holds the earth in the hollow of his hand is held fast by the earth; put to death... he delivers the dead from the grasping hand of hell.'

'Willingly thou diest as a mortal man... but as God thou dost raise up the dead from the grave and from the depths of sin.'

'By dying, O my God, thou puttest death to death through thy divine power.'

'The deceiver is deceived, and those he misled are set free by thy wisdom, O my God.'

'All-devouring hell received within himself the rock of life, and cast forth all the dead that he had swallowed since the beginning...'

'Christ the life, by tasting death, has delivered mortal men from death, and now gives life to all.'

'...O word, thou hast descended to dread hell and raised up the race of mortal men.'

'Source of the river of life, the wisdom of God descends into the tomb and gives life to all those in the depths of hell.'

'How great the joy, how full the gladness, that thou hast brought to those in hell, shining as lightning in its gloomy depths.'

'The whole creation was altered by thy passion; for all things suffered with thee, knowing, O word, that thou holdest all in unity.'

'Now art thou hidden like the setting sun beneath the earth and covered by the night of death; but... rise in brighter dawn.'

'He who holds all things in unity was lifted on the cross, and the whole creation wept to see him hanging naked on the tree. The sun hid its rays and the stars cast aside their brightness; the earth shook in mighty fear, the sea fled and the rocks were rent, and many graves were opened and the bodies of the saints arose. Hell groaned below... But the women cried aloud: "this is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, but on the third day he shall rise again".'

‘Hell was wounded in the heart when it received him whose side was pierced by the spear; consumed by divine fire it groaned aloud at our salvation... O God, our deliverer, blessed art thou.’

‘We venerate thy passion, O Christ.’

This is what David means in the Psalms, when he speaks of the need to ‘pass through water and fire.’ By living in the world we get wet, by living in the world we get burnt. Christ embraced this, and redeemed and transformed the possibility of the world by being immersed in it, and wounded by it. Buddha offers light as exit from the suffering of the world process; Christ plunges into that very suffering, gives himself over to it, and by that sacrificial deed, changes the suffering from within, revealing it as the only way to love the world redemptively. This is the ultimate love, for as Christ says, ‘no man has greater love than he who lays down his life for his friends.’ Buddha: ‘the enlightened one’; Christ: ‘the suffering one.’ Light has no power to redeem the world; only the suffering of love can redeem the suffering world.

Our prayer for the neighbour, much less our active service to him, is useless unless we are able to ‘suffer’ him in our love: be with him, bear him, and finally sacrifice ourselves for him. If we are rising up, higher and higher, we resent and refuse any such suffering, for it drags us down. It calls us to a difficult, dark, struggling place, and that is where we do not want to go, in ourselves, and thus in the world and in the brother and sister. We want only the knowledge and freedom and unfettered joy of the light.

On the Cross, the best is sacrificed for the worst, but the sacrifice does not stop there. It proceeds and is really only complete in the Descent into death and hell. For this sacrificial dying is what allows the best to plumb the deep, and in the deep undergo a suffering in which the best gives itself wholly to the worst. This redeems the worst in the place it is most lost, in the deep ground of its being.

Out of death, the water of eternal life. Out of hell, the fire of eternal truth.

Such is Christ’s way.

This way is a reversal, a paradox, an inversion, of the religious desire to escape the world, and escape the brothers and sisters in it, so we can return, alone, to God, whether this escape is put in more Western dualistic, or put in more Oriental monistic, terms. The Westerner rises to heaven to escape the earth; the Oriental returns to ontological oneness to escape existential otherness. Or, to put this escape in straightforward human terms, we want the best to get free of, and get above, the worst. Even if we kindly and patiently – ‘compassionately’ in Buddhism – throw down a rope ladder, and haul a few ‘hurt souls’ up with us as we rise into the light, this is not the fullness of Christ. This is not even the teachings and healings of Christ in the gospels, but it is certainly not Christ on the Cross, and it is certainly not Christ descending into the Hades of dark deadening and into the hell of burning torment.

Monastic asceticism is only purged of the error to which it is invariably prone – in Buddhism no less than in Eastern Christianity – when the structure of spiritual discipline and spiritual practice no longer delivers what it aims at, but out of the blue just crumbles. For no reason, numinous cracks appear. The floorboards give way. The person experiences themselves falling into profound disorientation and doubt. In reality, they are ‘falling’ into the heart: entering the depth where love cannot be made a law, the depth where love cannot be made an ascetic yoke.

Christ told St Silouan, “Keep your mind in hell, and despair not.” The hellishness spoken of here is deep in the human heart, which is where Hades and Hell are rooted in us. It took Silouan many years of spiritual depression, of being forced down into the place to which Christ descended after his crucifixion, to accept what this deep place’s suffering can become: [a] the suffering of, on the one hand, ceasing to want to raise the best out of the worst, so the best can be preserved, glorious and triumphant, from the worst; [b] and on the other hand, the suffering of finally accepting and allowing the best to be given over to the worst, so the worst can be redeemed, and thereby become the best. The person who can suffer in this way in the depths can then return to the world, and see Christ in the world’s worst, and make the same sacrifice to them that Christ did: he can die for the stranger and the enemy because they are all ‘friends.’

All human beings are afflicted with the desire to escape, yet simply resort to different ways of accomplishing this exit from the deep heart, but the monastic ascetics, whatever ostensible religion they are in, are likely to be the most tempted by the religious version of the exit. This is why they have to be Daemonically forced down into the depths, deprived of light and joy, for such long periods, by the suffering unchosen that comes suddenly. But in this way Christ accepts the loving motive that indwells their spiritual error, honouring them, as he did Silouan, with the opportunity to embrace the mystery of the seed that must die to be planted, and must be planted to bear fruit. Silouan came through – for at the end of his ‘season in hell’ he could reveal its fruit in him simply: ‘my life is my brother.’

Similarly Christ-like is this Sufi declaration:

“The Sufi opens his hands to the universe  
And gives away each instant free.  
Unlike someone who begs on the street for money to survive,  
A dervish begs to give you his life.”

Later Buddhism itself moved in a more Christ-like direction, as a famous statement from Dogen Zengi, dating from the 14th century, attests:

"The more we realize, the more compassionate we become; and the more compassionate we become, the more deluded we have to be. When all things are wallowing in the mud, we have to jump into the mud to be with them. Just

sitting back, we can't accomplish much. And obviously when we get into the mud, we become muddy. That's being deluded within delusion – that's our life."

This is taken by Zen to mean that the Buddha's spiritual enlightenment is not enough. Being not-deluded and rising above humanity's travail is another kind of delusion. Therefore, it is necessary to go back into delusion [human suffering] to play a part. In other words, escape is out.

In Tibet this Christ-like new direction in Buddhism is manifest in the story of Geshe Chekhawa who lived in the 11th century. 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. It was a new step. He set out to find the master who had written such lines, 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].

The Elder Paisios of Mount Athos puts the same point forcefully:

"Prayer which is not from the heart, but is made only by the mind, doesn't go any further. To pray with the heart, we must hurt. Just as when we hit our hand or some other part of our body our mind is gathered to the point where we are hurting, so also for the mind 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..."

The figure of the Oriental Guru, whatever his spiritual attainment and spiritual benevolence, is not the Messiah, the Chosen One, the Anointed One: chosen and anointed by God to be the sacrifice for the redemption of the world.

## *5, Conclusion*

This new way in which Christ suffers our old suffering allows us to remain in it and to meet it as he does. Death and hell are redeemed in us. This is what

makes us unafraid of the death and hell in the world. We go back to the world, willing to go on its rack, willing to be stretched by it, in order to bring to its depth what Christ brought to our depth: redemption.

It is clear that Christ's deed on the Cross, and in the Descent into Hades and Hell, is ultimately engaged with and committed in action to the destiny of the world. Our deepest love and our deepest rejection of love only operate from the heart toward the world. It is this buried love and last rejection of love that Christ's 'redemptive love' addresses.

It is this enworlded existential condition itself, in all its passion and pathos, which will be redeemed, in depth, on the ground, in time and over time, for all who dwell in it.

[i] It is only where the real existential possibility is lost to tragedy that it can be regained.

[ii] What makes the difference is a sacrificial suffering, a different way of embracing the tragedy, that Christ offers.

[iii] We must be in the tragedy to know we need this offer; he must go into the tragedy to make the offer count.

Such is Christ's way.

#### **4= The Suffering That Comes Unchosen**

Christ is preordained to the suffering in existence that cannot be removed, but which can be for humanity either a bottomless spiritual defeat or a fathomless spiritual victory. Christ does not choose to take on this suffering in any ordinary sense. It is chosen for him by the Daemonic God before he comes into the world, from before the beginning of time, and his freedom consists in the accepting and affirming of what was always chosen for him: he says to it, 'not mine, but thy will be done.' The Daemonic 'metes out his share', exactly as it does with all human beings, but the difference is he faces and undergoes what we turn from and flee.

No human being wants, and voluntarily chooses, the suffering inherent to existence.

In the world we face the challenge to use our heart or throw it away, and the temptation to give up on the heart and let down all those in the world who cry out to us, 'we need your love.' We can hurt and be hurt, we can betray and be betrayed, we can damage and be damaged, we can offend and be offended. Our innocence is abused and we abuse innocence. The heart can be glad and the heart can know a terrible bleakness. Not for nothing was this life called a 'vale of tears', but this life also contains a seed of something mysterious, strange, marvellous, if we can keep faith with it, and undergo its existential blows, reversals, trials, for the sake of what is at stake – that its possibility may



not end in ruination, but may be redeemed, and hence bear fruit 'in the end.' This is why Christ did not end any of our suffering, but embraced all suffering: making suffering redemptive of the heart and redemptive for the world.

But redemption is a process in time. It is not some instant conversion. What Christ did for us, so that we can do it, must still be done by us. It takes time for Christ's seed to be planted in each and in all, to work in the depth, within and without. Christ's seed is already planted. In one sense, it has already affected all people everywhere, unseen; thus could Dogen, the founder of Zen Buddhism, go beyond the Buddha, and even beyond the Bodhisattva, to something more Messianic, more Christ-like. Yet, there is another sense in which Christ's seed must be received by us more personally and actively, so that we can become a seed for humanity, a seed for the world. In short, the paradoxical process which Christ's sacrifice instigates in the depth has to be embraced by us in our depth. Or put another way, his new suffering has to be embraced in our old suffering, for that old suffering to be changed.

But how can we let God's suffering for us [Cross], which becomes a redemptive suffering of us [Descent] into our heart, if we cannot even own, and be immersed in, the old suffering 'all flesh is heir to' just by being born into the world? How can Christ's divine-humanity reach us if we repudiate our humanity, which is divided, tempted, broken, yet still has a spark which is ardent, zealous, faithful?

The problem is two-fold:

[i] We don't want to acknowledge our own deep suffering, so why should we want it exposed, dug up, reactivated, by God's deeper suffering that embraces it? The more determined to remain invulnerable we are, defended from our suffering, the more Christ's suffering repels us.

[ii] In our deep suffering, we are on a terrible edge, in a fight for our life, and a fight for the life of all things. We know we are losing this fight, and that slowly but surely everything is slipping over the edge, ready to fall endlessly into an empty void. In this place, we know a total contradiction. We are defunct and derelict, yet we are still moved to not let it all go, but hang in and even try. The place where the journey has failed yet refuses to be over, the place where the battle is half lost, half still capable of being won, is taxing and heavy and full of agony. It is bitter, regretful, despairing, yet even in this acid gall there is some vulnerable, irrational yearning.

It is in the context of this twofold problem that 'the wound inflicted by the Daemonic', the suffering that comes unchosen, is a mercy of God, not a curse. God has to 'drive' us back into our deeper suffering to embrace it in his deep suffering, making death and hell the existential furnace that sifts and tries life and heaven.

Consequently:

[i] God wounds us in one way [waves of water] to get us out of the shallows.

[ii] God wounds us in another way [arrows of fire] to throw us into the deeps, and force us to re-own, and re-enter, the old suffering in which we are struggling. F. G. Lorca called the old suffering a 'black pain', a pain inexplicable and devastating. It is 'the deep pain in the heart.' This is the pain for which there is no secular or religious solution. It cannot be solaced. It cannot be fixed. It cannot be made better. In this pain so old in humanity, so sorrowful and so dirty, we are pierced, we are besmirched. It is our shame, our guilt, our apprehension. It is our grief, our mourning, our sadness. There is anger in such sadness, to be sure, but also acute distress. This black pain deep in the heart is ultimate for humanity. It is the Koan for which there is no solution. It is the Cross on which the heart is already crucified, long before Christ came. It is the unbearable we bear and cannot bear. It is the unendurable we endure and cannot endure. The black pain defeats all explanation, secular and religious, and defeats all healing, secular and religious. It is what is, and no one can do anything about it. Spiritual, social, psychological, panaceas are just furious currents that smash into its unshifting rock, leaving it untouched and unmoved. In the deep place is our ultimate heartbreak.

We are heart-broken about our own possibility, we are heart-broken about the possibility of the world and humanity. But the deepest heartbreak is about God. This is what people most radically will not own. In this last heartbreak, we know we have forsaken God, and we fear God has forsaken us because of it. In this deepest heartbreak is all our mistrust that God's heart will be present to our heart, no matter where it goes, or how far it falls. We doubt God's heart will be with our heart way out on the limb, and in the death and hell below. We doubt we are good enough for God, and doubt God is good enough for us. We doubt we are loveable and doubt we are loved. The people who claim to be straightforwardly obedient to God, and offer God praises and thanks, are liars in the heart; in the heart we hate God in our love of God, in the heart we despair of God in our love of God. In our heart, we are desperate about God, pleading with God, spitting on God, all the time, day and night, in sleep and in waking. We are heart-broken about God. We are in torment about God because we cannot stop loving God, and cannot start trusting God, ourselves, the world and humanity.

There is no passion so fervent as the love of God, and no passion as desolate as our repudiation of God, our hate of, mistrust in, and despair over, God.

Our heartbreak is over the heart.

It is a stalemate, certainly a stasis, almost but not yet a checkmate. We know a few moves remain, and that they will be make or break. But we don't know what they are. We cannot make them happen, of ourselves. And we dread them, because whilst things are static, we still survive the contradiction. But if it were to be suddenly dynamised, 'moved' towards a decisive resolution, then

we would feel really up against it, because we would understand full well that the half and half situation was going to be finally decided, and it could be decided for an ultimate better or for an ultimate worse. This is why, in our deep pain in the heart, we cling to our old suffering and find it hard to let it be penetrated, accepted, changed, by Christ's new suffering. This is why, as a Leonard Cohen song has it, we resist being tempted by a God or a devil. Our own ultimate place is onerous enough; to open the old wound and let air in, to take up the old burden and let the dust be shaken off, risks our half risking to a more ultimate risk, suffers our half suffering to a more ultimate suffering. What if God finally failed? What if we finally failed? What if God failed us and we failed God, in the last throw of the dice, in the last gamble, for him and for us? This is terrible beyond any imagining, yet if the place of break-down becomes the place of break-through – if there is a turnaround just when it all is about to go into freefall – then this will be wonderful beyond any imagining. We can hardly entertain such terror, such wonder.

The black pain deep in the heart is what everyone knows, but no one will take the chance of trying to live out its contradiction in full, to see it through, to see if there is a far shore it can reach on the other side of where it is now.

When Christ suffered on the Cross, and descended into death and hell, he did this to take on what we have not taken on and seen through; he came to take it on in full and see it through to the end. Thus, he came not just to take up, or assume, our old suffering, but to challenge it to move beyond its primordial position, and take one last terrible and wonderful chance. By being wounded by our old suffering, Christ's new suffering wounds it: the seed dies into the ground, but it sends gushes of water and tendrils of fire into that ground, awakening, enlivening, sparking, its own hidden nascent seed. His dying wounds our deadness, his hellishness wounds our hell. We are called out to fight 'on the rim of the well', as Lorca calls it, we are called out to fight on the edge of the abyss, one last time, and for keeps. It will be keeps for us and thus it will be keeps for our passionate mission to the world and humanity. Suddenly, at the very moment when it is about to go over the edge, at the eleventh hour when it is all over bar the shouting, Christ comes, and intervenes, and it is a whole new situation, because at the last breath it is suddenly all to play for. Suddenly, there is a second chance, deeper and greater than the first which was missed. Only Christ reaches this ultimate in us, and offers his ultimate to it, to alter the dynamic, the odds, the balance of tensions, of the game being played for final perdition or final coming through. We cannot go above this old black pain; we cannot go around it; we can only go through it, and this is what Christ's challenge, Christ's hand in friendship, reaching down from the Cross into our pit of death and our furnace of hell, offers.

We will wound him, but in this very fashion, he will wound us, to redeem our wound.

The great becomes deep, so that the deep can become great.

Only Christ earns the right to ask us to change in the deep place: because he suffers on the Cross the stark fact we cannot change. He pays the cost for us that is so acute in suffering and so heavy in weight. But, by paying for our inability to change, he can give to us in the place where we are broken and stuck that which will enable us to change. Yet, to receive this, we will have to take the chance of our heart being broken one more time, for keeps.

Should we respond and follow through on Christ's offering and challenge, in the throes of this process we will lose all secular and religious assurances, securities, handrails. The apparatus of religion collapses: if Christ could cry to God, 'why have you forsaken me?', then the ascetical desert and the worshipping temple have ceased to be of any use. This is the place where only Christ and one's own abyss count. Here, we experience God as impotent, unable to do anything, or as absent, unconcerned, safe, secure and enjoying himself in a better place. Here, we regard God with contempt, scream and rage and blaspheme at God, and fear God's retribution for our presumption. Most religious people lie about this place because it destroys all piety. Instead, they resort to the good boy or good girl stance, breaking ranks with the desperation in all human hearts, to posture as God's loyal children. The monk who threw excrement all over the walls of his cell was showing more honesty, sincerity, integrity, than those who pretend that the deep death and deep hell is not in them, or if it was once, now everything is cleaned up because of their conversion to Christ. This is a lie, plain and simple: such people are trying to deceive others because they are trying to deceive themselves. God is not deceived, because God sees the unfathomable heart in a way no human being can. Christ comes to this place because he knows how bad it is for us, and that to open our badness to him, we must make him its scapegoat. Of course we have to put our desperation on him, to find out if he is for real, and is up to taking us on, at our most impossible to help. The hand that feeds has to be bitten.

This dark night is not only the sharing of Christ's suffering of our death and hell, it is the suffering of our death and hell. It is our deadened and hellish abyss we have to remain in, to let Christ bring God's 'abyss of wisdom' into it.

What holds us here?

Christ's presence in the deep place is God's last and most significant revelation to the human heart, because it makes God's last and most fearful and wonderful promise. It vows God to the human predicament radically, and promises if we don't come through, God won't come through. If we end in death and hell, God will end in death and hell with us.

Thus it also makes clear he came through for us, that we will come through.

Christ restores our faith in the heart, to the last extremity the heart can reach. We believe in, and trust, his heart because his heart believes in, and trusts, our heart.

We will, finally and forever, fulfil God's will that the human heart be the representative and engine of the divine heart in the world.

But this end time is not yet, and Christians have always mistakenly wanted to rush it, out of cowardice, impatience, lack of strength. Even Christ did not know when it would end. Before the end, it gets tough, it gets dreadful, it gets unbearable, it gets unendurable.

Thus, it must be concluded that there are really three wounds that constitute the fullness of the Daemonic.

[i] Shedding the shallows;

[ii] Re-owning and re-entering the deeps;

[iii] Risking it all, suffering it all, one last ultimate time, because Christ did, and Christ challenges and wounds us with his faith that we can go where he went, into death and hell, by doing what he did, making a sacrifice. But when this last fight on the rim of the well, this last fight on the edge of the abyss, really bites and grips, then our passion is in its profoundest suspense, in its most dramatic intensity. It knows this is it. Time has run out.

Here the heart really endangers itself to and wrestles with whether it is worth having a heart, or whether the heart should finally be put to rest, its bleeding, sweating, and tears, given up on. This process in which we let the heart rise to the second chance is humanity's last hurrah, it is humanity's last sigh. This is a rim where all the options are running out, this is an edge where all the moves are being exhausted. The options on the rim, the moves on the edge, are few but very powerful.

This is the last journey.  
This is the last battle.  
This is the last suffering.  
This is the last struggle.

It generates terrible despair, and a strange, inarticulate hope.

It is the last, most fearful and most wonderful, wounding by the Daemonic. We are going to bear the unbearable, we are going to endure the unendurable, again, and for the last time.

## **5= Deep Song And The Dark Christ**

In the 'Saeta' – a poem based on a musical prayer sung during Passion Week – F. G. Lorca speaks of a 'dark Christ' who has changed in coming from Judea to Spain. Lorca says, "look where he comes from!", then describes the darkened Christ of Spain's hard land, pained land, fated land – elsewhere he calls it, "earth of light, sky of earth" – and ends, "look where he's going!" Christ is coming from where he entered the existential arena, the arena of Seville to

wound, Cordoba to die, the arena of the dagger in the street and the blind archers, but Christ is going to another place, the place of the dry land, still land of immense nights, ancient land of the oil lamps and grief, land of deep cisterns and death without eyes. Christ is darkened because we only meet him now in the deep place where our despair is quiet and resigned, but his arrival there will be the dagger that goes into the heart like the blade of a plough in barren land, his arrival there will be the ray of sun that sets ablaze terrible hollows, the fire that penetrates terrible depths.

Again the crucial question is not theological, not doctrinal, not dogmatic, but existential: how can the dark Christ reach us if we will not go to the dark place?

Even among those who are stricken by the Daemonic, there is a temptation to falsify its depth.

In the music of the heart tried in the fire of suffering that comes unchosen, we hear the strange battle in the depths for which we have no words, for which we have no images, but which haunts us with its urgency. We know it holds some ultimate danger and some ultimate opportunity.

This battle is critical. It is a death that could lead to life reborn or a death that could just end in the heart's failure of its call, ruination, dereliction, without end; it is a hell that could lead to heaven reborn, or a hell that could just end in the heart's betrayal of its call, remorse, regret, without end. Therefore this battle is 'on the rim of the well', or 'on the edge of the abyss.' Since this struggle in the deep is already abysmal, taking place in the fathomlessness within each and underneath all, in what sense is it on a rim? On the edge of what? It is stretched, in suspense and suspended, on the edge of a plunge into the abyss that will reclaim the depth as the matrix of the profound, or will lose the depth as this well of living water and forge of true fire, and instead will consign the abyss to becoming an eternal Hades of dark death and an eternal Hell of burning torment.

In everyday language the mysterious and potent word 'abyss' is used in precisely these two converse ways: [1] We speak of the most dreadful evil, or the most abject letting down of our calling, as 'abysmal.' In such usage, abysmal means lowest of the low: bad in a deep, not a shallow, way. [2] But the abysmal also carries the reverse implication, of that which is not the highest, but rather, is the deepest, the most profound. Height signifies truth which is secure, impregnable, shining out. Depth is truth which is put at risk, and thus losable; in depth, truth is hidden, dark, latent, and can either be 'tested and proved' or it really can be lost, swallowed up, blotted out. In the abyss, we can fall forever, into a nothingness without bottom, or we can stand on a groundless ground that upholds us from a void we cannot fathom yet can lean on.

Depth is where it can go either way.

Depth is the mysterious, unknown and unknowable place of ultimate paradox. Depth is life and death. Depth is heaven and hell. Depth is the fact truth is not impregnable but vulnerable, and can only be victorious by being made subject to the challenge of what can defeat it. Depth is the unfathomableness of truth, as it is risked, and put to a test, to see if it can or cannot come through in the human heart and therefore to see if it can or cannot come through in the world. Truth is in the heart for the world. The risking and testing of truth can be failed and betrayed in the heart and therefore failed and betrayed in the world.

It is here, precisely at the most ultimate point, that we are not yet through to the other side. Human beings can blow it all at the last gasp, or make remarkable last minute turnarounds, but this is because the deepest level is not resolved yet.

There is, then, always a yearning in deep song, in the *cante jondo*, for a resolution that is not yet reachable in any person, because it is not reached in all the world for all of humanity. Deep song must lack classical music's harmony and thus closure, it must be discordant because the closure is not yet attained, truthfully, in the deep. In deep song, all the extreme opposites of human existence converge, not cancelling each other out, not balancing each other out, but creating a tension of yearning. Even when quiet despair has settled over the drama of the fight, still there is yearning. The deep song is praying to the unknown God, deep is calling to deep, out of the heart's knowledge that another deep must be in our deep to resolve it, to bring it to 'the peace beyond understanding', but until we commit to and engage with the last throw of the dice that the dark Christ calls us out to one last time, we cannot really surrender our deep song to his deep song. The yearning in our human deep song stretches towards this final risk and final suffering, yet also holds back from it. Our groaning is the heart's prayer, but that praying has not yet come to the 'amen', when we surrender to the dark Christ's surrender.

Yet this same dark Christ is always in the deep place with us though we don't know that. It was the dark Christ who was in the concentration camps, and when the Jews put God on trial, it was this dark Christ who would have been handed over to their justice if God were convicted; yet it was this same dark Christ who underwent their crucifixion with them.

We cry to the unknown God – the God people think they know is no use – and we yearn for the dark Christ. Yet, we do not surrender to him in the first wound of the Daemonic, nor in the second wound of the Daemonic. He is with us, all the way in and all the way down, and we cry to him and this is our prayer and our yearning. This is almost, but not quite, our surrender to his surrender. We are not ripe. We must take a further step, but we cannot find it, and so we must be true to where we are, and not move from it prematurely. We must let the tension rise, let the intensity turn and twist. We must yearn, and only when the time is right will we take the final step. We pray from within a defeat where we still fight, from within a staticness where we still move. "Be still and know I am God" [Psalm 46, 11]. We stand in our truth, in one sense stuck but in another sense stilled, and we cry to God. We yearn for God. But the yearning has to

grow to a crisis point, before it can give birth to the step we must take to join the dark Christ.

Deep song is what is wrung out of us – like all true prayer, all prayer of the heart – from the wrestling with the most powerful burning of the suffering that comes unchosen. The wrestling itself, if done with humility and boldness, if done with sincerity and honesty, generates ‘duende.’ Duende means ‘spirit’, but it is not the spirit that floats above the sticking place, nor pretends to be in it when it is merely play-acting a dramatic role, but is the spirit only born of being nailed to the spot.

The more we move through the first Daemonic wound, and the more we become engulfed in the second Daemonic wound, so the more duende, the more spirit, is raised from the depth. This spirit must be raised in us before we can give it to the dark Christ. He waits, he even stands tactfully back, to allow our passion to be forged in its most black, most pained, spirit. It is this spirit that will be redeemed, and will redeem. The duende is the human spirit being hammered on an anvil. In this we start to be ready to accept the third Daemonic wound that wants to resurrect heart truth from death and hell to make a final stand in the world.

Therefore, if the Daemonic is the spirit that strikes us, like lightning, then duende is the process of burning in our depth whose outcome is that same spirit born in us. Like the grit in the oyster that produces the pearl, the duende ‘forges’ the heart with the power of the spirit of truth. The Daemonic is the spirit, the power, of truth. Anything that rings false to this spirit, to this truth, proves powerless under duress, and gets burnt up. But what rings true is burnt into us, and becomes our spirit, our power.

Only what withstands can stand= neither ‘God lifted me out of it because I am such a good boy/girl’ nor ‘I got through it because I am such a heroic figure’ can survive the duende. No moral law, no ascetical yoke, but only the duende, sifts wheat from tares. The Daemonic took everything away from Job, but in his duende it remade him; the Daemonic was the monster who swallowed Jonah, but in his duende it changed him so that when he was spat out, it was to complete his mission. The duende takes time, and ripens. It gathers power. It sparks spirit, like rock on flint.

The duende operates in the heart’s lonely place, where the heart is alone with God, the devil, and its own abyss. To come through the duende is then to be with the world in a radically new way: but to fail to come through is to be lost to the world, and thus to let the world remain lost. This renders the duende starkly dramatic. A spirit can be born, a power can be unleashed, that will shift things decisively, but if this is not attained, the shift will not eventuate. The whole creation holds its breath, waiting to see what will happen. Everyone and everything is on the edge of their chair when the duende really bites. Redemption or damnation is coming.



It is not just humanity, but also the unknown God, and the dark Christ, and his Spirit of truth, with its dread power, who is in this duende in some manner that disallows any quick or any easy victory 'over' the depth. The victory is to overcome that in our passion which would cry in a different way, breaking the rising tension and dispelling the gathering intensity, by exclaiming, 'I cannot stand the heat of the kitchen, let me out!' A man once went to a Russian Staretz and said, "I cannot stand my life." The Staretz replied, "It changes nothing to say you cannot stand your life. You are still standing it."

Anything purporting to be heart truth, or depth truth, that has not come through what God has established as 'abysmal', will be sucked down into the abyss, and will go on falling for ever= this is the empty void beneath the pit of death and the furnace of hell. Only truth that is stripped naked of pretence and distortion and deception in the duende, and that is ventured, checked out and proved, will be upheld by the profundity of the abyss in its fathomless depth; this truth will stand on the abyss, and act from it towards the world, no longer paralysed by the world's abyss. This final moment is coming, it is what the spirit, the power, of truth will give birth to if it goes to the end.

'God toils in the sign of the abysmal' [the Chinese 'Book Of Changes', the 'I Ching']. God toils, humanity toils, in the abyss, that it can become a life born of death, a heaven born of hell. The duende is this toiling in the abyss, for both God and humanity. It was prefigured from the beginning, long before Christ's Incarnation, but Christ took it on, and pushed it to its radical extremity, embracing the suffering that comes unchosen at its deepest, at its most mysterious, at its most crisis-gripped and crucial, in his Cross, and in the Descent into Hades and Hell prior to the Resurrection.

But the very prospect of stepping up, and assuming humanity's oldest and most blackly inexplicable pain in the depth, brought Christ to his knees in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked God if the cup could pass [Matthew, 26, 39], as all of us do. We should be clear what this request means. It means: can heaven triumphantly be victorious over hell? Can heaven eliminate any need for the abyss where hell is either going to be defeated – or hell is going to win, for all of us and for the God vowed to us, for all eternity? The full drama of what his passion had put him in hit Christ hard, and he almost buckled under the hit. He voiced all human reluctance, when he asked a last time of God, 'can heaven be spared the duende in the abyss?' 'Can heaven be saved from hell?' And Christ knew the answer already, but he asked not only for himself but for all of us, in our lack of faith. The answer to Christ, as to all of us, was in God's silence. It said, 'no way out.' An angel came, to strengthen him to do what had to be done, though his struggle with its reality was not over yet. "His sweat was as great drops of blood" [Luke, 22, 41-46].

For Christ, God's silence was a thunder clap, saying 'take the step on the ground that will plunge you into the abyss beneath the ground.' And knowing this was the reply, Christ sang his death song in the garden of choice, in the garden of a last questioning before venturing the final heart deed that put him in the place where our heart deed has been failed and betrayed, and come

under the alien power that does not want it to ever come back, for the world's redemption. In the depth, the devil has power; in the depth, this power must be broken. Christ breaks this alien power, but he dignifies us because he wants us, the fallible human heart, to be the one who finally brings the devil's power to naught. In the end, only this false power will fall forever in the abyss.

Christ put a question to God, but really, by his silence God put the question to Christ: are you still in, are you prepared now to go all the way? Are you prepared to finish it? The final battle on the rim, in the deep, is beginning.

Christ chose, after the crisis, to follow passion to the end: he freely tried, and was tried in, the passion of love we have not fully tried and not fully been tried in. But we must go on burning, go on ripening, in our duende until we can take the step that will join Christ's step. God waits for this, as does all the creation. It cannot be rushed: yet when the time comes we must cease all hesitation, and wade straight in.

There is silence in the deep place because there is nothing more to say, nothing more to ask. Words are used up. Images are used up. Once we stop weeping, we are just silent. The pain in us exhausts and is inexhaustible. It is beyond words and images. It is beyond pain.

The pain of the heart wanting to go all the way, yet doubting the heart can make it, becomes acute. In this slowly but surely increasing pain is converging the vast contradiction of our existence as a creature of heart. One of the Hebrew meanings of the word 'passion' is 'pregnancy'; this pain in us is full of ultimates that clash, yet the pain is pregnant. This pain is capable of destroying us yet it is also capable of recreating us. It is a sacred pain.

My step daughter Anita Harmon's poem:

One day – a dragon will fly out of the sun  
And sink his claws into your mind in perfect perspective,  
Your flesh will be tossed from your bones  
And your bloodless belly left gaping,  
Warm scales falling around you – like petals.

Beating on the highway – all alone  
Your aching heart will cry out  
For another glimpse of  
The flaming Moses-bush he carried in his maw.

What, then, brings the pregnancy, the burning, the ripening, to the moment of its fruit-bearing?

## **VI= The New Mystical Land of Heart**

When the moment of truth arrives, the situation in the depths can change.

This is the moment David in Psalm 50 yearned for: “Let our God come, and be silent no more!” This is the electrifying moment David could only anticipate but not yet experience: “preceding him, a devouring fire, around him, a raging storm; he summons the heavens above and the earth, to his people’s trial.” This moment when God comes in fire and storm, silent no more, summoning the whole creation to his people’s trial, is the same moment Lorca describes as “see where he goes!” and “see where he comes!” In this moment it is the dark Christ who appears, he is the centre of God’s fire and storm, he is the ending of God’s silence, he is put on trial for God’s people. And in this moment, we become available to this Christ who has left Judea to come to Spain for a last Daemonic wounding and a final duende on the rim, on the edge.

Anyone can come to the moment which could be for destruction, or for destruction and recreation, if they have passed through the duende and stayed with it all the way. A religious person might never come to this moment, because of being defended from the duende by other-worldliness; a secular person might never come to this moment, because of being defended from the duende by worldliness. Both are escapes. Since the duende does away with opinions, beliefs, dogmas, it makes no difference what a person’s theories, or even visions, once were: God asks of us “truth in the inward parts”, thus anyone who goes through this truthfully can arrive at the climax of the whole drama, where the truth is finally revealed in us, and can defeat the lie from within: “and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”

People of genuine religion, and people genuine in no religion, are united in this moment of truth.

This moment is existential. There is no formula to encompass it, no map to plan out its terrain.

Yet, there are three mysterious things which bring us to, root us in, and get us through, this moment. They seem three steps in a progression.

1= The pressure, from God or the world, which brings us to our crunch point;

2= Our surrender, at this crunch point, to the dark Christ’s surrender;

3= God’s secrets given to those in death and hell.

### 1, Pressure

Deep song is humanity’s ongoing prayer of the heart, which declares what the heart is and what the heart is up against, but it makes no petition to God – because we would petition to be saved, to be let off the hook, when what we need is to be speared inescapably, and for good, so we stop messing around, thinking we have infinite time, and instead realise, time is up.

To tighten the tension on the inside, the pressure has to be increased on the outside: things are difficult normally, but for us to enter and remain in the deep place at its most charged, they must get far worse. The Daemonic ups the

pressure on the interior heart through some relentlessly potent and inexplicable exterior happening that suddenly befalls it; this forces the heart to go in and down to the place of its ultimate crisis.

Sometimes God will turn the screw, as when 'out of the blue' the carpet is just swept away from our feet, and we fall into the pit or the furnace. This happened to Silouan by God unexpectedly shooting him full of arrows after a mystical experience: he is in the height, thinking himself home and dry, and suddenly he is cast down, swallowed by the depth and told to remain there with his awareness, but not give up despite being in Hades and Hell. More often the screw is tightened by disasters in the world pounding us, or the world suddenly throwing us into dramatic situations that rip the heart out of its hiding, and put the heart on trial as to what it is made of, and what it will do. Not just God with Adam, but the world with us, demands 'where are you?' Where is your heart, what will your heart give or not give to be true?

The dagger in the street is needed to make things serious. The worse it gets, the more grounded and energized in its deeper reality, its existential predicament, the heart becomes. The battle in the deeps is not helped by situations of certainty, safety, control, comfort, predictability, detachment. It is helped by storms, floods, earthquakes, that reconnect us to what is at stake in existence and hence reconnect us to our heart's stake in what is at stake. Suddenly we are no longer drifting, asleep, apathetic, disengaged, uncommitted. Suddenly we are acutely alert and in the thick of it; we are on the rim, we are on the edge. We are struggling, suffering, fighting, in the deep place within that is bound hand and foot to the deep place without.

When the Daemonic puts us into the world's arena outside us, it puts us into the deep arena inside us.

Whether it comes from God, or from the world, this mounting pressure on us is inexorable, and closes off all avenues of escape. Slowly but surely the options are taken away, and it narrows to the all or none, black and white, ultimate. This is like being in a room where, one by one, all the doors are being closed. In ordinary language, we refer to this when we say, 'all my alternatives have run out, now it has come down to this.' It is not the most scalding sounds wrung out of our wrestling with the blows and hurts of existence that signify this climax, but the sudden silence of a sharp intake of breath when the last door in the room shuts and we know 'this is it.'

We do not want our suffering put under a pressure that will get it moving again. We prefer it to remain where it is, buried in us and paved over in the world. But the Daemonic does not let it rest in peace! The Daemonic pierces the 'quiet despair' buried in the deep heart, like a body wrapped in a shroud in a tomb, to dig it up, to stir it into anguished life, to pressure it into dynamism, in order to grant one last possibility: the coming of the dark Christ to our 'bitter root.'

The heart has always been seeking this new way, but it has not been able to find it, of its own strength and its own effort. Suddenly a second chance, a last

chance, to go for it appears. What we most dread and what we most yearn for arrives.

This is the redemptive element in everyone's crunch point, and what can redeem those who have chosen the smaller heart no less than those who have chosen the bigger heart.

The choice by us is not enough to redeem the heart, whether we choose for the greater or the lesser. In choosing we find choice is not enough= it needs God to intervene.

At our crunch point, all that is required is that we offer what is lacking in our passion to the dark Christ. He is dark because he has already been tested and has already proved he can receive it.

## 2, Surrender

Peter's crunch came at Christ's arrest. Three times choice was demanded of his heart, and three times his heart choose the lesser rather than the greater, denying he even knew Christ, much less followed him. The drama that put Peter in the dark room of no exit exposed his passion as not up to the mark. Yet, it was this failure and betrayal that finally broke Peter's heart, and it was this heartbreak he could, finally, give to the Christ born to suffer, carry, and pay for, it.

Whatever the black inexplicable pain deep in the heart, the heart is not finally broken until, under the duress of the most fateful moment where the heart is required, it makes its last attempt to find the way of heart and comes up wanting. There is no heartbreak as savage as this. You know you have given it all you could and still you have let down what matters. Black Elk came to this moment on Harney Peak, at the end of his life, when he accepted that he had not been able to fulfil the great vision and calling early put upon him of saving his people. The tears that fall at this point, and run like rivers creating harsh rents down our cheeks, is not mourning at what has been done to us, but mourning for what we have not been able to do when it most mattered what we do. Heartbreak comes to the heart when it gives its all, and finds all it is and all it gives not enough for what it loves.

This is our deepest cut, our final wound. The heart comes to absolute poverty, and total mourning.

But this is the moment when it can turn around, and the way of heart be recovered, never to be lost.

Christ waits for us to give what is lacking in our passion to his passion, that his passion can redeem ours, and ours be resurrected with his.

It is in our lack, not in fullness, that we turn to the dark Christ, in surrender. Those who are heroic can put their own heroism in the way of Christ, while those who are not heroic can turn to him more readily= the sick know they

must lean on a physician, while those seemingly healthier but in fact just as sick fundamentally, deny they have any such insufficiency.

There is a more comprehensive surrender when we can confess, at the point of heartbreak, that our passion is not sufficient, but is lacking= and we do not just offer this lack to God as acknowledgement of the deficiency of our fallen passions, as has always happened in the past, but offer it in a new way as the deficiency even of our unfallen passion. This allows us to really give our heartbreak to the dark Christ whose heart is broken for our sakes. We offer our passion to the only one who has paid for what our passion is lacking, and plumbed the mysterious depth of the lack in our passion, making it a door we can pass through to what an Eastern Orthodox saint called 'the new mystical land of the heart.' This comes only through the dark Christ. The passion not dead in Christ, not in hell with Christ, will not come to the resurrected life through death, the resurrected heaven through hell, of Christ.

We surrender in utter, final, bottomless, heartbreak over the whole destiny and calling of the heart in us. At this moment, we know this heart given to us does not belong to us, but to the giver who gave it, and the redeemer who, alone, can redeem its destiny and calling. It is something mysterious when we hand our heart over to the dark Christ who came to restore our heart. We recognise a friend, a brother, an ally: the one who, like us, is in the narrow straits, and has gone there for us, that we can get through. We love this dark Christ in a special way, unlike bending our knee to God, for in fact this deep place is where the God to whom people bow, and about whom they are pious, is not present. There is no transcendent, radiant God in the abyss. Only the dark Christ is with us in the absolute abysmal make or break point: there is no other help here. We know the dark Christ will stand and fight for us, and by doing this, make it possible for us to stand where we are endlessly falling and fight where we are endlessly being defeated.

It is this 'human heart in God' that the dark Christ offers to us, and it is not to the God of transcendence, but only to the God of a human heart that we really surrender. We really surrender, fully, to him because he has surrendered, fully, to us. This love of the God with a human heart, sharing in our heart's defeat and destruction, moves our love as nothing else.

For our whole life reveals our lack of faith in the heart God has given us. Thus it is this heart we hate like we hate God, despair of like we despair of God, repudiate like we repudiate God. It is no good, we pronounce, damning our heart as we damn God. We experience our heart as cursed and accursed. It is we who pass this final judgement on the mysterious, beautiful, vulnerable, affectable, heart in us. And Christ, while still in Judea before he went to Spain and became dark, took on this mantle of what we most despise in ourselves, like a robe of glory. On this robe are all the scorches and rents of our own self hate and self despair and self cursing. Thus, unlike any Shamanic holy man, any Buddhist monk, or any Jewish prophet, Christ became the reviled, the despised, the besmirched, the accused, the lunatic and the criminal, who believed too much in the human heart – for as a human heart he also claimed

to be God. As we denigrate and damn our heart, so he bore these stripes humanity ultimately inflicts upon itself. He took on, and shared in, all the loathing we feel toward our heart and toward the God who gave it to us. The defeat of our heart is also this God's defeat. Thus when we throw away the heart, we throw away God, the world, humanity. This is the void of nothingness, of emptiness, beneath death and hell. This is our final damning of the whole thing, from beginning to end. It is we, not God, who condemn it all to naught. Our utter condemnation of the heart is assumed by Christ.

Christ reveals the heart of God, which never before had been fully revealed, and he reveals a divine heart that trusts, believes in, and will not give up on, that will never throw away, the human heart. Only Christ, in the depths of his duende for us, validates the heart in us we invalidate, spit on, and want to throw away. To this day, it is difficult for people to accept just how radically Christ loved human nature, and human nature not only in its perfectibility but also with its flaw.

This is why Christ preferred the title 'Son of man' to 'Son of God'; he had always been the latter, the Logos, but had become the former, the Christ, for a last push, for a decisive break-down that would become break-through. This love for humanity is also revealed in one of the strangest passages of the gospels [John, 11, 35] where it simply says "Jesus wept." He wept for the death of his friend Lazarus, and brought him back from the land of the dead. Why? Why not wait, and let Lazarus come to the same paradise Christ on the Cross promised the good thief when their ordeal was over? Raising Lazarus anticipates the raising of all humanity, but it is more than that. It shows the reason for Christ's redeeming sacrifice. It is nothing but love for the human being. Christ was moved by our humanity, in its passion and pathos, in its valour and pitifulness. That is why he sacrificed his heart to us on the Cross, and surrendered his heart to us in Hades and Hell. Henceforth, our heart belongs to Christ= not to us, not to God, but only to Christ. Henceforth our heart belongs to the God with a human heart, and this changes us into the humanity with a divine heart.

For anyone who experiences their root in death and hell, and lives every day in the abyss of the deep place, the love they discover in their heart for the dark Christ is a unique and special love: in putting Christ first, we are reborn as the Christ of the creation. This is Christ's gift to us: he becomes like us that we can become like him.

All other confessions to God that humbly recognize human limitation and repent of human error, or cry out to God for mercy, are leading up to this final surrender. Whoever makes that last step stands on the shoulders of ancestors who went towards where they are now; and whoever makes that last step carries with them all those ancestors who came before. Each of us who makes this final surrender does not do it as an individual, for themselves alone, but stands in for all humanity and does it for all humanity. The final surrender is the most mysterious in every respect. Ontologically and existentially it is the moment of abject defeat, yet there is an incipient victory because we wholly

turn in love to the dark Christ whose love for us has already been proved limitless.

Some people undergo instant conversion, after which they feel happy, even ecstatically joyous, but their mistake is to think that 'now everything is solved.' It is not. The long drawn out duende, increasingly heightened by the Daemonic, is only just beginning.

Real religion exists to prevent the painless quick fixes that people tend to invent 'off their own bat' once they break away from the traditional religious yoke, preserved from the earliest times down to the present day.

It is necessary to examine the different components of the heartbreak we offer to the dark Christ when we surrender to him, to distinguish the genuine article from the bogus simulation.

The heartbreak is not in our emotion, and does not make us emotional or emotive. It is in our passion, in our deep wrestling with the profundity of existence where we are radically on the line. It elicits silence, or the cry that expresses the silence. It takes a long time ripening, after much struggle and suffering, after much staggering under a heavy load. It is not some quick fix 'release' from the deep pain in the heart, but the moment when that pain has grown to crisis point. This cannot be hurried nor faked. The English poet who said God will 'pursue us until our heart is broken' understood this does not come soon or easy, but at the end of a harsh and lengthy road. This real heartbreak is too deep, too true, to be cheapened by short-cut, facile pretending.

The heartbreak has several components. Three stand out.

[2.1] The main heartbreak has been identified: acknowledging our human lack, our human incompleteness, our human inadequacy, not simply in our weakness, but also in our strength.

Christ asks us to cease trying to perfect ourselves by getting rid of our flaw.

This determination to be self-perfecting separates us from Christ more than any sin, more than any fallen passion, ever could. It is not the evil in us, but the wrong attempt at being good, the misguided attempt at being perfect, that makes us unable to call out to, to lean on, to rely on, the dark Christ. This self-perfecting has many forms, from wanting to be the spiritual superman who flies imperviously over existence, to just hiding from God and other people, and ourself, the flaw that brings us crashing back to the ground. Indeed, it is because we want a perfection without flaw, and want to achieve it all on our own, that Christ on the Cross seems weak and ineffectual to us, and the dark Christ in the abyss cannot be found by us.

This is why heartbreak brings tears, a softening of the heart= these spiritual tears, crucial to our surrender, acknowledge our paradox that without the



vulnerability in our passion which can become weakness, our very strength becomes heartless. It becomes above it all, like Lucifer, or ruthlessly moralistically judgemental, like Satan. It never knows tenderness, compassion, kindness, pity, for the flaw in others which causes them not to be capable of fulfilling their calling, nor shows mercy on itself.

Our passion, cut off from its prototype, cannot resolve its own paradox.

Without the real Christ, we do not know what our Christ-akiness is for. We spoil it, by insisting we know what it is, when we do not: we abuse its mission. The real Christ reveals that the highest serves the lowest, in self-humbling and self-emptying. Sacrifice has no further extent than this: that he came to his own, and his own received him not, as John says, echoing Isaiah, 53, 2-5:

“...He hath no form nor 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; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: on him lies a chastisement that brings us peace; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Confessing the lack in our best is confessing it is not yet Christlike, and cannot become Christlike on its own, through any advanced spiritual techniques, much less through ordinary obedience to the morality and beliefs of religion.

Without this confession of lack, we skate over the deep place where we are not yet redeemed.

[2.2] Repentance at its deepest= this is the second aspect of the heartbreak in which we surrender to the dark Christ.

One of the surest paths into the depths is confessing and repenting for our sins – our fallen passions, errors, evils. This is where we face the shadow in us, or put another way, own up to our heart of stone which is dragging down and inhibiting the heart of flesh. This is where we offer our weakness to God, in humility and contrition.

This too creates tears which soften the heart. The absence of tears can signify that the heart is not really embracing its deeper failure and betrayal, not really taking responsibility for having done it, but is instead blaming conditions, or the damage done to it, to excuse its actions. Conditions do limit our room for manoeuvre, and the damage done to us further imprisons and compels us. Certain things we do, to fail and betray our calling, seem unavoidable, and thus we protest it is unjust to have to repent for them. In the ultimate, it is all God's fault – and that is true. God set it up, and God is ultimately responsible. Bishop Anthony told of a confession where, over the course of it, the person got more and more indignant about 'the shocks and arrows of outrageous fortune.' They

ended up fuming, and withdrew any sorrow for what they had done. After all, given the Russian revolution and their rheumatism, to say nothing of their daughter-in-law, what did God expect? Bishop Anthony said, "When you are ready to forgive God, come back." The person wanted no forgiveness from God, because they were not ready to forgive God for the impossibility of life.

Why, then, do we have to take responsibility for what we do? Why not blame God, blame nature, blame existence, blame other people?

Confession is not about blame. Blaming is a stalemate. But forgiveness only can happen when we are honest enough to face what has been done to us by people, and what we have done to people. Pretending to be calm, and OK, with it, is a cover up that creates the illusion forgiveness is not really needed. William Blake said, "Mutual Forgiveness of each Vice, Such are the Gates of Paradise."

The point is, blaming is stupid because we are all in this together. Confessing and repenting is rejoining the human race. No one is without sin, no one is without weakness, no one has not failed and betrayed the calling of passion. It is a collective problem, and we all have our share in the collective failing. We have all been let down by someone crucial and we have all let down someone crucial. We all have been burdened by others, but we all have also burdened others= forgiveness is so that we can stay together, and include all, excluding none. We forgive the other person because, whatever they have done, they are still our brother. We ask forgiveness of the other person because, whatever we have done, we are still their brother. Forgiveness allows us to remain 'one people', bearing each other's weaknesses, enduring each other's sins, for the sake of not breaking ranks. Sin cannot be redeemed individually, but as the ancient Jews knew, can only be redeemed collectively. We all live in a world soiled and tired from an old tragedy.

It is, like everything pertaining to our life in this world, a paradox. The person who refuses to repent for their sin refuses to see how they too add to the unredeemed suffering, weight, cost, of existence borne by all, but they also deny themselves any part in the redeeming of that tragic condition: whatever they do to try to relieve it will be in vain. The hero who has no shadow, who only does good but never evil, is a silly but also dangerous figure; his shadow gets denser and huger the more he denies its existence. In the end, he is wholly possessed by the shadow he denies. An old tradition says, only the devil casts no shadow.

For example, the hero of dramatic stories who steps up for truth and opposes the lie in the world has to realise this lie is in him, and that in some ultimate way, his only victory will be to overcome its hold on his heart, rather than imagine he can triumphantly dispel the lie from the world. Evil has to be fought in the world, but it can never be defeated there, until the collective redemption is complete, and that is far off. The real challenge is to overcome the hold of evil on the heart, in the deep place where it is rooted, so that such a heart can go into the world as did Christ, not to judge but redeem. The real hero is

usually not triumphant in the world, but like Christ has to die for the sacrifice he makes. This is not Clint Eastwood outdrawing 6 men whom he dispatches, which is impossible, but it is more like Paul Newman in the film 'Hombre', where a half-breed Apache has to give his life for the very whites defrauding his adopted native people. He starts out unwilling to pay any price for these whites, and is determined to leave them to their fate at the hands of a band of cruel outlaws, but through the dynamic movement of the story, he ends up paying the ultimate price for them. He goes down a hill to face 2 gunmen, knowing he is not coming back.

Evil has to be unmasked in the depth, because it offers the heart an alternative 'way' to that which is true; it is a lie that not merely corrupts but directs the heart in a false direction. Thus, repenting is not about telling a parent what a bad boy or bad girl we have been. It is about working with God at a deeper and deeper level to understand and break the hold evil exerts over the heart, as a false solution to its dilemma. Evil is destructive because it walks a false road through existence – but one that seems to be an answer to 'all our problems.'

In part, evil tricks and fools us [Mephistopheles]; in part evil flatters and seduces us [Lucifer]; in part, evil intimidates and bullies us [Satan]. We have to humbly admit our collusion in this. We are innocent, basically, yet we become drawn in, and can get more drawn in if we do not resist the pull evil has over us.

Repenting is therefore lifelong – "my sin is forever before me", David says in Psalm 51, 3 – not because we remain as addicted to evil as when we first acknowledged its presence in us, but because we need to remain sober, and modest, toward the power of evil as a spiritually objective force, and our human capacity to be taken up in it. Until evil is rejected as a 'way' deep in the heart, and its ontological and existential root in that depth has been uprooted, we cannot in fact honestly say 'all evil is gone from me.' In any event, it will not be gone from me uniquely until it is gone from all collectively.

Repenting happens gradually in degrees over long years of wrestlings that are a descent for us, like peeling back layers of the onion. This is a self-knowing that gradually takes us deeper and deeper in the heart. We go down into the heart's secret recesses and hidden crevices, like going ever further into a labyrinth of caverns. We are not shown the deeper evil in us initially, but only as repentance grows do we come, steadily, to the starkest truth about the falsity our heart is in thrall to and even worshipping as its idol. Only in this deeper journey do we really face the harm we have done to others, and to our self. Anyone who thinks our sinning is not serious and easily shed is not spiritually realistic. Repentance respects the seriousness and intractability of sin.

The abysmal foundation of evil drags us into the abyss of the heart, revealing our passion's weakness yet also its compunction, its sorrowing at letting down what passion was created to shoulder. More basic than guilt and shame is sorrowing for what we have failed and what we have betrayed, because it

mattered, and no one else could give to what mattered the sweat, tears, and blood it required to be redeemed. Our profoundest sorrow, which we pour out to God in tears when we repent at the deepest, is not for our own unredeemed state but for what we did, or did not do, for the sake of the unredeemed state of the world. This is why it does no good to confess our faults as a shopping list of blots on our character: this is far too individualistically oriented, when our sin is actually a failure of love's passion in relation to what it loves. We need to confess the actions that failed and betrayed both specific situations and specific people in them. We need to be concrete and name the actions we performed and name the people to whom we performed them.

Confessing our sins is not simply about being forgiven by God. How could Christ sacrifice himself on the Cross, if God did not forgive everybody everything? Christ earned the right to forgive all sin, by undergoing all the horror it has placed upon humanity: "He remained alien to sin while he was laden by all its consequences", as Bishop Anthony puts it. Moreover, how could we not count on God's forgiveness when Christ urged us to be perfect like our father in heaven, and defined the real perfection as like the sun which shines on the just and the unjust alike, or like the rain which falls on one and all, denying none? St Isaac of Syria – who called the zealotry and judgementalism of many Christians a spiritual illness – said the Cross was "the judgement on judgement", ending judgement and replacing it by redemption. Moreover, this Cross allows us to express our disappointment and anger with God for how God has made things function. Through the Cross, we forgive God as well as forgiving each other and ourselves.

But confession is really about that 'inward truth' which God requires. For this truthfulness – even if we remain partly faithful and partly unfaithful to our calling at the same time – allows the heart to cease pretending to itself. This in turn helps the heart be open to God, and invites God to work with it more and more comprehensively. Hence confessing the sin that separates us from God turns out to be what most brings us closer to God. Bishop Anthony expresses this paradox about sin when he says: "We are... strangely a mixture of holiness and sin, strangely to the outer eye, not to the inner experience, because at the moment when sin ceases to be an idol which we adore, a master which we serve or which we obey, [then] instead of being a wall of partition between God and us, instead of being an unbridgeable gulf between us and him, it becomes the very meeting point of God with us. [For] the... meaning of the Incarnation was to meet us at the very point where sin abounds by a great abundance of grace. Sin cannot separate us from God, if we stand both sinful and broken-hearted, contrite and repentant, before the... face of... our Saviour."

Honesty is therefore the vital necessity in dispelling the spell of evil. St Isaac of Syria: "He who knows himself is greater than he who raises the dead." Evil makes us dishonest about what we are up to, and cloaks many sins in a mantle of respectability. Bishop Anthony speaks of "sins which are not recognised as such but presented as something else" as the most destructive forces buried in each of us and viciously manifested between all of us. He

gives the example of 'hate' in a cleric whose personal enemies just happen to coincide with the enemies of God!

Hence, the problem is not the sin we repent of, in the tears of broken-heartedness, but the sin we still will not confess and repent of with our dry eyes and cold heart, because we are holding on to it, and thus invariably lying about it to ourselves as well as to God. The reason why we only partly repent, and thus are not fully truthful in the inward parts, may be complicated. Maybe it is some idealised or romantic role we wanted for ourselves as a child, or some spiritual goal that is different in the living to what we imagined. Maybe it is some revenge for what has been done to us, to appease our blaming, which we cannot give up. Maybe it is some desire to fit in with and be admired by people, or just the desire to have a pleasant, comfortable, lazy, untroubled, life, for which one will sell one's soul. Maybe it is some childhood damage that is so severe it has left us feeling we are deprived of any real chance in life – such as child sex abuse, which leaves the person feeling dirty and besmirched, or child violence abuse, which leaves the person feeling fearful and powerless. How could the child exposed to these kinds of harm not grow up into an adult who sees sex as about using the other, or sees anger as about crushing the other? How can we repent even for the sins where we do to others what has been done to us? In fact, we do not repent only for things we could have done differently, but we also repent for what could not have been different.

Repentance cannot be worked out by thought. It is motivated by love, and fellow-feeling, that exceeds our demand for justice, our demand innocence be protected, and all other demands that existence 'add up.' It does not add up. Only love, and fellow-feeling, makes any irrational meaning, value, worth, out of existence. Thus, when we gaze at the harm we do, and really feel the suffering of the one we have harmed, it is love and fellow-feeling that moves us to repent of it. In repentance, we throw away the weighing of scales and the keeping of accounts of the small heart, and embrace our bigness of heart. In doing this, we find we can pray for those who have hurt and harmed us, and as we grow, we find we can even throw a covering over their sins. Basically, if we forgive others what they have done to us, then they are forgiven in God's eyes. Even if they cannot repent, our repenting of what they passed to us and which we passed on repents in their stead, standing in for them. Basically, once we enter the domain of repentance, we realise it is no scoring of individual rights and wrongs that matters, but that passion fights for the brother, and lets no brother be lost. This is what Christ does. He receives our hurtful and harming darts, but it does not stop him loving us nor fighting for us, that we should not be lost. Hence, the ultimate repentance is to repent of the sin done to us by others, as if we had done it.

This is the law of sin when it is not repented of= we pass on the poison put in us so that it is put in others. We give bad for bad. Sin being repented of is the converse= we cease passing on the poison in us to others, but cut it off in us. We give good for bad. In the way we bear sin we begin to reveal the deeper and greater way of heart.

What we find, at depth, is the threefold situation described by Bishop Anthony: "Think, each of you, of himself, as I do myself, and you will discover that on the one hand there is in you, incipiently, but... how beautifully, Christ. On the other hand broken-heartedness, and somewhere in between... sins which are not recognised as such but presented as something else." He elaborates on this threefoldness of [1] Christ-akiness, [2] broken-hearted repentance, and [3] something in between: "In each of us there is not only him who is already now... indwelled and gradually melted into a holy alloy by the Holy Spirit, who is already a son or daughter of the living God. We are not only the repenting sinner, [but] there is within us a tragic no-man's land in which each of us is still an unredeemed beacon. I do not mean to say, that we are unredeemed in the sense that the act... [by Christ] is not addressed to that side of us..., but we have not yet accepted redemption."

When we go deep into our sin in repentance, slowly but surely we clarify the way of evil that it rests in: we come to see both what the appeal of evil's way is to the heart, and why that way, promising to secure and empower the heart, will let it down, and undermine it in the abyss, so it falls through the floorboards, forever. This is the most acute paradox about evil. For, evil has this twofold economy inside our heart: if we give in to it, we are increasingly corrupted and undermined by it, until we end up engulfed in the deadness of Hades and the torment of Hell; but if we resist it, and contain and bear it in our love, then evil becomes the great teacher and revealer to the heart of what the heart really is. Why? Evil tests and challenges every truth of the heart as nothing else does. For example, when the Daemonic Spirit 'drives' Christ into the desert [Mark, 1, 12], and he refuses the three inducements of the devil [Lucifer: spiritual miracle; Satan: worldly power; Mammon: economic magic] during the 40-day ascetic period, the whole nature of the redemption hoped for by the Jews, but never made plain, is fully revealed. Evil clarifies what the heart is not: in the end it becomes part of that apophatic truth of negation, in which only the negative assertions of what God is 'not' really discern, and even serve to protect the precious quality of, what God 'is.' For the heart, this apophatic way of negation is a long and arduous, and very sore, tussle in the deeps. But its outcome is to be able, finally, to undercut evil at source, precisely where it enters and seeds itself, like a predator living off us, in the ground of our nature.

Repentance at its deepest causes us to realise that just as our best is not sufficient to do what it is required, so our worst cannot be removed by us. This is part of our surrender to the dark Christ because, having come to the pit of Hades and the furnace of Hell, we know that only he who has gone to the bottom of the abyss and returned resurrected has the power to change death to life and hell to heaven. He has plumbed death and hell, and found a spark there of life and heaven. He, alone, can kindle it in us. Surrendering to the dark Christ means going where he went only because he takes us there. We cannot leap into the abyss alone. On the rim, on the edge, we buckle, and funk it. Like David [Psalm 55, 4-8], our heart is sore from pain, and the terrors of death are sweeping over us; fearfulness and trembling are come upon us, and horror is overwhelming us.

But there is no escape, so the fear and trembling brings on paralysis. The stuffing is taken out of us. We are gutted. Then we meet the evil one, and without the dark Christ, we are pushed off the rim, shoved over the edge, falling, endlessly.

[2.3] Our cry to God for help at its deepest= this is the third aspect of the heartbreak in which we surrender to the dark Christ.

When we are really broken-hearted is when we can cry to God for help. We acknowledge the limitations of our worthiness, we acknowledge our unworthiness, and in the end, we just acknowledge how much we need God. God is ruthless, because he will not allow us to put other genuine needs first, before him. He is a jealous God, and will take everything away, reducing us to ashes, reducing us to nothing, to help us realise our only help is God. Our need for God is absolutely primal, and cannot be evaded by trying to put other needs in its place. The abyss in the heart does not just produce the fear and trembling in which we become dizzy, and teeter on the brink, almost fainting, it is also our aching for God, our love of God and passion for God that is fathomless. Bishop Anthony used to say, we are so deep in heart because one thing only can fill our depth: the depth of God. At the deepest, our prayer is just this cry to God for help, out of need. Even if all other needs are not met we can survive, but we cannot survive our need for God being set aside.

Crying to God for help is just asking for God to come into the heart. But God does not come immediately. Again, the crying, and aching, must ripen over time, through immense 'trouble of spirit.' The moment when we can surrender is when we have wrestled in the trouble, with sincerity, and can do no more. Deep doubt has taken away all props and all idols and all substitutes and all distractions. Nothing makes sense. We have done our utmost to make it all hang together, now we are finished.

Stripped of everything, in the broken-heartedness of our poverty and our mourning we entrust our heart to God.

This is the 'amen' which finishes our cry. When we say amen to God, the heart accepts. The heart leaps into the mystery. The heart burns with the fire. The heart stands in the abyss, and does not fall.

[2.4] Conclusion= the heartbreak from which we can surrender to the dark Christ is foreseen, and prefigured, in several of the penitential Psalms of David, such as Psalm 22, but it is especially articulated in Psalm 51=

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness;  
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts – and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

...create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a constant spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

...Thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a crushed and broken heart, O God, wilt thou not despise...”

And in Psalm 50, David hears God saying this=

“Offer unto God thanksgiving; and fulfil the vows you make to the Most High. And call on me in the day of trouble; and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

According to Eastern Orthodox Christian Tradition, the voice heard by the Jewish prophets is that of Christ: the Logos, or Word, of God is speaking to them about his own coming as the Messiah, and preparing them for it.

It is the coming Christ who is saying that he desires “truth in the inward parts”, so that through his mysterious redemption, “in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.” The hidden part is the deep heart, and its fruit will be the new heart, the heart resurrected, the heart that knows God’s secret wisdom only given to those in Hades and Hell.

It is the coming Christ who says to David, and still says the same to us at this very instant: “Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me.”

May the dark Christ, who alone is with us in the day of trouble, who alone has gone all the way into the inward parts and all the way down into the hidden part, be glorified.

In Psalm 49, David says “man could never redeem himself”, and “it costs so much to redeem his life” that man couldn’t ever “pay his ransom to God.” Thus it is a measure of how valued, honoured, beloved, of God we are that Christ redeems us as we cannot do, and becomes the ransom for us we cannot pay. Do we, therefore, bring nothing to Christ? Is redemption done to us, while we are inert and passive, as some of the Protestant Christian Reformers claimed? No, we co-operate in redemption: we bring our heart, in its self-constructed and self-ruined Christ-akiness, in its sinful failure and betrayal of the mark, in its need and crying for help. We bring our heartbreak.

We bring our whole heart, loving and unloving, and offer it to the dark Christ, as the final sacrifice humanity makes to God, the final ‘burnt offering.’ This is, in reality, the final thanksgiving.



At the last supper, Christ explained that his coming Cross, and Descent into death and hell, is his free and loving self-giving, his passion's blood and flesh. We do not 'submit' to God, as not only Western Christians but Muslims think, because we, in surrendering to the dark Christ, also make a free and loving self-giving of our passion's blood and flesh. His surrender is communion with us, our surrender is communion with him.

A troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart: these Christ will not scorn, but joins, to bring forth from their deep place a new joy, a new birth, a new wisdom.

The dark Christ is the only warrior of the abyss with us as we make our last fight.

### 3, *The Secrets of God Given To Those in Death and Hell*

The most extraordinary line in the Holy Saturday service, celebrated on Friday evening of Passion Week, is surely this=

“O Christ, as both God and man, thou hast revealed thy hidden secrets to those in hell who cry – there is none holy but thee, O Lord.”

Why would God reveal the most hidden secrets of the divine heart in the human heart only to those in death and hell? Surely, death and hell are for those who have put themselves outside God, in a place where nothing of God can reach? This prayer, from the service which honours Christ's Descent into death and hell, overturns all settled expectation about the dualistic gap between life and death, the dualistic gap between heaven and hell. Even more galling to dualism, the hidden secrets of God given to those in death and hell have been hidden from the upright, who think themselves more deserving to be granted them. For this revelation exceeds what was shown to any holy shaman, to any enlightened Buddhist monk, to any inspired Jewish prophet. It is the most hidden, the most secret, Wisdom of God that is only revealed in Hades and Hell. To all those who think God's final and ultimate disclosure should lift us up out of the deeps, and take us to the heights of eternal life and ever-bright heaven, this saying in the Easter ceremonies must cause offence= it must be the utter folly, the utter stumbling block. For Christians, as offended as everyone else, it should be the central mystery of Christ's coming, the climax of all that he did= how sad that so few Christians can even tolerate this declaration, much less live it.

What are these hidden secrets disclosed to those in death and hell, and what is the cry to Christ that signifies they have been received?

This mystery begins to unfold at the last supper, and so it is the mystery of what 'communion with Christ' really means that is at issue here.

The communion cup of wine and bread in the liturgy is, in actuality, the cup Christ asked to pass from him in the Garden of Gethsemane but drank to its dregs on the Cross and in the Descent into death and hell. This communion of wine and bread does not signify, therefore, direct entry into the communion of

the Godhead, the communion of three persons who share one nature. The ultimate divine communion cannot enter the world through the ascetic desert, nor through the worshipping temple, but only through the blood and flesh of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and in the Descent into death and hell. Hence, communion with the cup of wine and bread in the liturgy is really communion with the blood and flesh of passion, both Christ's divine-human passion and our human passion. The cup we drink from at the end of the liturgy to be in communion with Christ is a cup mixed of Christ's blood and flesh and our blood and flesh, and it is pointless to drink it thinking it can directly unite us with the eternal communion in God. The wine is the wine of redemption, the bread is the bread of redemption: this refers to what Christ accomplished on the Cross, and in the Descent into death and hell. Our human communion with the Trinitarian Communion of God is only won by, and must pass through, the blood and flesh of the Cross, and the destruction and torment this blood and flesh is imprisoned in deep in Hades and Hell.

It is not Biblical to start with the God who is a Trinitarian Communion. Indeed, it is not Jewish and thus not Christian to start with any kind of purely mystical theology whatsoever, in which God is supposedly spiritually known apart from the creation. Our starting point, both as Jew and as Christian, is the story told by the Bible, and it is only in the course of this story, so full of both divine and human blood and flesh, that everything ultimate is gradually revealed.

Humanity: a passion, composed of blood and flesh.

Blood: heart; flesh: body. Passion is a spiritual fire with a material action.

Hence, it is only if we comprehend passion's blood and flesh, meant to be on fire with God and meant to kindle fire in the world, that we can appreciate what the Hades of death and what the Hell of evil really is.

Immense fairy tales and psychological projections surround these two deep realities. Some say they are just frightening stories of divine retribution invented by religious authority to keep people docile. Others say they are just the personification in imagery of unconscious dynamics. Both these accounts have some truth, but they do not reach the deeper spiritual reality.

Hades and Hell are real. They are not punishment by God for sin, for God does not punish our deepest error and deepest failing. As Bishop Anthony used to say, would not a parent who had witnessed their incautious child get hit by a speeding car and left bleeding in the road not run solicitously to them, to try to save and heal them? If the parent had an ounce of love for their mortally injured child, they would not lecture them with, 'it's all your own fault: it is a just punishment for what you did wrong.' Rather, wouldn't God act as did the Good Samaritan? Has God less love than the Good Samaritan? Wouldn't God be capable of a goodness a million times greater? Is God's loving kindness and tender mercy constrained by morality? In actuality, the entire 'reward and punishment scenario', beloved of Fundamentalist and Evangelical Protestant Christians, and conservative authoritarians of every ilk, is false. It is a teaching which comes straight from the devil, the accuser, Satan. He wills the killing of

the human. He creates that spiritual murder – in the name of ‘rightness’ – which masquerades as obedience to the patriarchal divinity; it was this Satan who acted in the Jews who judged and condemned Christ.

It does not help to invert the Satanic God with a nice guy God who is cool with everything because he has no passion toward anything. God chastises, to get us to change, but he is not vengeful, nor does he keep score.

The issue at stake in death and hell is that of the enormity of what human passion is entrusted with by God: it is because the load on us is so far-reaching in all its creative and loving consequences that falling away from it is also so far-reaching in all its non creative and unloving consequences. The Fall is an immense tragedy. The reward and punishment scenario – like the nothing matters too much scenario – is frivolous compared with the real enormity. It is not that we have done wrong when we were told to do right; it is not that we made a little mistake, but hey, no one is perfect.

The reality is that something immense entrusted to us was failed and betrayed, and it is a profound tragedy for us that we have not lived up to the dignity that God bestowed upon us, but even more severe, it is a profound tragedy for the whole world process that its destiny has been abandoned by us who were called to love and care for it. Because of this twofold tragedy, there is a great and deep deadening and a great and deep hellishness in our heart, but there is also a great and deep deadening and a great and deep hellishness at the heart of the world. For our dignity was to serve the world, and finally, to reclaim the world, at any sacrifice to us. What fails in us inwardly fails outwardly towards the world, rendering the world an outer mirror for the death and hell inside.

When humanity fell, nature lost a friend and co-worker; hence the animals flee us, and we no longer, as we once did in paradise, commune with all the voices, energies, and spirits, who indwell nature. All of nature suffered with Christ in his crucifixion, because it knew him as the one awaited from old who would change nature’s suffering at the hands of humanity.

What appears to be punishment for error and evil is in fact ‘existential consequences’; passion cannot be entrusted with love and freedom, and a huge task, without that being for good or ill, for better or worse. And to save us from being glib and indifferent to this responsibility placed on us by God, so God must show us it matters what we ‘do’ with our passion: there are real consequences of either free and loving action or non-free and un-loving action, for our heart and for the heart of the world. We affect each other in this vast way: every loving deed of passion makes the shared, common life between us more full, whilst every unloving deed of passion makes the one life of all more diminished. This is how serious the Fall is.

It is even more tragic than that: the long journey and battle of the caravan of humanity moving through time is losing its true destiny to a false and horrendous outcome, more and more. If this outcome is what prevails at the

last, then God's heart in the human heart is brought to ruination, dereliction, perdition: the whole gamble perishes.

It is because the stakes are so high, that what God entrusted to us is so real, so serious, so valuable, so meaningful, so purposeful= and thus it matters physically, socially, cosmically – pervasively – whether we take it on, or throw it away. When God blasts us for what our heart gets up to, this is not rewarding good with good and punishing evil with evil, but it is God's passionate attempt to force us to 'get real' about our passion: to take it seriously, to realise it is existentially and ontologically of radical value, of radical meaning, of radical purpose, so that we cannot afford to play fast and loose with it. We are rebuked by God to get us to be more honest about the heart's passionate inner movements and outer actions: to be more sincere in its motive, to show more integrity in its deed. God is trying, in hitting us with the difference between good and evil motives and deeds, to get us to realise we must be truthful in heart about all the heart's comings and goings. Christ brings us to a place of freedom and love beyond 'good and evil', but if we do not truthfully and faithfully wrestle in the difference between the heart God wants from us, to put the load on it, and the heart we want, to escape the load, no change, no progress, is possible. Good and evil is a stage, a necessary schooling, towards a freedom and love deeper and greater than any duality of good and evil. But this comes to those redeemed by Christ in death and hell.

Is death and hell a place?

Only if we understand that 'place' is only half literal, but really is a metaphor for a 'condition', an existential and ontological 'state' of being. This condition is, however, situated in us and situated in the world, and therefore does have a 'location.' It has effects, inside us and outside in the world, which are easily seen, but its source is invisible. Particularly hidden is where, and how, its source takes root.

The location of death and hell is the abyss= the deep place in our heart and the deep place in the world. It comes in through the heart and spreads to the world= then the world spreads it back to the heart. It becomes a damaging two-way dialectic.

How does death and hell come to 'fill' the abyss of the heart?

In two ways:

[i] First, through the deceiver. This evil spirit is our adversary, even as Christ is our advocate. Called 'the enemy', he is implacably opposed to the human, in all its frailty, and offended that it is this poor vessel which will be divinised – raised beyond any spirit. He tempts our frailty, in various ways, to try to get it to seek the power with which to transcend its lowliness and limitation. Then he judges us for the transgression this produces. He would bring us to death and hell, then seal us in this condition.

[ii] Second, through our own failure and betrayal of what has been entrusted to us. Passion's Fall creates in the depth of the heart a zone of passion's failure: Hades, and a zone of passion's betrayal: Hell. Beneath both is the ultimate place of death and hell: the empty void. Again, this deep place of abysmal deadening and torment is not somewhere God sends us, because our motives and deeds are not to his liking. Rather, this is the deep place the heart creates in itself by refusing, by rejecting, its passion, its passion's calling. For, in accepting, in embracing, its passion, its passion's calling, the heart opens its abyss to the indwelling presence of the abyss of God, and in resisting and fleeing this passion, this call, the heart makes its abyss into 'the place where God is not.' The abyss ceases to be the place where God's passion enters human passion, and becomes the place where deep sundering, deep separation, occurs. This is why the abyss is experienced by us as an empty void into which we could fall forever, without hitting bottom. The heart's abyss ceases being empty for God, and becomes instead empty of God.

Thus emptiness, voidness, is all that the heart's passion rests in at depth. This emptiness, this voidness, undermines and terrifies the heart, for it renders passion 'baseless', rootless, without source, without foundation.

Passion has no ground to stand on: the groundless ground it once stood on is fallen through, and thus passion cannot take any stand. Our fear of dying is gazing into this gaping abyss beneath our feet; this makes us fear the action in the world that might need our death. Towards our deepest origin we experience that dizziness that makes the heart go faint, lose its uprightness, and crash face down.

The abyss contains an empty void, and above this is the furnace of hell and above that is the pit of death. We fall progressively through deadness into hellishness and finally into emptiness.

- 1 – Hades
- 2 – Hell
- 3 – Void

By failure and betrayal, passion comes to a place in itself which is where its whole calling is lost and because of that, its whole deep nature is torn and destroyed.

It is we who put Hades and Hell, and the empty void, in the abyss. But having done it, we cannot undo it. Without Christ, this is the end of God's gamble, in his passion, with our passion. These three places and conditions of the heart are 'the end of the road' for the heart.

That is why the less deep part of the heart pretends the abyss is not there, or tries to fill it with hamburgers. Yet signals from the depths percolate up to the surface. Shame over deep failure and guilt over deep betrayal assault us, waking us up in the middle of the night, and the mind goes into overdrive in the attempt to think away what cannot be thought away. Even more searing than

shame and guilt is that signal of the empty void that creates profound fear and trembling, profound dizziness and faintness, profound sickness unto death. We suddenly feel we could fall and fall, endlessly, into nothingness. This is not simply our death. It is a horrendous 'sinking feeling' in which everything we have ever believed in and given ourself to suddenly 'gives way' because it is without any support, and thus we lose all heart for existing and our guts go to water. Both in the Psalms of David, and in existential writings such as those of Kierkegaard, deep existential and ontological malaise gripping the depth of the heart, are described.

It is for our redemption, not our punishment, that we should experience these disabling depths, not sweep them under the carpet. We need to experience the death and hell at our base, at our root, at our foundation, in the abyss beneath our feet, to admit two things: [a] That this gradual accumulation of the consequences of human passion's failure and betrayal of the load, the task, the dignity, the calling, put upon it by God's passion, is in each of us personally: we are each its victim, it is what we inherit from the faltering caravan of mankind, but we each are adding to the accumulation, making it more horrible, by our personal investment in failure and betrayal. Personally, our options are only two: we can make the accumulation more severe for everybody, or we can make it less severe for everybody. But we cannot escape being born into a fallen humanity and a fallen world that pre-exists our birth. Our personal responsibility is not only for what we add or subtract from the common burden of fallenness, but our real responsibility is to invest in the common tragedy such that what we care about is not ourself but mankind's caravan. Then what befalls humanity befalls me. As John Donne has put it, do not ask "for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." [b] This gradually increasing accumulation is in everybody without exception, and thus is not simply personal but is in fact communal: "no one is without sin" [1 Kings, 8, 46; 2 Chronicles, 6, 36; 1 John, 1, 8; Romans, 3, 9-10, and 23]. It is not that it is in the evil-doers but not in those who try to do good. It is in everyone, and no one escapes, because we are each in fact part of the caravan of mankind. No-one will end up in a fate 'better' than the fate that humanity as a whole ends up in. Thus it helps nothing to separate oneself from Hades and Hell to try to avoid the common destiny of mankind. One, or a few, cannot be saved, while all the rest are lost. Thus, the Hades and Hell deep down undergirds all of humanity.

In the modern world – excepting the existentialists, and novelists like Dostoyevsky and Kafka – the experiential signals of the depths are blotted out. The empty void is medicalised, Hades and Hell are moralised. But these are evasions of the spiritual condition the heart knows to exist deep down, at the base, at the root, at the source, at the foundation, of its passion. We feel the deeps in us, and see it in others: William Blake notes in each face he meets in London's streets, "marks of weakness, marks of woe."

We cannot speak of the empty void, hell and death as a punishment for transgression. None the less existentially they do represent our choice to not shoulder the load God created us to shoulder. As long as our choice is to throw

away this load, our heart cannot contain the life and heaven that signify God's abyss has filled our abyss. To this extent, it is either/or, not both/and.

Yet our choice was not final, because it was engineered through deception, and only partly expressed our real will and real passion. A piece of us never went along with what the evil spirit, and our smaller heart, contrived. Looking at things from the perspective of the not extinguished 'image of God' in us, that choice was an immense tragedy, yet a tragedy capable of being redeemed. In this sense, the empty void, hell and death have not won, are not permanent; they could become so, but they might not: they are horrendous now but not yet permanent for all time. It is not over until it is over, and Christ's intervention shows that just when we thought it over, it gets exciting: there is a second chance, for God's passion and for our passion, created by the divine-human passion of Christ. This reversal of the run of play by Christ makes possible a both/and, emerging out of the either/or.

Until this intervention of Christ happens in our depth, we remain in either/or: life or death; heaven or hell; emptiness or fullness. Once it does happen, we come to both/and: life out of death, life that includes death to prove a deeper and greater life; heaven out of hell, heaven that includes hell to prove a deeper and greater heaven; fullness out of emptiness, fullness that includes emptiness to prove a deeper and greater fullness. This is when 'good and evil' ends, and a different and wholly non-dualistic freedom and love are ontologically and existentially reborn.

Until this happens, we are in real straits.

What, then, is the 'pit' of death, the 'furnace' of hell, the 'emptiness' of the void from the point of view of passion's collapsing, as a result of its withdrawal from God and negation of the world? If these places and conditions are in passion, what is their ontological and existential quality as passion?

What God asks and the world needs is passion's sacrifice for love. Passion's withdrawal from God, whose abyss alone can inspire, strengthen, uphold, it over its own abyss, negates passion's calling to the world. Death, hell, and the empty void, are in passion as its own ground because when passion negates the world, outwardly, passion negates the very springs, the very spark, the very dynamic, of its own existence, its own life, its own flame, inwardly. Deadening, hellishness, emptiness, are simply the three faces of love's sacrifice declined; in essence, the existential and ontological hole in the heart is created by the heart's refusal to love.

The specific quality of these three faces of the inversion of passion thus all hang together, once we understand both how they shut down the opening in us to God, and shut down the opening in us to the world.

1= EMPTY VOID

This is where we experience God as absent from us, or as powerless to help us: all ground falls away, and we just fall forever. This is a condition of radical

paralysis, of apathy, alienation, and what the Desert Tradition termed 'Accidie': nothing matters, nothing can make any difference, and the heart has no will and no passion to even try to make a difference for the sake of what matters. In this state, we laugh at everyone and everything, ourselves included, and dismiss it all. We are capable of the most sophisticated irony, demonstrating everyone and everything is shit, indeed not even shit but just pretentious nothingness: 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing', yet we cannot stir ourselves to even the slightest effort, the slightest engagement and commitment, to anything that matters. We sit around and sneer, and make not the slightest sacrifice for anything and anybody. They are lost, we are lost: what does it matter anyway? There is a sly but profound disrespect in this acid gall, a sense of 'nothing deserved consideration' and 'no one held out a helping hand of consideration for me.' But the will to live, the passion to live, is in any case gone, exhausted, all used up. This is despair, bitter and savage, bottomless. This is gazing into the abyss and seeing only absence. Meaning, value, purpose, are swallowed in the absence, and we can do nothing, and we don't want to do anything anyway. This is the finish. We are so finished we care about and care for nothing and nobody; we are so finished we couldn't summon the energy even to bury the corpse of those in our family= even with our nearest and dearest, we just don't care, at all.

In Dante's 'Divine Comedy', and in William Blake's illustrations of it, sinful or fallen passions – from greed through lust to vainglory, and so on – are at a less deep place in the human heart than the pit of death and the furnace of hell, but deeper still is a cold and vacant place: this is the empty void. It terrifies us beyond terror because it seems to have the power not only to suck us down, and suck the world down, but even to swallow God. It seems the final victorious truth: we don't matter, the world doesn't matter, because God is absent. We don't care, the world doesn't care, because God doesn't care. No one cares for us and we care for no one, because God is gone and his going declares he doesn't care. In this state, we pronounce a last damnation on God, the world, ourselves. It was not worth the candle, we spit out, as we fall from the rim, as we go over the edge, and fall endlessly into nothingness. Everything and everybody ends up like this. So what?

## 2= PIT OF DEATH

This is where passion's failure and betrayal of its task, calling, mission, first bites, and we fall not into an empty void, but into a vast pit with high walls. The walls cannot be scaled to get out, thus the pit is a place where we are imprisoned. We are imprisoned in a deadening, a deadness, of passion. The vibrancy and vitality of passion is gone, and thus we are like wraiths, ghosts, shadows, of a living passion. Both the Jewish Shaoel and the Greek Hades refers to the same ghost-like deadness of life, a thin half-life. For both Jews and Greeks, this mere spectral remainder of life was where a person went after this existence ended, but in reality the underworld of Shaoel and Hades is a pit of deathliness undergirding this life. It speaks of the fact not of physical death, but of an end to life in this existence: a dead zone underneath our passion which causes its flame to be unable to rise up, and reach out, but drags that flame down into a pit, where it is restricted, chained, tied up, and thus not able



to release its energy to perform its action. The flame is mortally injured, not extinguished: it suffers precisely because it is not dead. It wants to leap up, wants to leap out, but cannot; it has no life with which to break free, it has no life with which to remain free.

But the pit is not only an imprisonment in the deadening of passion's aliveness – its élan, its outgoingness, its intensity – but more basically it is an imprisonment in passion's capitulation and giving away of its integrity. Passion eschews the hard way. The pit opens up and drags us down when we jettison all moral, but more importantly, all existential integrity: we funk stepping up, but let go what we should care about and in extremis die for, because we back off from taking a stand. Thus, in this state, 'we have no standing.' The person 'has no sand' – the strength that keeps us standing – because they run away from any stand: their standing is non-existent, and indeed they have 'no ground to stand on.' Thus they literally and spiritually cannot stand up, they are dragged down into the pit of deadness. They end up not only deadened in sheer aliveness, but also morally and existentially deadened: their life drive is weak, but more vitally, their passion for truth is fatally injured and mortally weakened.

In the Psalms of David, God tells us to keep the vows we make to him; almost the first thing I was told, when entering the domain of the Lakota was, 'we make vows, and these vows are sacred.' The vows we make to the world are really vows we make to God: and if passion cannot vow, if it meekly fails and meekly betrays its vowing, then it has no core, no compass, no direction, to keep it struggling. We are 'not sure of our ground': this ground has totally collapsed, and we cannot stand upright but again and again end up falling. In the pit, the heart is imprisoned in a deadening of its capacity 'to fight the good fight', to persist in fortitude, to persevere in patience: it is spineless, gutless, heartless, toward what it must do. Passion breaks its vow, because it hasn't got the freedom and power to keep its vow. Whatever it promises, it fails and betrays; it may have good intentions, but it can never keep to these. Whatever strength and power the person possesses for evil doings, they have no strength and power for the doings of good. The 'doing of the heart' instigated by passion does not happen, because passion is in prison and cannot break out: the pit is a permanent condition of weakness so abject, we surrender what we care about and let it go to wrack and ruin. This shames us; we hide, we don't want to be seen.

The pit of deadness is the place of 'downfall', in which we are ruined because we ruined our chance to make a contribution. The pit is where everything and everybody ends in ruin, like an unfinished building, like a glory faded, like a potentiality half finished then given up on. Though a moral and existential collapse of integrity, it is also a state of profound sickness. Decay carries the connotation of a disease, a viral infection, spreading throughout the hands and limbs to invade the entire body. Physical, psychological, spiritual, deadening is a sickness crying out for healing. All people have this illness: if they did not, the world would be a vibrant and contested place, where people told the truth and acted on the truth, honouring their vows, keeping their promises, and standing up to those who did not. That the pit of Hades has infected the ground we

stand on entails there is little or no fight in people for the truth: 'Christian mildness' is mere cover up for the depressive slime that keeps all vital cutting edges blunt, and allows the genuinely evil to get away with murder, unexposed and unchallenged. In the pit, zeal for the truth of God, and the courageous recognition this truth has genuine enemies, is sickened with deadness. Cowardice, timidity, self-protective caution, kills off passion's whole connection with heart truth.

Thus the pit is the ruination, extreme and pervasive, that underlies us all in our world: a state of radical 'impairment', where the seed does not come to fruition, and the works we should do remain in tatters. The doing of the heart that should take place in every walk of life never happens. Downfall= ruin= impairment= 'perdition.' The pit of death is the perdition where what could have been is spoiled. The wondrous and fearful possibility is ruined, and it comes to despoliation, on the way to coming to nothing. The relationship that got spoiled, the work that got spoiled, the mission that got spoiled: this is what faces us, night and day, in the pit. Tradition calls this place 'the pit of destruction.'

In the pit are the untold millions of un-lived and despoiled lives, past, present, future; yet each ghostly figure grows into the dank mud, unable to move, and is on their own, facing away from everyone. In this pit, the destruction of each separates them from everyone else. We are imprisoned in our own misery, not able to stretch out to anyone in their misery. Thus in our misery, there is no one else in all the world.

There are places in the New Testament where Christ very explicitly and unambiguously refers to people 'going to Hades', and 'going to Hell.' His remarks about these places are mysterious, allusive, poetic, but that he refers to them is undeniable.

Christ is referring to the pit of Hades in the context of the 'good-for-nothing servant' cast into 'outer darkness' where there will be "crying and grinding of teeth" [Matthew, 25, 30]. This conjures up the sorrow and anger that accompanies the imprisoning and deadening of passion. We are sorry about what we let down, but our sorrow is more complaint than plaint: we blame others, or circumstance, for our failing. Similarly, we are angry with ourselves for what we did not do, but our anger is more raging at fate than holding ourselves responsible. Moral and existential failure of our integrity and vowing goes with not being able to take responsibility. In the pit is self-pity and resentment at how we have ended up. It is the fault of everything and everyone else, except me.

Thus, the pit of Hades is a place, and condition, of terrible and relentless 'dereliction', and this old word has a double meaning= it means having to live with, and never be able to either accept or escape the knowledge of our dereliction of duty; but it also has a more subtle sense of something left ownerless, left to fall apart and go to wrack and ruin, and thus abandoned. In this latter meaning, the pit of death is where we experience our passion, and all of its aliveness and action, as ownerless: as abandoned by God because we

are not strong enough. It has all come to perdition because we did not measure up. Thus the pit we end in is where people who do not 'come up to standard' are thrown away. In this pit, we experience ourselves as bereft. We are ownerless, abandoned, thrown away, forgotten, robbed of life and action: we are deprived, radically, and left for dead. We are 'uninhabited' by God's life and fire, and have no life and fire of our own in our house; we are devastated, disconsolate, discouraged, downcast. We are left in desolation.

### 3= FURNACE OF HELL

This is not where passion's failure and betrayal of its task, calling, mission, first bites, nor where it last bites, but a place in between. Hell is invariably associated with burning, but since the Holy Spirit is also a fire that indwells the flame of human passion, in what sense is there a burning in Hell? This burning is fierce, harsh, tormenting. In the furnace of Hell passion's flame is subject to a burning that is a torture to it. This burning is a further step after deadening. It is deeper into the heart's abyss: it pertains not to the 'solid earth' that upholds passion – which is integrity – but to the fathomless deeps where passion is kindled and rises up: it addresses what kindles passion. Thus Tradition refers to it as 'the depths of Hell', further down into the abyss than 'the pit of destruction.' From the pit of death we pass into the furnace of Hell, and then into the empty void. In the first place, passion is put in chains and stopped dead in its tracks, in the third place passion has no air to feed its flame and is extinguished, but in the middle, second place, passion is sparked, but the way it burns hurts it: tears it, and hence is a torment to it. Passion becomes a Hell to itself. In Hell, passion is held fast in a furnace that afflicts it with a twisted and unrelenting suffering. In the gospels, Christ refers to it [Mark 9, 43-50] as "the worm that never dies" and "the fire that is never quenched" [this never dying worm and never quenched fire is quoted from Isaiah, 66, 24].

What is this undying worm? What is this unquenchable fire? What is this burning that is Hellish, like being roasted in a furnace? Experientially it is 'punishing' to go through, and thus it also feels like it is a state in which God's anger is singeing us.

Hell is a place where in reality God is angry with us, but not in the childish way that we imagine. God's thoughts and ways are not our thoughts and ways: his thoughts and ways are above ours, and it is therefore vital not to project anger as we psychologically know it onto God. What understands hellishness is the recognition that Hell is what happens to our passion's 'anger for truth' when we play false with it.

In this sense, the burning in Hell is what we do to ourselves when our passion does not stand before God in truth at the deepest point where passion emerges from the smithy, the anvil, the furnace, of God. That smithy, anvil, furnace, is what 'forges' passion in the white heat of God's truth, and therefore blesses passion to 'forge ahead' in existence, not letting itself succumb to a forgery. When passion is not in the truth at this primary level, then passion's own 'burning for truth' becomes a torture and torment to it. Why should this be so? It is so because at this level, the fire of the Holy Spirit kindles passion, and

so when passion emerges from the blacksmith's hammering and refining of its mettle, and stands before God in truth, so the holy fire burning it creates in it warmth, glowing, sparking: it is joy to be burnt in that fire. It raises passion into action, and passion then seeks truth in all its action. Even the suffering of sacrifice is embraced by love of that truth. Conversely, when at this primal level passion resists, repudiates, and even lies toward the truth, then it experiences the holy fire as a twisted suffering: the holy fire which inspires us when we are in the truth is experienced, when we are out of the truth, as rebuking us, as running a sword through our conscience, as intolerant of our lie. We can find no peace: this fire assaults our flame, and renders its burning afflicted, anguished and agonised, all day and night. In Hell, we never rest, sleep, get a moment off. The burning that tortures and torments us goes on all the time, in each second.

This refusal by the holy fire to let our flame of passion off the hook seems uncompassionate, unforgiving, unkind: we accuse God of accusing us, and we deem this accusation too heavy, too relentless, too demanding. We feel on the receiving end of God's wrathful displeasure, and we would just like to crawl away and die – the pit of dejection would be a holiday compared with the furnace of Hell! We ask, why isn't God more loving? We judge God as a cruel, over demanding and over strict, pitiless judge. Of course, Satan wants us to conclude just this: which is why Hell is composed of both a false vision of God's anger with us, and a false vision of our anger. The whole complex knot revolves around 'truth', in its relationship to 'love.'

God is truth as well as love, and we cannot be in God's love without being in God's truth. Even if God were to 'compassionately', 'forgivingly', 'kindly', place us in the midst of heaven, while our passion was still out of the truth, this environment of absolute and unending love would not touch us: it would not mean anything, it would not have any value, it would not have any purpose, for us; it would be worthless. Without truth, love cannot be kindled in us. Truth is how love works, functions, operates; what love is doing and how love does it; what love will give of itself and even how love will empty itself for what it loves. But all this would simply be abstract, it would be wholly outside us, it would be information we can take or leave, unless we could catch fire with it. The holy fire is love, and truth: through truth we enter love, through truth love burns in us and in this burning radiates from us.

It is therefore serious when our passion, at depth, turns from truth. This means it separates itself from the kindling of love. That is why it goes cool on love, and simply regards love as a choice, a possibility, 'a lifestyle option', rather than the very driving force of its being. Passion burns, it is a flame not a machine, because it was meant to burn with God, in order to become God's candle, God's hearth, God's pillar of fire in the world, to transfigure the world. When Christ stood on Mount Tabor and divine fire burned in him, transfiguring his whole being, he showed what the nature and destiny of human passion is. We are the flame called to burn with God's love, becoming a raging torch, but it cannot happen if our flame steps out of the truth. Then, its own capacity for

burning through truth becomes a Hell to it: truth grinds at its untruth all the time, without let up.

In the pit of death, we are not up to truth's integrity, we have no ground on which to make our stand. Existential and moral cowardice causes a catastrophic collapse. We are weak: passion sinks down. But the furnace of Hell is not a reflection of weakness. We can be very stubborn, very tough, very powerful, very wilful, in Hell. Truth, and the anger that is truth's loyal servant, is the issue.

God is relentless in insisting on truth because he wants his love to dwell in our love, wants his passion to dwell in our passion. If we wield the sword of truth outwardly, but have not been stabbed by it inwardly, then we are not in the truth and will not be able to call the world to be in truth. We will lose the heart's understanding that truth reveals love, and will increasingly just use the sword to Satanically accuse and murder people. Truth without love is demonic.

God is angry with us when we throw away our passion's anger for truth by standing in a lie. These lies are various. They are idols, put upon the altar of the rock of sacrifice in the abyss. These lies are things we lie to ourselves about, but in being that, they are lies to God and lies to the world. The Bible is referring to this when it says 'there is no truth in him'; his heart has enshrined, enthroned, the lie. It is Hell for us to put a lie where the truth should dwell on the altar of our heart; it is Hell for us to not be able to stand and fight for the truth that kindles love's limitless passion.

The burning affliction of the furnace of Hell is, therefore, not the experience of God's anger frying us to a frazzle, so much as the experience of our own truth suffering its untruthfulness as a never-ending rebuke, creating not despondency, not vacancy, but a 'hot and bothered' uncomfortable sweating, and painful twisting and turning on a spit that has us skewered however much we wriggle to get off. We cannot. There is no exit from this twisted, tortured, tormented, suffering of untruth, which causes "wailing and gnashing of teeth" [Matthew, 13, 42] – until we embrace truth, as our conscience demands.

In the same passage where Christ speaks of Hell as the undying worm and the unquenchable fire, he concludes by saying "for every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Truth is like salt, which gives the food savour, but more than that, truth is the salt that saves the food from corrupting, becoming diseased, poisoned, deadly to us. Thus, when we are standing in the lie, then that untruth invites the most terrible 'saltiness' as its only correction. The salt God then Daemonically pours on us is bitter, sour, biting; Christ refers to this when, in the same passage, he says it is better to go into life maimed, than to be whole and end up in this hellish furnace. Thus, if one hand, foot, eye, offends us, pluck it out. The salt 'salts the fire' of our truth to free it from untruth, and so such losses of our wholeness are redeeming. If existence smashes the greatest idols we worship, it has salted us savagely, but once we return to being able to stand in the truth in our deep heart, we are grateful, and give thanks.

In his anger with us, God has not ceased loving us, but he takes away his love, and turns away from our untruth for a while, to let us stew in our own juices. This is clearly put in Isaiah, where God is declared the husband, and humanity his wife [Isaiah, 54, 5-17]. God says, through the prophet, that he has been angry, but it will not last, it will not be final, it will not be eternal: “for a small moment have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little anger I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, sayeth the Lord thy redeemer.” To be without God for a moment is to be ‘as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit.’ God comforts this forsakenness and grief when he says that just as he swore the waters Noah confronted should no more swamp the earth, “so have I sworn that I would not be angry with thee, nor rebuke thee.” This rules out any eternal wrath, any ‘eternal punishment for sinners’, and points directly to Christ; the Lord who is the redeemer is Christ, and Christ’s redemption will end Hell, and restore those in it to heaven, in the end. Truth is angry for a season, to get us to realise we must return to truth, but love will convert that anger into zeal and fervour for redeeming what is loved.

This is what our anger will become, in Christ: the warrior for truth who becomes the martyr for love.

To stew in our own untruth allows us, in fact, to realise how much the heart needs God in order to ‘stand up’, before God and before the world.

There is another passage in Isaiah that prophetically announces universal redemption – the ending of the deep heart as the place of emptiness, deadness, and hellishness, and its restoration as the place of God’s holy mountain [Isaiah, 25, 6-9]. The prophet gives praise to God, saying he has done marvellous things, and that his counsel to humanity has been “faithfulness and truth.” God will bring the evil city to an end – the city built out of untruth and unfaithfulness in the heart – and will erect a holy mountain. In this mountain God will destroy “the covering over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory, and ...God will wipe away the tears from all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth... And it shall be said in that day, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; ...we have waited for him, we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Christ’s redemption ends God’s wrath with us, and our wrath with God. The time of opposition to God’s truth will end, and we will be able to stand in truth, reconciled to God’s truth.

My step-daughter’s daughter used to say to her mother, when she was a very little girl, “I’m angry with you because you’re angry with me.” Are we much different with God? We are angry with him because we try in that way to defend ourselves. Our defensive anger lies in asserting he let us down, for in truth, we know we let ourselves down. This is why our deepest anger in Hell is actually with ourselves. We are full of self loathing, and self hate: this burns in

us hideously, like a spear we constantly shove into the heart. We ourselves stab, repeatedly, the innocent, childlike loyalty to Christ at the bottom of our passion; we self harm, we self injure, that unfallen remnant of the image of God in our heart. Christ warns against abusing the child's faith in him, but this refers to not injuring the innocent, childlike, impulse of passion, where it first arises. Yet we do precisely attack this very Christ-akiness in us, scorning it, belittling it, holding its willingness to love in contempt, as naïve and foolish. This child is wiser than the sophisticate in us who has a million reasons for remaining in untruth, and blocking off all of passion's love. Our own innocent, childlike flame rebukes us most of all, because it just says: let's go, hoka hey! Thus do we engage in 'child abuse', killing the innocence in ourselves and in other people. Hell is the place of child murder: where we slay the lamb slain before the world began at origin, so he cannot be given to and slain for the world. This plants real evil in us, for the devil hates the child passion that trusts, and has faith in, God's passion more than he hates anything. Anyone who is abusing the child in themselves, and in others, is in Hell. Better a millstone were around their neck and they were thrown into the sea than they abuse the child= this means, no disaster passion outwardly is harmed by is half as serious as the way we self harm the passion's child, the lamb.

What, then, of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire? What aspect of the hellish burning is this? The unquenchable fire is the rebuke our passion brings on itself so long as it clings to untruth: this fire pricks and scorches our conscience; the undying worm is the regret, and the remorse, which burrows and eats away at us so long as we are hit by conscience but do nothing to answer its insistence that we change. The conscience we hide from finds us out, it chases us all the time, though we run from it; while we do not face it, we know we have blown our chance with passion, of being the "leaven of sincerity and truth" that makes the bread of life, and so searing remorse, and regret, invade our inward parts.

Remorse is filled with bitterness. We have no compassion for ourselves, and do not experience any compassion from God. Regret is even more extreme in hellishness. In regret, we feel not only profound existential angst and guilt, but also a horrendous existential incompleteness: a loss to our deepest sense of who we are, and what we are to do. In reality, regret signifies how disappointed we are in ourselves, but we mount both a case for the prosecution, and a case for the defence, against the pricking of our conscience: 'I have failed myself, I am no damn good', we say, yet simultaneously say, 'I was given nothing good to lift me up, I had to betray my calling.' Self-justification and self-condemnation are unbreakably locked together. We are stuck= our will remains relentlessly obdurate, preferring to hate the world, or even the self, for 'what went wrong.' However much we blame God or circumstances, deeper down we are in a state where passion's 'worthiness' has been cut to the quick, and because of pride we are angry at God over this brutal revelation of our lack of worth. Having absolutely no worth sickens us more than deadness. It sickens us in our passion's core. In its grip, we end up not wanting to have any flame. We believe God gave it no fair chance, and we want to kill it.

The worm and fire that never relent are not some eternal punishment God puts us in, but our own self-consuming, in hatred, of our deepest worth – our worthiness to stand before God in truth, and to stand in the world for truth.

In Hell, truth devours itself, finds itself unworthy, without let up or end.

The progression through these three hells is, then:

- 1, Pit of death= shame – passion in weak hiding.
- 2, Furnace of Hell= guilt – passion in corrosive self-destruction.
- 3, Void= terror – passion in despondent paralysis.

The most basic theme of the progression is, then:

- 1, Failure= imprisonment/complaint
- 2, Betrayal= reproach/accusation
- 3, Despair= negation/disrespect

Hence, each of these places has its own quality, expressing its essential theme:

1= The pit of death is a place and condition of dank decay: decrepitude, atrophy, blight, degeneration, decomposition, fragmentation, decline, disintegration, rot, putrefaction, desolation.

2= The furnace of hell is a place and condition of hot excruciation: torture, torment, pricking, affliction, agony, anguish, dryness, burnt up.

3= The empty void is a place and condition of cold blankness: gap, vacuum, vacancy, futility, listlessness, depletion, drained, restlessness, absence.

In these three places in the depths we have lost God, lost the world, and lost our own depth as the third relating the two, making an unbreakable trinity.

These three places in the underworld percolate up in experiential signals when we hear people say, in everyday life: 'I am dead', or, 'it is hell', or, 'I feel faint, like I could just fall and fall.'

They are powerful conditions in the depths of all human beings. As such, they are the result of existential action which is not up to the mark and off the target, but they also undermine the attempt at existentially authentic action. It is a negative feedback loop: faulty existential action feeds the sickness and evil of the depths, which in turn increasingly undermines genuine existential action. However correct outer 'behaviour' might be, it is only a mask of what is in the heart, and it is not heart action in the sense God asks.

It is the human heart itself which must change, and change in the depths, for heart action to change, by returning to its task, calling, mission. It is this change in the depths which Christ's Descent into death and hell, and the void,



accomplishes. Death, hell, and the void, become the doorway into 'the new mystical land of the heart.' This is also the 'new heaven and earth' God promised humanity through the Jewish prophets [Isaiah, 65, 17; Isaiah, 66, 22; Revelation, 21, 1]; it needs a 'new heart' to live in this new heaven and earth. Heaven comes to earth through the abyss: this is the new mystical land. Christ is referring to this mystery when he tells the Jews, to their astonishment and shock, 'heaven is within you' [Luke, 17, 21].

But before the mystical land is reached is the mystery of what happens in the deeps, when Christ dies our death and wins life, is condemned to our hell and wins heaven, plumbs our void and wins the abyss of God. The very worst, not the best, of human existence becomes not only the focus of redemption, but the key to the coming of the kingdom, in which God's hidden secrets are revealed.

There are several points about this which should be noted:

[i] Christ must go all the way with us, and reach the very ground, root, source, foundation, base, of our existence. All that is potentially most human, full of flesh and blood and guts, arises in this place, and thus is what is most divinisable in our humanity. Redemption is not mainly to reactivate a past we lost, but to move us toward a future that always summoned us in the now= the nexus point of divine-human interweaving is not in the heights, via the nous or the soul, but is in the abysmal desolation, agony, and apprehension, of the heart depths. Thus, Christ makes 'the place where God is not', the place created by fallenness, into 'the place where God toils' and where God redeems: the place where the seed of heaven is planted in the soil of human nature. What had seemed 'bad earth' for any such planting becomes 'good earth.'

[ii] It was given to previous human holiness to bring divine light into the gloomy, smouldering, swallowing, depths, but not divine water and not divine fire; not water to renew life in the midst of death, not fire to renew heaven in the midst of hell. If Christ were not divine as well as human, his entry into death, hell, void, could do nothing to change these. He does not wave a divine wand over them to magically remake them, but rather, he restores them to their original, God-created function. For each deep place is the fulcrum of the divine heart entering the human heart. Void: *the matrix, the womb, the pregnancy, whereby the divine abyss enters and is born in the human abyss.* Hell: *the smithy, the anvil, the furnace, whereby the truth needed to kindle us as bearers of God's passionate love is forged.* Pit: *the ground, the support, the solidity, beneath our feet as we act from the abyss and let its fire indwell, inspire and dynamise us.* It is Christ's life that reveals what heaven come to earth, through the abyss, will be. Only in the three deep places is the human being 'born again.' Here is our redemption, here is our rebirth.

[iii] As man, Christ enters these depths as we do, experiencing the abysmal 'it can go either way' like us. Being without sin means he can do two things, as human, we no longer can.

1, He lacks our disinclination, thus he reveals the way in which the human can bear and endure the suffering of our calling without buckling. In this sense, he can assume the human responsibility we fled because 'he is innocent.' He is what we once were, and are meant to be again.

2, He does not suffer as we do, in death, hell, and the void, because our suffering passion reflects our falling away from passion's suffering for love. Christ is not defined by this suffering, humanly, and hence he can 'assume' it in a way we cannot. By bearing and enduring what imprisons our life in stasis, invalidates our worth, and reduces our fibre to nothing, without 'deserving' this, in innocence, Christ reveals to us our own innocence that is crushed underneath our three places of lostness. He reveals to us how to be in a different relationship to sin, and the fallenness undergirding it; he teaches us, in regard to this profound lostness of the human being, not to justify ourselves in endless rationalisation and lying; not to judge and damn ourselves or other people; not to disdain the action that we or other people are trying to accomplish as ridiculously useless from the start. Christ assumes the human wound, burden, cost, as a tragedy, a tragedy not to be lied about, not to be condemned, not to be diminished.

He enters into the pit, hell, void, but he also finds the way to recover in this extremity the innocent suffering humanity, the humanity hurt, weeping, broken, in the tragedy, but still open to God.

This broken-heartedness in us, that signifies a different relationship to our tragedy, is the redeemable passion spark in the human heart which Christ will ignite. It is this human broken-heartedness, this human cry, still open to God, which the devil's lie tries to snuff out, so that we come to accept the pit, the furnace, the void, as our irredeemable resting place. Christ repels this lie, and evokes our tragedy differently, as a wound still open to healing.

This is prefigured by David in Psalm 22, which points towards the different way to be in death, in hell, in the void, that Christ will confirm in his own human suffering, and unlock in our human suffering. Though there is the pit, the furnace, the void, the lamentation that David engages in embraces it in a different way. This lamenting opens the wound to God, letting its tears, sweat and blood pour out; this lamenting begins to offer our failure and betrayal to God, as pure tragedy, which we do not bewail, do not accuse, do not disrespect.

By this, we 'offer' all three hells to God, as our defeat, in humility, in trust, in faith, in hope, in love. The spark of passion that never gave up, that never gave in, even after the Fall, does this. The innocent child does this. The warrior on the rim, on the edge, does this. The lover of the world's poignancy and fragility does this. The lover of the venture, the risk, the suffering, the burden, the cost, the struggling, the whole undergoing of life and death, heaven and hell, does this.

This is David's broken crying, which brings Christ near to the heart:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou who inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn, ...saying: he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him [now]. ...I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up... And thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet... But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me... I will declare thy name unto my brethren: ...for he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted... But when they cried unto him, he heard... A seed shall serve him."

At times in this Psalm, David speaks as if his broken suffering were that of Christ, yet in some ways it is, for it is our most untwisted suffering over our tragedy that Christ identifies with and joins, that this innocent suffering may change the twisted suffering inherent to being in hell. The suffering in hell is closed off, but the suffering which expresses the heart of the human tragedy is opened up: it can be reached because it reaches out.

[iv] As God's heart at work in the human heart, Christ refuses the demonically encouraged 'evaluation of men' that divides humanity, and seals us in our tragedy: he closes ranks with all, and reverses our evaluation by bringing God's evaluation.

This reversal of our evaluation is why Christ's death defeats our death, why Christ's hell defeats our hell, why Christ's void defeats our void. If the most high can lower itself, to reach the lowest in us, then the lowest in us can be made high. This is the heart of the mystery of Christ's descent into death, hell, and the void.

1= For our sake, he who is life is found wanting, blamed and faulted like us, and is put to death, thrown into a pit, abandoned and bereft, yet God raises him from this place.

2= For our sake, he who is truth is accused, put on trial, judged and condemned like us, banished to hell, cursed and invalid, yet God raises him from this place.

3= For our sake, he who is the way is roughly handled, stripped naked, flogged, ripped up from his moorings and storm-tossed by 'events beyond

anyone's control' like us, consigned to the wasteland and tossed overboard into the void, yet God raises him from this place.

He who is 'the lamb slain before the world began', he who is innocent of all taint, is obedient to death, judged a transgressor, is blown away like grass in the wind, to remove death's stasis, to remove hell's accusation, to remove the void's nullifying. By sharing in our abysmal place and condition of failure [pit] and betrayal [furnace] and negation [void], so Christ drives out the devil's lie from those places, and solaces and encourages us in our loss of the true way in such a manner we regain it. For, his innocence has joined and shared our loss of innocence, and thus demonstrated love can undergo the same hurt and harm, yet not be destroyed.

By his death, he brought life; by his conviction, he brought acquittal; by his emptying, he brought fullness.

St John Chrysostom's famous prayer on Easter night rings out an extraordinary message of universal redemption, for the first and the last, for those who came early and those at the eleventh hour, for those who have kept the fast and those who have disregarded it:

"Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shone forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the saviour's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it, has annihilated it. By descending into hell, he made hell captive. He angered it when it tasted of his flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: hell, he said, was angered when it encountered thee in the lower regions. It was angered, for it was abolished. It was angered, for it was mocked. It was angered, for it was slain. It was angered, for it was overthrown. It was angered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered heaven... O death, where is thy sting? O hell, where is thy victory? Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To him be glory and dominion unto ages and ages. Amen."

St Macarios of Egypt speaks with less 'hwyl', but asserts the same:

"When you hear that Christ 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. [For Christ] comes into... souls... And 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 ...dead from death, brings the imprisoned soul from the dark prison. Is it difficult for God to enter death and, even more, into the depth of the heart and to call out dead Adam from there? ...the Lord of everything enters caves

and abodes in which death has settled, and also souls, and having released Adam from there, [remains] unfettered by death.”

Bishop Kalistos puts it like this:

“The Incarnation... is an act of identification and sharing. God saves us by identifying himself with us, by knowing our human experience from the inside. The Cross signifies, in the most stark and uncompromising manner, that this act of sharing is carried to the utmost limits. God incarnate enters into all our experience, [sharing] not only in the fullness of human life but also in the fullness of human death. ...the true meaning of the passion is to be found, not in [physical death] alone, but much more in his spiritual sufferings – his sense of failure, isolation and utter loneliness, the pain of love offered but rejected.

...’he descended into hell’ [Apostles’ Creed]... Hell is not a point in space but in the [heart]. It is the place where God is not... If Christ truly ‘descended into hell’, that means he descended into the absence of God. Totally, unreservedly, he identified himself with all humanity’s [dejection], anguish, and alienation. He assumed it into himself, and by assuming it, he healed it. There was no other way he could heal it, except by making it his own.”  
[‘The Orthodox Way’, pp 104-107.]

‘He made it his own’: by Christ’s descent into death, hell, the void, the most dire absence of God is made the most loving, overflowing, and radiant presence of God.

What, then, are the hidden secrets of God withheld even from the holy, the enlightened, the righteous, but given to those in hell?

Christ, as both God and man, has revealed the most hidden secrets of God’s heart to the human heart in hell. It is this heart which cries out to Christ, you alone are holy, because it is in this heart that redemption’s mystery is wrought.

By absence, presence.

By death, life.

By hell, heaven.

By emptiness, fullness.

What are the hidden secrets, then? They are the hidden secrets of God’s love, a love that knows no limits, in its passion for what it loves.

In our fallenness, we seem to put a limit on God’s love: we turn from God and create in our deeps a place where God is not, a place dead to God’s life, a place hellish to God’s truth, a place empty of God’s fullness. In Christ, this limit we put on the freedom of love becomes the mysterious and holy inversion,

reversal, turning upside down and turning inside out, of all limit, and instead becomes the very thing that allows love to reveal and pour out its limitlessness.

From the duality of freedom finally arises the all-embracingness of love.

The hidden secrets of God therefore concern how God 'operates.' God operates through love. The hidden secrets reveal and pour out a radical love without limit, a love at its most universal and powerful at the very point where it appears to be at its most dualistic and impotent.

This is why Christ says that prostitutes and tax collectors are entering God's kingdom ahead of the religiously correct, who aspire upward, and never look downward [Matthew, 21, 31-32]. Sinners are nearer to redemption's mystical paradox than all the religious people who think that by aspiration aimed at ascent, morality, discipline, they have been lifted up, and thereby transcended the tragedy lodged in our deeps. This pious 'thought' of the religious is not God's thought: not God's way, not God's secrets, not God's wisdom which is given to the backward and foolish, to confound the advanced and sophisticated.

The desire to be free of the human tragedy is what causes us to put ourselves beyond the reach of redemption.

Because of Christ's mystical paradox, our worst is closer to God than our attempt to make our worse better.

Because of Christ, 'all bets are off' and the conditional becomes the door to the unconditional: by failing, the heart has uncovered the nature and dynamic of failure, and is freed from its blight; by betraying, the heart has uncovered the nature and dynamic of betrayal, and is freed from its blister; by negating, the heart has uncovered the nature and dynamic of negation, and is freed from its fainting.

God set up existence as a Koan, as a Golgotha, in order to call humanity to a dark place, where love could be drawn beyond limit. But God did not simply call humanity to that place so deep, for ultimate regeneration or ultimate degeneration: God called himself to that place, to manifest his depth. God made a day of trouble for humanity, but it was really a day of trouble God made for himself. God always knew, in this existence, in this world, he would be called to a dark place. The day of trouble is not just the deep day of humanity, it is the deep day of God. On this day, our depth is revealed; on this day, God's depth is revealed.

Christ's love has no limit, and when we allow this love to redeem and resurrect us, then our love has no limit. The existential becomes the mystical.

The new mystical land of the heart begins in the depths, then it is resurrected to return to the world.

In the depths=

Christ leads us to the three supreme mystical realities that undergird the conjoint passion shared by God and humanity. These enable the transfiguration of our dark place into the cave from which Christ called forth Lazarus, and out which God raised Christ.

1= 'The rock of life.' This rock is not up in heaven, but down in the abyss where God opened his own blood, and vowed to go through all toil and loss, without limit, to establish the divine heart in the human heart, making the divine heart the 'ground' of the human heart. God will not give up on humanity, whatever the consequences to him. Love and freedom no longer contend.

2= 'The altar of truth.' The rock of God's promise is also the altar of truth, where God's vow becomes active in the fire of sacrifice. Love's truth exceeds any limit when it goes on loving despite its truth being faulted, accused, unheeded. Truth no longer insists on itself, but is prepared to be faulted, accused, unheeded, to become the seed that must die into the ground to bear fruit. Love and truth no longer contend.

3= 'The abyss of wisdom.' The wisdom of God's Way is planted in the abyss of the human heart, grounding and empowering the human heart's passion as it follows and takes a chance with God's promise and God's sacrifice. What we thought solid is flimsy, what we thought worthy is trash. The abyss of wisdom not only upholds us as we stand and burn, it also inverts and reverses, turns inside out and upside down, all we see and do. What is folly to philosophers is to us the supreme wisdom; what is defeat to the worldly is to us the supreme victory; what is a stumbling block to moralists is to us the supreme righteousness.

This is the real 'promised land' the Jews searched for in the wilderness, but still have not found. It is hidden from all those who do not realise seeking to fix the human tragedy blocks redemption and becomes the real folly, the real defeat, the real stumbling block.

In the world=

Give and it will be given to you.

Bear and you will be borne.

Jump in hands and feet and you will be upheld.

The more the well of life overflows the more full it is.

The more the fire of truth makes sacrifice, to illumine, to warm, to serve, the more inspired and empowered it is.

In the new mystical land of the heart, we see the tragedy of humanity as God does, and we act for that tragedy as God does. We go to any lengths. In the 'worst case scenario' we uncover the story of redemption at work, hidden, in secret, incipiently.

It has come. It is coming. It will come.

It will dawn. The 8th day – the day of resurrection – will dawn. After the crisis of the hour of the wolf, the hour of the dark place and the pained place at its most black and most suffering, the moon sheds tears and the wolf howls. The new day is not far off, the glad day has almost dawned.

We venerate the passion of Christ.

Christ venerates the passion of humanity.

In the new mystical land, there is only one humanity, and we know that anything we must give up, suffer, sacrifice, for the redemption of all humanity in their oneness is a very small loss for a stupendous, ultimate gain. Thus can we say 'my life is the brother'; our life is each other. We suffer hell because we are inter-related and bound together, and our redemption is to conquer that hell by how we sacrifice to each other for the love that brings us together and keeps us together. 'There is no greater love than that we lay down our life for our friends'; and in the new mystical land the friends are the stranger and the enemy. To make sacrifice for one and all, that none should be lost, is the rock of life, the altar of truth, the abyss of wisdom, alive and on fire and rising from our depths, going into the world.

We venerate Christ's passion.

Christ's passion venerates humanity's passion.

There is a freedom, truth, love, beyond 'standing and falling', beyond 'good and evil', beyond 'emptiness and fullness.'

The limitlessness of love is freedom, is truth. To love without limit, in the limited, is to be made free, is to be made true.

In the end God's intention for us is fulfilled: we are love, we are freedom, we are truth.

It burns in us, and all the creation rejoices.

We venerate the God revealed in Christ because this God venerates humanity.

May God's passion, and humanity's passion, forever be praised, grieved, rejoiced in.

Passion wins the victory. Passion is vindicated, in the end, both for God and for humanity.

God's eternal power only works through humanity's 'passible' power: passion. The only real power that redeems is the power that love has to be passionate,



to carry a load for what it loves, and to go beyond all limit. God is in this power.  
God is in no other power.

Passion rises to what is hard, fated, deep.

Passion suffers a wound.  
Passion carries a burden.  
Passion pays a cost.  
It is passion that undergoes.  
It is passion that struggles.

It is passion that bears.  
It is passion that endures.

It is passion that risks, takes a chance, ventures.  
It is passion that takes on ordeals, challenges, obstacles.

It is passion that makes give away.  
It is passion that steps up, and fights.  
It is passion that makes love's sacrifice.

Passion is staked to what is at stake.

It is passion that surrenders to destiny.  
It is passion that offers itself, and lets go.

It is passion that wrestles with the hindrance of love, and it is  
passion that, having come through, loves without hindrance.

Passion is ecstatic.

Passion burns with fire.  
Passion leaps into mystery.

## THE INESCAPIBLE PARADOX

1,

Eric Gutkind declares the real situation of Jewish–Christian redemption; he is prophetically angry with all Western heaven-seeking, world-betraying, or Oriental oneness-seeking, otherness-betraying, religion and spirituality=

"The 'pious' attitude... turns the white heat of God into a comfortable household fire. Religion makes God harmless. ...our glorious inescapable feeling for this world was thus made ready to open a hundred ways of escape. But turning our gaze inwards we mistook spirituality for reality. The joy of meeting with God withered before a hateful theology. Religion has betrayed us. It has tricked us out of that miracle of miracles which enables us, when our last hope of escape has died, to... attain to absolute reality, to eternal meaning, where, not consumed but tempered in the white heat of God we can proclaim that 'all the ways of the earth are ways to heaven', and that the 'other world'... is nothing but this created world made manifest.

No – we must venture again and again upon that... meeting of God, humanity, and the world. No one of the three must be tampered with"  
[‘The Absolute Collective’, 1937].

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.”

2,

We are redeemed by Christ not to be ‘saved’ from the world, but in order to be ‘given over’ to the world. The fire initially in each will finally engulf and be shared among all. The whole creation, through humanity, will be on fire with God.

Christ’s Cross is what makes possible this general kindling by the Holy Spirit which creates the radical and universal brotherhood among humanity. Well before the conclusion of his mission, Christ says he wishes this final conflagration of love in all for all were already ignited, but he also acknowledges that without the love unlocked and released in God and in humanity by the Cross, this universal brotherhood cannot be attained: “There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress until it is over” [Luke, 12, 50].

There is, however, an extreme paradox about the ‘brotherhood of all’ won by the Cross. It is the final unifying of humanity, yet his very unity creates in those with a vested interest in maintaining humanity’s divisions an enmity and

opposition which becomes a final dividing off from love's limitlessness. This paradox has given rise to endless misunderstanding in Christianity, polarising those who think universal love can have no enemies and those who are all too ready to throw away love's universality for the sake of love retaining enemies. Both these polarised positions, the 'pacifists' and the 'militants', are untouched by Christ's redemption. This redemption is universal, yet for that very reason, it has enemies. The paradox is openly announced by Christ. The Cross will open up the possibility of universal forgiveness, and therefore will create universal brotherhood; but the Cross will bring the final sword because this very unification, this very universalism, this very brotherhood, will create division with those who still resist not only God as he first was with humanity but even God as he finally is with humanity, pouring out the most overflowing extremism of love. They prefer humanity's current division to humanity's potential unity, because they profit from the former and would be threatened with loss by the latter.

3,

Thus in the same part of the gospel where Christ wishes that the coming of fire to earth, its embodiment in humanity, its transfiguration of the entire creation, were already completed, he asserts the two things about this coming of fire that are a paradox.

**[1]** The Cross will overcome all division among people created by sin by virtue of how it redemptively and lovingly embraces the consequences of sin. For the Cross not only 'reconciles' God and humanity, it 'mystically' engenders a new humanity, a humanity totally given up to the radical love which Christ demonstrates on the Cross: a love that carries the weight of, suffers the wound of, pays the cost for, the brother who is loved. This is the true meaning of forgiveness. This love extends to the stranger and to the enemy. It is the most radical overcoming of division of any and all spiritual attempts to unite human beings in all times and in all places.

For a brief time, the early Christian community shocked the surrounding world by the way it lived this new communion between God and humanity, and between human and human. The Fire of Spirit, in bringing the love Christ followed to its extreme on the Cross, also creates as the fruit of that love, a more extreme communal solidarity among human beings. Instead of rivalry and jealousy, class structures, and all the rest of the panoply of Satanic divisiveness so obvious in human societies, human beings suddenly pull together. Rich and poor disappear. Goods are shared in common. 'Bearing the brother' keeps people together on the heart ground, showing there is but one heart in which all humans, indeed all creatures and things, dwell in togetherness. This is what Metropolitan John Zizoulas calls 'being as communion', and this is where the Communion of the Holy Trinity in eternity comes to earth, and becomes operative as the communion between human and human. If the Cross wins its ontological and existential victory, then this will be mystically evident in how radically people love each other: how far their passion will go for each other, and indeed, how extreme this love will be even

towards those who do not return it, or spit on it, or even crucify it. Love that cannot return love for hate, love for indifference, love for contempt, love for opposition, is not love on fire with Christ's Passion.

St John makes clear the link between those redeemed by the Cross and their manifestation of this in radical love for the brother: "We know we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. ...Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" [1John, 3, 14, and 16].

**[2]** Second, Christ also says that this new coming of the fire of the Holy Spirit into the world will have a very sharp cutting edge, like a sword, and will initially not unite all of humanity, as is its impetus, but will divide people concerning its unifying thrust. It will do this, inescapably, because it will threaten as never before the most entrenched, vested interest in keeping division going, whether this interest is religious or secular. Universal brotherhood will challenge the selfish 'nest egg' by which certain people profit from the Satanic system of division that holds sway in the world.

This is why Christ says, in total contravention of the sentimental and cowardly image of him as 'Jesus meek and mild' many Christians prefer to hold: "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided – three against two and two against three; the father divided against the son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother..." [Luke, 12, 51-53]. The same point is made with even more force in another gospel: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth; it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother... A man's enemies will be those of his own household" [Matthew, 10, 34-36].

These two points, taken together, seem contradictory. They pull in opposite directions. Yet they must remain in tension until the end of time when the universal redemption will be complete; because they also expose more dramatically and more starkly on the stage of history the options of going with God's 'mad love', or giving up on any and all love entirely. This is why the Last Judgement [Matthew, 25, 31-46] is not of individuals on their own [like George or Sally], nor of nation states [like America or Russia], but does pertain to whether whole societies of people in inter-relation with one another 'person to person' have lived brotherhood, or declined it. That is the new, and only remaining, 'dividing line.' Because of the Cross, there is no longer any limit on God's love at work in the world, but if people have 'other fish to fry', then they create the limit by not answering love's invitation.

This is where it has to be non sentimentally grasped that the new fire of radical love, and the radical communion of humanity it makes possible, cannot do otherwise than stir up enmity and opposition. Passion has always, because of the heart of stone in us opposing our heart of flesh, had enemies among

human beings who take the easy option and go with the lesser heart, rather than go for the difficult option of the bigger heart. But passion, both divine and human, has enemies and stirs up enmity not only because of the split, or duality, in the human heart: our inherent ambivalence towards passion, which divides the heart into the passion of love, faith, truth, opposed by 'the evil passions'; but also because the devil, though in one sense defeated by the Cross, in another sense is fighting more fiercely than ever to prevent the dynamic transition from the Cross into Being-as-Communion ever happening. Indeed, despite its brief happening in the early Christian community, that kindling was soon put out, and it has never been rekindled in any Christian Tradition, not East, not West. A few lingering coals, a few flickering embers, is all that remains from that time when the Pentecostal Fire indwelt humanity, and created the Trinitarian Communion as a real communion in the community of humanity on earth. That community was a 'pillar of fire' more blazing than the smoke by day and fire by night [Exodus, 13, 21-22] that led the Jews through the wilderness, out of Egypt toward the Promised Land: which is actually 'the new mystical land of heart', the one heart ground on which all humans stand together, upholding each other.

Of course this new fire of the Spirit of God that promises to totally change everything in the human condition has enemies! Of course it stirs up human and demonic enmity and opposition! It must do, because Christ's victory on the Cross makes universal brotherhood a reality. And because it is real, it threatens all those who do not want to change, all who prefer the old divisive order because they are 'doing well' out of it, religiously or secularly, and will fight with ferocity to preserve their spiritual or material 'power, privilege, and possessions', from the universal brotherhood that would rob them of all that they cherish.

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But we must be careful just here, in being non sentimental and non cowardly about Christ's sword, to not fall into the opposite heresy of many Protestant, Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians. Christ's Cross and the Holy Spirit of Fiery Love that it unleashes on the world stirs up a new division, but this is not like the old contention in Judaism between 'good and evil', nor can it be lived by a Christian as if it were simply the same as that old contention. The sword of Christ is far more complex, subtle, and demanding. That was then. This is now, and now is a whole new ball game. That Christ brings a sword is not in doubt, but it is a new sword and a new fight.

Not realising this has meant that many Christians of an authoritarian and conservative temper misinterpret Christ's sword as the kind of divine blast the Daemonic God of Israel dishes out to his people the Jews in the Old Testament. But this interpretation does away with the radical and universal love revealed in the Cross: it undoes the victory of the Cross, and returns to a primitive stage of Judaism, where God is first differentiating the road of loyalty to heart passion from the road of betrayal of heart passion, and trying to get

the Jews to own up to these two hearts in them, and accept that there are dire consequences to which of these hearts we make first, which we make second.

Even among the Jews, at this relatively primitive stage of their religious consciousness, God will not allow them to separate wheat from chaff in any final dualistic sense. The Jews must choose the heart of flesh, and put up with the heart of stone, rather than just surgically remove it. This is why there is, among the Jews, a lengthy and arduous process of moral struggle between the two hearts, why repentance by the bigger heart over its sneaky 'back door' dalliance with the lesser heart is on-going and never ending, and why purification of heart, the ascetic theme, is equally long drawn out.

None of these wrestlings between the good and evil impulses occupying and troubling the heart is successfully brought to a conclusion in a single life, or even in a single generation, but applies to all the people in their communal life, and applies to all of them over generation upon generation. Only at the climax of centuries of 'intestinal fortitude' in putting up with the constant clashing of the two hearts in everybody, do the Jews produce a purified, single hearted human being, and this turns out not to be a man, but a woman; the woman they call Miriam, and we call Mary. The wrestlings needed to advance toward singleness of heart prove necessary not so much to achieve justice in society, the ostensible aim, but a different, more obscure aim: that Mary should be overshadowed by the Spirit and give birth in the flesh to the Logos who will bring humanity's new heart. This new heart promised in Ezekiel comes through the Messiah: it comes in Christ. It could not be reached by moral or ascetical wrestlings of the Jews over centuries of faithfulness and loyalty because it was foreordained by God to be brought by Christ, and given to all of humanity only through his Cross.

This means that the Old Testament Jewish struggle in the two hearts of humanity was itself far more complex than modern Protestant, Fundamentalist and Evangelical, so-called 'Biblical Christians', realize. They have not only made a travesty out of the Cross, but they have also made a travesty out of what had to Jewishly precede it to prepare the ground for it. David's own life is eloquent testimony to the more complex meaning of Judaism. His two hearts, both big and small, were conveyed to the people he lived with to the end of his days. And it is precisely people like David who, troubled by powerful urges going in both directions, at times cease to be able to tolerate the evil in themselves gnawing away at the good, and therefore call out for God to simply kill off all evil doers, and thereby deliver the good doers from their harmful influence. But this external, and dualistic, solution cannot work, since how would removing all the people in the world in whom there is evil help David cope with the evil in himself? He too is an evil doer, despite his burning love for God. Maybe the supposed evil doers also still have left inside them some few flames of love for God? If they are to be exterminated, then why shouldn't David also be exterminated? Hasn't he done things just as wicked as they have done?

But it is perfectly clear what David's sudden bloodlust really is. We only fall into intolerance, hate, and Satanic Accusation and moralistic condemnation of other people's evil when we are blind to the evil in ourselves. David's crusade against the wicked people outside him is really no more than his loss of faith in God and in himself: it arises from his impatience, out of which he refuses to stay in his own moral fray, repent, be purified. He wants a quicker solution, a final resolution of good against evil, but this really just means he is tired of the heavy yoke of having to bear his own evil in his own good. So, he goes on a crusade against himself by going on a crusade against the enemies of God= he calls for God to kill them off; indeed, he ends up wanting to murder the enemies of God to please God. He actually thinks this murderousness in his heart –in the name of morality, religion, God – is what God wants, because only in that way can there be a separating of wheat from chaff. Not only Muslim fanatics but many Christian fanatics in America and elsewhere think the exact same. They are stuck back in the Old Testament with David having a bad day and lying to himself it is a good day!

Thus David explodes out:

“God, if only you would kill the wicked!  
Men of blood, away from me!  
They talk blasphemy about you,  
Regard your thoughts as nothing.

Yahweh, do I not hate those who hate you,  
And loathe those who defy you?  
I hate them with a total hatred,  
I regard them as my own enemies.”  
[Psalm 139, 19-22]

This is not God's will, even in the Old Testament; rather this 'good guys versus bad guys scenario' is a rebellion against, a failure toward, the more subtle vicissitudes of good and evil. The Daemonic God does not preserve us from the ambivalence to which we are subjected. The point is, this outburst of David, and modern repeats of it among Protestant Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, are precisely attempts to get off the hook Judaism puts us on.

Right next to this false salvation of good 'from' evil that David wishes were on offer, is the hint and prefigurement of the true redemption of Christ, for in this same Psalm David discovers that God will go to hell with him, if he ends in hell. This suggests not good triumphantly destroying evil, but good giving itself, in love, 'to' evil.

“Where could I go to escape your Spirit?  
Where could I go to flee from your Presence?  
If I climb the heavens, you are there,  
There too, if I make my bed in hell.”  
[Psalm 139, 7-8].

The saving of good 'from' evil, which would therefore divide them eternally, is not the redemption Christ enacts on the Cross. Love gives 'to' evil, in order to effect a transformation 'in' evil. This entails that love not only gives good for good, but gives good for evil, ending any potentiality for an ultimate moral dualism of good versus evil. Hence Christ's third and new commandment, to love as we were loved by Christ, and therefore to love our enemies, which reflects the universal brotherhood his Cross wins:

"But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will be... sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate as God your father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back." [Luke, 6, 27-38]

The sword that Christ's long-suffering and sacrificial love, enacted in his Cross, brings to the world simply cannot be understood as anything akin to David's outburst in Psalm 139. 'God is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.' God shines his warmth on and gives his healing rain alike to 'the just and the unjust.' Christ's sword is not the old Jewish call to differentiate good from evil in each of us, personally, and therefore between all of us, socially. It pertains to something far more spiritually advanced than that necessary, but primitive, foundational stage of the Daemonic God.

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Yet it is a sword, it has enemies who are loved all-inclusively and yet refuse this love because it would 'rob' them of either the individual, or more usually the small, closed group, advantage to which they cling. These people do not want love's radicalism on the Cross, because they do not want the universal brotherhood among humanity it opens the door to. Therefore, the all inclusive love creates division, because there are and will remain people who reject all inclusiveness. Those who want to remain selfish, better off, with the lion's share or at least in with a chance of getting the lion's share, want no love that has carried, suffered, and paid for the brother in such a way that all people can be brothers with each other.



This is a fight for sure, but it is a new fight. Given that Christ's Cross unleashes or releases the new Fire of Spirit creating communion and brotherhood among all of humanity, then this fight has the intensity of being the last throw of the dice by the devil. God has, in Christ, hugely upped the ante, thus to counter this the devil will also go up several gears. His fight to unseat love in humanity will become more vicious, more ferocious. After Christ departs – and he says he must depart [John, 16, 7] in order for the Spirit who will guide us into 'all truth' to come – the forces of unity among humanity are far stronger, but equally, the forces that prefer division in humanity are also far stronger. Brotherhood is the new battle ground. To say, 'all my relatives', meaning 'my tribe', which was the primal way of brotherhood, is no longer good enough; now we must say, 'all my relations', and mean everybody without exclusion. The devil and those who unconsciously or consciously fall in with him, are divided from God in Christ, and God in the All-Embracing Holy Fire, because they cling to division among people. They profit from it. It is the basis of 'big business' in the world.

Thus the new battle line is not individual good or evil, not even social good and evil, in the old sense. The new brotherhood exceeds the old brotherhood of justice, because it is the brotherhood of forgiveness, of bearing the brother who cannot bear himself, of carrying and suffering and paying for the brother who cannot bear, cannot suffer, cannot pay. It is this new brotherhood that will be at issue in the Last Judgement, when we will be asked if we fed and clothed Christ in feeding and clothing those who are hungry and poor, if we visited Christ in visiting those in jail, if we healed Christ in healing those who are sick. In doing to the least of humanity, we do it to Christ, because Christ's redemption loves and includes and cares for 'the least' in each of us. The new brotherhood has a divine power granted it by the Cross: if we human beings redeem each other on earth, in time, so we are redeemed in heaven, for all eternity. Anyone I forgive, God will forgive. The new brotherhood is redemptive. It includes but far exceeds justice; it is a brotherhood of extreme love that will go to any lengths to include the brother. This is its distinctive mark. We can see many older kinds of communalism, among Shamanic peoples, among Celtic peoples, among the Jews, among many 'traditional' peoples round the world, as a prefigurement of this new community of the Holy Fire. But none of these prefigurements were more than a pretaste of it. At the present time many older communities not only of justice but solidarity are calling for a new and even more radical universal brotherhood in humanity as a whole. This is Christ's doing, and the doing of the new Holy Spirit set to work in the whole world.

Therefore, Christ's sword stirs up a new and final fight: a fight between the way of human division, at its most entrenched, against the way that can bring all humanity together, through mutual forgiveness, mutual bearing of one another, mutual sharing of all gifts, riches, and life necessities, in order to come through all high and lows, all loss and gain, together, as one people. This is the 'body of Christ', meant to be in all the world, not just in the church. But, since some receive and some oppose this new reality of love in human for human, so the way of brotherhood, recovered and paid for by Christ, has real enemies. They

will stop it in its tracks, in its eschatological advance, if they can. This new Spirit, leading the caravan of a single humanity, will be increasingly menaced by predators out to derail it, and scatter it to the winds.

The wrong kind of pacifism will allow this scattering to happen; the wrong militancy will play into its hands, working for it even as it stupidly thinks it is working to prevent it.

Who are the real enemies, then?

Christ reveals who they are, at the same time as revealing the way of redemption of the Cross as the love of the enemy [Luke, 6, 24-26]:

“Alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now;  
Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry;  
Alas for you who laugh now: you will mourn and weep.”

Anyone not making sacrifices for the sake of pulling together with the brother is the enemy of Christ and the Holy Fire he brings.

But clearly, the rich and powerful and privileged in this world, who are full up with good things, and are having a good time because of this, have the largest ‘vested interest’ in protecting the system of human division. Invariably, these people profit at the expense of the most broken. They increase division day in and day out, and make its outcome more and more vicious: they create a vast gap between those at the top and those at the bottom, and the top only secures and maintains its position by creating more and more at the bottom. The laughter at the top becomes the weeping at the bottom; the belly full to satiety at the top becomes the belly aching with hunger at the bottom; the riches at the top become the poverty at the bottom.

Already in the Old Testament, it is declared [Judith, 10, 11]: “For Thy power stands not in multitudes, nor Thy might in strong men. For Thou art a God of the afflicted, a helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak, a protector of the forlorn, a saviour of them that are without hope.”

Christ speaks prophetically to these heartless people, the ‘high and mighty’ and the ‘high on the hog’, and warns them how the Holy Spirit will increasingly operate in history. Those who suffer and sacrifice for the brother, now, will inherit great gain later on, when humanity is one and God is in humanity. But those who suffer and sacrifice nothing, at the expense of the brother, will inherit great loss later on. This does not mean they won’t enter the general redemption at the end of time. But they will enter it as a beggar, as someone who sought to prevent what finally benefited them like it benefited everyone else. And long before then, the new Holy Fire will strike with lightning their Tower, to bring it down, and reveal the Pit beneath.

If anyone refuses to make peace with the Common Destiny, then it will war against them until they do. This warring of the Holy Spirit against the citadel of

advantage – which is always increasing division and making its outcome more and more costly for some and more and more cushy for a few – will get more ferocious as time goes on.

The other enemy is religious fanaticism because this force, like the rich, operates by the Satanic code of elected and rejected, saved and damned. Since Christ's Cross overcomes the basis for this duality, the new brotherhood in the Holy Fire of the Spirit contains no such duality within its own ranks, nor does this brotherhood create any such duality against anyone else, including the 'enemies of truth.' To fight for the larger unity is not a partisan fight against anyone; but it will commit us to fight some people because these people seek to block that larger unity. How we fight, how we reveal what the fight is for, becomes crucial. In a bizarre but real sense, we are fighting for the enemies of love even as we fight against their resistance to love, for only if love prevails will they and we ultimately win.

But, how do we love the enemy and fight the enemy at one and the same time? This is the real calling of a Christian. The dove and the serpent: or as Zen says, 'If you meet a poet on the road, show him your poem; but if you meet a swordsman on the road, show him your sword.'

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It is a paradox which must be lived. There is no formula for it, no plan, no map. Living such a paradox is entering uncharted terrain. This is the challenge Christians have most fumbled and failed.

Christ's 'love of enemies' forbids us to indulge in the retaliation of giving evil for evil, and equally it forbids us to fall back on David's moral crusade of good against evil; it enjoins us to be long-suffering and sacrificial to enemies as well as to friends. But, in requiring this, it also realistically calls us to a new battle ground and a new battle which has eschatological implications, since it will be decisive for the future of humanity. Not the battle of good versus evil: but the battle of love, and its brotherhood, against those who, gripped by Satan, [1] deny love can do what Christ showed it can do, and consequently [2] are against the fruit of that love, the universal brotherhood of humanity.

These people will want to kill us, because they want Christ nullified due to the change Christ can bring to the entire world. We will have to fight them, even as we love them; they must know what sword is pointed at them, so they can also know what Cross is prepared to die for them.

Alas for those who will not be kindled by love personally; alas for them because this justifies them in refusing to work for love's spreading abroad, and being kindled communally. Alas for those who deny communion, and try to get ahead, for themselves or their limited family or class or group or nation, alone.

But, in receiving the New Fire, we must never forget what it asks each of us to give up and let go, even as we challenge the world that will give nothing up and

let nothing go. Yet, its greater and deeper calling is what it will 'do' and how far it will go for love. A Christian who does not love the world in this redemptive way is not redeemed.

For in reality redemption is not complete in any person, and certainly not in the church, until the entire world is redeemed.

The desert ascetic who wanted to give his body to a leper was being redeemed. The desert ascetic who would not join in a general accusing of one of the brothers but threw a veil over the man's sins was being redeemed. The desert ascetic who took the blame for the sins of another brother was being redeemed. In these examples, Christianity was not in vain. Nor was it vain in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood against the Nazis and paid the price for it, as did Mother Maria Skobtsova.

Christ is the ultimate courage. Christians have dishonoured Christ by their fear, timidity, irresolution, lying about this by pretending it is a 'gentle' love. It is nothing of the sort. It is simply out and out cowardice. Fear of their own heart becomes a boundless fear of the heart of the world. Because Christ's victory is not subjectively alive in their heart they imagine Christ's victory can have no objective life in the heart of the world: because they have not allowed Christ to conquer in their depths, they have no faith he can conquer in the depths of the world.

Christ tries to encourage us not to be crippled by this double-sided fear. 'Be of good cheer' he says, telling us not simply to be strong, but to have trust everything is just as it must be. Our fear is understandable, but by virtue of Christ's life and deed, it is simply no longer applicable, no longer accurate. Christ has already redeemed the world, and by virtue of that, redeemed each one of us. We have to act on this to discover its truth, buried deep within our heart, and buried deep within the heart of the world.

The world's depth seems more fearful than our own depth because we can say 'yay or nay' for ourselves, but pronouncing yay or nay for the world is different. Yet even in our deepest struggle the world's deepest struggle is implicated: our heart contains all the people we love, our heart carries all the good and ill, all the gifts and poison, of the world. The world affects the way things are in our depths: and we affect the way things are in the world's depths. What we are and what we have not become has influenced the world, even as what the world is and has not become has influenced us.

The world is deeply in us, we are deeply in the world.

To be redeemed in our depth is already the beginning of the redemption of the depth of the world.

Christ asks us to complete it, to finish in the world's deep heart what he began in our deep heart.

It is deep to deep. God, humanity, world, in an unbreakable trinity.

Redemption does not proceed from above to below, but from below it springs up and out: it resurrects the world.

The resurrected life has passed through and includes death, conquering it in a fair existential test; the resurrected heaven has passed through and includes hell, conquering it in a fair existential test; the resurrected fullness has passed through and includes emptiness, conquering it in a fair existential test.

Mystically, the aliveness of life is marked but not limited by death; mystically, the heavenliness of heaven is marked but not limited by hell; mystically, the abundance of fullness is marked but not limited by emptiness. This is visible in the faces on Eastern Orthodox Christian icons – the dark is still there but has given birth to light; the ashes are still there but have given birth to flame.

Through death, life; through hell, heaven; through emptiness, fullness. This mystical paradox, born from existential danger and strife, will finally command all the world as well as commanding the human heart.

This is what we must stake ourselves on, as we reach out passionately to the world, for the world is also staked on it.

The world's depth is a place where all roads cross, and all things, creatures, persons, influence each other, tempt each other, affect each other, for ill and for good; it is a place where we all make each other's burdens heavier or lighten them. Christ plumbed this deep place, which is so very old in the world, and he plumbed it in full. He took it on in full, he was wounded by it in full, and this wound planted a seed in it and changed it, from the very origin of its depth. This seed is the future: the working through, and coming to fruition, of what the redemption in the depth accomplished for all the world. Christ went all the way. He passed through the dark night, he passed through the burning day. He crossed the water, he crossed the fire. He came through, and because he came through, so we will the world, past, present, future, beginning and end. Christ's deed is personal, social, cosmic.

Without faith in the power of Christ in our depths and in the world's depths, we fear too severely to ever become Christ's Cross, and Christ's sword, working redemptively in the world. We must love it all inclusively, but that commits us to fight the forces in the world in thrall to a way of ultimate exclusion.

It is not enough to believe Christ 'redeemed me'; he redeemed the world, and redeemed me as a part, a vital part, but still only a part, of the world.

He came through, to restore the world's innocent beginning; he came through, to open up the road to the future which will be the world's holy end. This is the future the devil will try to derail and stop. It is for this future, of the whole world and of all humanity, that our most severe fight with the devil must be faced. The devil is going to be taken down in the world, for the world.

Christ cleared a path for us in the world. On this path, he is always with us, even if we do not realise it. As we struggle in the world's death that might become life, as we struggle in the world's hell that might become heaven, as we struggle in the world's emptiness that might become fullness, Christ is with us. As we fight, and as we make sacrifice, Christ is in us.

Christ knows that our fear, in extremis, is the crippling fear of the devil, who is our sworn enemy. We sense that if we really put our head above the parapet, if we really make a move, for Christ in the world, then the devil will fiercely and savagely stalk us, very personally. Thus did the devil threaten me in my early twenties when I had received a vision showing Satan enthroned as Christ in western Christianity, especially in America, but in all Christianity more or less. It is already fearful to take on the devil in our depths, but it is more terrifying to take on the devil in the depths of the world. In the former we have to trust our own heart, but in the latter we have to trust the hearts of all other people. Though the devil tries to undermine those who are in their hearts being redeemed by Christ, his real ferocity is directed at anyone who, having tasted redemption in their depths, follows in Christ's footsteps in bringing this redemption to the famished depths of the world. These people the devil punishes like no others. He tries in this manner to intimidate and break them, to cause them to turn back.

In the depths, Christ has already defeated Satan in a fair fight. If we will stand from these depths, and rely on Christ's help, we will prevail over the devil. Christ has not suppressed the devil but cut off the devil's power at origin. If we follow Christ, we can do this. The devil will still have his day, we will be punished by that aspect of the world still taken over by him, whether it be the religious authority, the political authority, or the people become a rabble. But this won't cause us to give in and give up. It will not stop us. "Jacob's heart fainted, but his spirit recovered" [Genesis, 45, 26-27].

Christ has intervened in the world at the 11th hour. But if we do not believe this, and entrust our whole existence in the world to it, then because we know the devil is 'out there', so we do nothing about what is 'between' all human beings, socially, communally, culturally, politically. We let the world 'go to the devil.' The devil wants the world. If the devil ends up possessing the world, then Christ's Cross, and Descent into death and hell, will have been in vain.

It is not in vain.

It is time Christians stopped acting as if it were in vain.

It is those genuinely tasting redemption deep in themselves who will be required to carry the heaviest load for the redemption beyond themselves deep in the world. The first is made last, the greatest is made least, the leader is made servant. You will cry the tears the world cannot weep; you will pay for what is too costly for the world. To those given most, from them most is required. This should be universally, always and everywhere, the way of Christians toward the world.

People throw up their arms in resignation at the fact which no one can miss: little by little death and hell and the void are claiming the world's abyss, and life, truth, wisdom, being expelled from it. But Christians fail to acknowledge that this fight in the world for the world is being lost because they won't follow Christ into the fray, and do in that fray what he did. They care only for their personal life and want that 'saved' – they care little for the communal life of the world. But this stance is not worthy of Christ – no personal life will be secure and well unless the communal life of the world is secure and well. It is the new brotherhood of communion, or it is increasing division. For the Christian, it can only be all or nothing.

We fear the devil is right: 'it is impossible,' he tells us. 'The load on the poor human heart is too much,' he whispers. We are not up to that, we conclude, and then pretend to be puzzled why death and hell and the void continue to increasingly ravage the world.

Anyone who steps up, takes it on, and sees it through, for the redeeming of the world, is of Christ, whether they call themselves Christians or not. Anyone who does not do this, whether the reason is wanting the advantage of being materially rich at the disadvantage of the poor, or wanting the advantage of being saved at the disadvantage of the damned, is not of Christ. The former will sneer at Christ, but the latter will rush to Christ, saying 'Lord, Lord', and he will say to them, 'Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, is following me, and to you I say, I do not know you.'

The Cross, and the Descent into Hades and Hell, bears fruit in those who embrace the world in the mad love of passion. These enworlded ones, these whose life is ultimately situated not in the ascetical desert, not in the worshipping temple, but in the world, and in the world's place of dramatic crossing of the two roads, its Golgotha, these are Christ's servants whom he calls friends, these are his allies, these are what in Lakota is called 'kola.' Let the desert and temple be helps and facilitations, but temporary places as they were in Christ's own life, leading into radical involvement with the world that challenges, breaks, remakes, the world's heart.

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness... Because as he is, so are we in the world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear... he that feareth is not made perfect in love" [1 John, 4,16-18].

The world's dual problem is both the devil trying to own it, and the world's evasion of the whole fated and fateful struggle going on at its heart. Occasionally the poetry of the common deep song breaks through. Usually worldly people distract themselves with the light cafe sounds that fill their busy lives; they will 'keep busy' to block out what their own heart's depth is telling them about existence in this world: 'You are in a battle, and it is life and death, for heaven and hell, for significance or pointlessness.' Each instant matters, because every second the heart is fighting on the edge and every second the

abyss is coming closer, like a huge and numinous beast exiled to the margins who is returning to consume everyone; and this abyss will either swallow everyone into nihilism and ultimate debacle unendingly or its profundity will ignite and uphold everyone forever.

This distraction and shallowness of the world is precisely what the Daemonic does not allow. The Daemonic disallows not only religious 'rising above it all' but also secular shallowness, and that situation where the world is trapped in ambivalence, and the ambivalence is static. The Daemonic strikes, and suddenly the world is submerged in passion's drama, forced to live and act it. Through this sudden 'reversal of fortune', the Daemonic dramatically brings the depths explosively to the surface, and makes them decisive for the world. The drama covered up in the world is made to erupt. This drama takes the world by storm, its earthquake shakes the world's foundation, its waves sweep away the world's edifice. The life and death, heaven and hell, significance and pointlessness, struggle that undergirds everything is rendered existentially conscious and existentially unavoidable. It becomes primary. Suddenly, the real human predicament is hot again, and the world is in the thick of it.

Such times are full of 'signs.' This is when redemptive deeds, with their paradoxical meaning in terms of both love and fight and their mystical effects, become timely and can reach to the foundations.

Redeeming will never pluck anything or anyone out of the world because it is redeeming that shows radical faith in the world and in all things, creatures, people, who dwell in it, have their life and make their action in it. Our love for the world affirms the world's possibility as where God dwells. God dwells in the earth. God dwells in the people. God dwells in the here and now. God dwells in living, in action, in our passion for existence. God dwells in the world. God wounds our original love for the world, which includes God and humanity in its embrace, to deepen it into Christ's passion.

We redemptively love the world in three things.

[a] We follow Christ's heroic deed, and thus do not become intimidated by fear. We declare to the world, 'it is not enough for me to be redeemed unless you are too, and if you won't be I'm going down with you.'

[b] We honour the upside down, inside out, 'reversal', of Christ's deed, and address the world's best in the world's worst. We make the give away of the best to the worst, as he did. The lotus is in the mud: thus we need to be in the mud to point to the lotus. The gold is in the dirt: thus we need to be in the dirt to point to the gold. The transformation of impossibility into possibility is through the piss, shit and vomit of humanity: thus we need to be with the prostitutes and tax collectors, not with the supposedly 'rich and famous', not with the supposedly 'upright and decent.' These admired people are the least in the kingdom of those resurrected from the mud, the dirt, the piss, shit, the vomit. Thus, we need to identify with and ally ourselves to the world at its most stricken, undone, hurting, confused, perplexed, sick, challenged, crisis-ridden,



for only here does the world get real: open to its own predicament and open to what redeems it.

[c] We fight the enemies of the brotherhood of humanity. We draw a line in the sand. In reality we are fighting the devil in them, and so must be prepared to forgive them if they repent. Vengeance is out. But whether we die or they die at the line in the sand is for God to decide. In some situations, this fight is bloodless. In some situations, it is bloody. Even in this, even if we and they fall in battle, we give our blood for the brother, as Christ did.

But this is all a long process. All we have is our love's passion. It failed once, but because of Christ, we are going to try it – and let it be tried – one last, decisive time.

If we have tasted redemption in our depths, then we hunger and thirst for redemption in the depths of the world.

There are no words, there are no images, to make us think we can understand in the abstract, without going through this, without undergoing this, without passing through water and fire. It can be understood only in the concrete, by passing through what Christ passed through, battled with, in the world for the world. We go from our deep place to the deep place of the world. It is Christ sending us.

Our prayer should not be for God to bring us through personally: our personalness is the seed dying for something bigger that we cannot see, about which we have no guarantee, and whose outcome we must let go. Our prayer is not for ourselves but that our loss should be the world's gain: our prayer is for the world, and for every thing, creature, person, who ever has, does now, or ever will, dwell in the world. The communion of the Holy Trinity is what is at stake in the inter-connected, inter-dependent, matter, space, time, of the world. The 'common world' is where the Trinitarian communion will be finally embodied; not 'in' each of us on our own, nor even confined to the boundaries of the church, but in everything and everybody, hence 'between' us all. The mystery of the three persons sharing one nature will be incarnate in the world when all humanity is one, and share one world. When division in humanity, and division in the world, is at an end, then will God be 'all in all.'

St John says the same: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, for the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" [1John, 5, 6-8].

It is not over until it is over.

## SUMMATION= Totally Changed Into Fire

1,

From the Desert Tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity we hear this:

“An old man came to a spiritual elder and said, ‘Father, as much as I am able, I keep my little yoke, my little fast, my prayer, meditation, and contemplative silence; and as much as I am able, I strive to cleanse my heart of thoughts; now what more should I do?’ The elder rose up, and in reply stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten burning lamps. He said, ‘If you will, you can be totally changed into fire.’”

Many versions of this story circulate. In some, the elder says, ‘you can become all fire.’ But this present version, quoted by a western scholar, captures something vital. It is fire that ‘totally changes’ the human being. The Arabic for heart, qalb, means ‘change and transformation.’ If it is only fire that changes and transforms the human being ‘totally’, then the heart’s truest seeking is for fire. The heart is restless, never at peace, until it has become all fire. In searching for God, the heart is searching for fire.

The references to fire in the Old Testament are many. Moses tells the Jews that “out of heaven [God] made you to hear his voice that he might instruct you and upon the earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard him speaking out of the midst of the fire” [Deuteronomy, 4, 36]. The latter is vital because it is fire that is coming to earth, not just to discipline, nor even to enlighten, but to transfigure. The fire contests the world, in order to recover the world for the indwelling of fire, as in the burning bush.

It is to this great, final fire that Christ refers when he says, “I came to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled” [Luke, 12, 49]. Whilst the Jewish Old Testament describes fire as the purifier, and also as the tester of faith, the fire that will change and transform the earth totally is a more radical reality.

God wants for us that we should become totally changed into fire: that we should be Fire Bearers, Spirit-Bearers, after the pattern of Christ. For this great, final Fire is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all things.

2,

Christ did not need to enter the world to purify the divided heart, nor to test the heart’s faith; he came for something far more immense: to fulfil the promise God made to all humanity, by showing the promise would not be withdrawn under any extremity, and that at the very extremity, break-down can become break-through. Christ’s bigger mission was to repair the heart for the ‘project of heart’ to which God entrusts, and hence risks, the fate of everything.

3,

The heart must change radically and totally for God to be present in the human heart. Initially, the heart seeks this, but for a long time, what the heart is seeking is not found. All superstition, idolatry and false piety that so many religious people are prone to arises out of the refusal to face up to, and be honest about, the existential truth that 'what the heart seeks is not found.' In this existential condition, what the heart is searching for is lost to it, and thus it is itself lost. Being lost is vital to a more honest, and more deep, heart struggle, heart journey and heart battle. Most people misuse religion to evade this lostness.

4,

God is hidden from the heart. The heart must hunt God, like a hunter tracking an animal. The coming of God to dwell in the abyss of the human heart cannot be taken lightly. It is the most difficult thing because nothing has a more supreme value. Thus the suggestion in Deuteronomy would seem to be that we will find God only if we really search for him, for it tells us we must search 'with all our heart and all our soul.' In Jeremiah, God says 'you will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you.'

But of even more importance is the promise in Ezekiel, which God makes to all of humanity through the Jewish people: "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh." Ezekiel equates 'getting a new heart' with getting 'a new spirit.' This is the Fire of God dwelling in the heart's passion: shown by the ability of the heart to follow Christ in his Passion.

The Fire comes inwardly before it can come outwardly.

The inward heart is the inner person, the real man, or real woman. If the inner heart is not touched, all our action is in some sense play-acting, faked, not meant, not intended. The 'delusive craving' [Buddhism] or 'failure to hit the mark' [Greek Orthodox Christianity] is lodged deeper down; thus must be dug up from that level. Just being 'good' on some outer level is not sufficient. St Peter commands those who would be brothers "to love one another deeply from the heart" [1Peter, 1, 22]. We cannot love deeply – act from the depth, act deeply for love of the world – unless our heart is changed.

But the question is, what next? Some say, after purification comes contemplation and mystical union. This may be true of the way of soul, but it cannot be true of the way of heart. It may be a gift for some, but it cannot be the answer for the many. The luminous shine of Light, and the beauty and magical fluidity of Water, is only 'secured' by the sufferings and raptures of Fire, come to earth, staked to the ground, for all.

Thus a fuller answer is, after purification the heart is free to live, free to fulfil its destiny as the lover and redeemer of the world, the one who pays the price for

others, and never puts down the burden. In Syriac Christianity, there is in the heart a "bed chamber", which is soul in the heart, and there is a "bright mirror", which is nous in the heart. But there is also an "altar", on which the heart offers sacrifice. In truth, it offers itself as the sacrifice. This cannot be fulfilled except in the world, as it was for Christ.

Finally there opens in the heart what the Syriac Christian Tradition calls "the eye of fire." This is not the spiritual mind of the nous, which has been "taken down in to the heart"; nor is it the many eyes attributed to soul, like the eyes on the bird's wing: the eyes of vision which see the Creator in the creation. It is the hidden eye that sees the world, in all its mess, ugliness, and tragedy, as still 'in transition', as still 'on the move', and thus as capable of redemption. The eye of fire is that in the heart which sees the world as God does, and thus finds its deepest realisation in acting toward the world as God does.

This is the real meaning of Christ's statement in the Beatitudes, "The pure in heart will see God" [Matthew, 5, 8].

Black Elk: "I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the light comes from above, it illumines my heart and I can see, for the eye of my heart sees everything; and through this seeing I can help my people. The heart is a sanctuary at the centre of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the eye. This is the eye of the Great Spirit by which he sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen."

This is the heart which Christ's Cross takes through the gateless gate, the eye of the needle, the undiscovered door in the wailing wall. This is the heart in which the wall of separation between God and humanity is no more. This heart sees the world as God does, and sees what God sees: that no human being is profane, no human being is beyond recall. Thus this heart is moved and enflamed to love in the same way as God does.

This is the heart that accepts the risk, and binds itself to its outcome, no matter the cost. Such a heart has been purified; such a heart has been tested; now, it is given away. Now is the heart sacrificed. To God, for the world.

This is the heart 'kindled' with fire.

God 'knows the secrets of the heart', those which signify our retreat from the whole venture, the whole project, of heart, and the greater and deeper secret, the secret so deep down in heart even we do not know it is there. It is the good ground, the tree of life growing in us, the treasure buried in the root.

We must find God to find the secret of our heart.

The heart wants fire. The heart says yes deeper than it says no. By God's fire the nous will be made luminous, and the soul clothed in beauty, but the heart

will burn with fervour, and that burning will become what kindles fire in the world.

The secret too deep for us is, we have a heart like God's.

The human heart is called to become the world's Redeemer, its Christ, through the wounded passion that alone can forge Suffering Love.

St Paul [Romans, 8, 14-24]: "Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The Spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the Spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Holy Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his suffering so as to share his glory... The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons... from the beginning till now... the entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait..."

St Dionysus: "Fire is in all things, is spread everywhere, pervades all things, without intermingling with them, shining by its very nature 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, violently assimilating to itself everything it triumphantly seizes, and so renewing all things with its life-giving heat and blazing with inextinguishable light... 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."

Deuteronomy, 4, 24: "For the Lord, your God, is a consuming fire."