

Sacred Spaces

Word in the World

Concordia University Graduate Journal of

Theological Studies

Volume 5 • 2013

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Page | 2

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The purpose of this Journal is to engage theology in the issues and realities of contemporary religious life in a secular, pluralistic society undergoing fundamental institutional change. In doing this, we solicit papers not only from graduate students in theology but also from faculty members who wish to participate in our endeavours. Relevant work from other disciplines will be considered. Although our primary call is for papers, we also solicit personal reflections, stories, artwork, poetry, and any other material operative within the different modes of the theological project. Former graduates of the Theological Studies program are especially encouraged to submit materials for consideration. Submissions should be made to: *Word in the World*, Annex D, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve West, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3Q 1M8. We require two hard copies as well as an electronic copy of the paper. Please do not send originals. If you have an idea for a paper and wish to talk to one of our editorial staff, please visit us at www.wordintheworld.ca or email us at: Concordia.wordintheworld@gmail.com. We reserve the right to determine the suitability of each paper for the Journal. Editorial modifications may be made for language, space considerations, or for thematic unity, although we are always careful to maintain the integrity of the author's work.

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Dedication

Dedicated to Dr. Pamela Bright

1937-2012



This issue of *Word in the World* has been respectfully dedicated to an important member of the Theology department, Dr. Pamela Bright, who unfortunately lost her battle with cancer this past year.

Dr. Bright helped to rejuvenate the department in the early 2000s' and in so doing created the perfect arena for *Word in the World* to be come into being. Dr. Bright was a strong believer in the importance of students publishing as early and as often as possible in their academic careers and as such often lent her time and support to the journal by helping in the reading process. She made a strong impact on all those who knew her and she will be sorely missed.

Donations in memory of Dr. Pamela Bright can be made easily and securely, either online, where you can designate your gift by completing the "Make my gift in honour or memory of a person" field, by phone at 514-848-2424, ext. 3884 or by mailing a cheque (payable to Concordia University) to the attention of Annual Giving, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., FB-520, Montreal, QC, Canada, H3G 1M8. Official donation receipts will be issued for tax purposes.

No donation is too small. The donations go towards setting up a student bursary.

Eulogy for Dr. Pamela Bright

Dr. Lucian Turcescu - Chair, Theological Studies Department

Dr. Pamela Bright was the Chair of the Theological Studies Department here at Concordia University from 1995 until 2006 and a Professor of Historical Theology. Her undergraduate studies were in classics, history and theology at the University of Queensland, Australia. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, with an MA in 1983 and then a PhD in 1987.

Dr. Bright joined the faculty of Loyola University in Chicago and then in 1992 was hired here at Concordia. Her publications were focused in the literature, history and art of early Christianity. She was a specialist in Augustinian studies and the interpretation of Scripture in Roman North Africa and Egypt. She, her beloved husband Dr. Charles Kannengiesser, and I shared an interest in patristics and early Christian studies and used to meet at conferences in Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

When I first met her at a conference in 1997, she was desperately trying to rebuild the department that by then had only one or two full-time faculty. Then I had the privilege of working with her on the executive of the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies, of which she was the

president between 2002 and 2004. When I joined the theology team at Concordia as an associate professor in 2005, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that there were already five full-time faculty, one internationally famous patristics scholar (in the person of Dr. Charles Kannengiesser, an emeritus professor from the University of Notre Dame and the Catholic Institute of Paris) who was working as an adjunct faculty, and the department had flourishing graduate and undergraduate programs.

To this contingent one should add the invaluable part-time faculty members who are providing our students with a great teaching experience. The faculty members that Pamela hired have helped make this department great. Theology after Pamela is not just what it used to be, but much more.

Our department was initially associated with the educational vision of the Jesuits because it was part of Loyola College. While maintaining the intellectual rigour of its foundations, the department is now a respectable teaching and research unit in the humanities sector of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Our faculty are the recipients of teaching and research honours and awards. They boast outstanding publications with some of the most prestigious publishers in the world, and 60 to 90 per cent of us hold research grants that amounted to as much as \$100,000 per year. We are moving quickly but seriously in the direction of opening a PhD program. The dignity and courage with which Pamela battled her cancer over more than eight years was something that kept all of us amazed. While accepting the treatment the doctors prescribed, she always refused to give up her projects and did not accept the idea that she could be defeated. This year alone, she designed and oversaw the development of an online course in Celtic Christianity. Her last few weeks were spent completing the work for that course and, in fact, she wrote the notes for her last class a few days before she died. This online course will be an important legacy that Dr. Bright will leave the Department of Theological Studies and Concordia University and the academic community.

Over the past few days, I kept hearing amazing things about Pamela and I quote here from the emails I received about her: “Dr. Bright was a treasure and she touched our lives in so many ways that we will have cherished memories of her. She was a unique scholar, someone who was learned, generous, and totally committed to both her students and her studies; an exceptional professor and a real lady. I was very impressed yet again by the depth of Pamela’s faith, by her courage in the face of obvious suffering,

by her tender love for Charles, by her profound gratitude for life and love and friends, and her words of encouragement and love to all who visited her in the hospital. There are those who are bigger than life and who have left their footprint in our hearts and minds. Pamela was such an individual. Dr. Bright was more than a scholar or a mentor to me. She was like a second mother and a wonderful spiritual guide. One Yiddish-speaking colleague described her as ‘a real mensch’ (that is, a person with admirable characteristics).”

For many colleagues, students, family and friends, Pamela was a mentor, a hero, a generous person who had a vision. Many women in particular, faculty, staff, and students who worked with Pamela, consider her as a role model.

Pamela’s passage from this world into the afterlife was referred to as “a sad moment in a courageous life.” That is certainly the perception of those of us who are left here after her departure. But the Christian hope in the afterlife and the resurrection assures us that here and “now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then [in the presence of God] we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor 13:12-13). May God rest you in peace, dear Pamela, and may you continue to grow from glory to glory in his presence.

Word in the World

Concordia University Graduate Journal of Theological Studies
Volume 5 • 2013

Word from the Chair	Page 7
Acknowledgements	Page 9
Editorial	Page 10
Ode to the Female Mystics and their Theologies of Scripture <i>Lynn Barwell</i>	Page 13
God's Goodness: Tipping the Scales against Evil in Origen and Rob Bell's Theology on The Restoration <i>Miranda Purdy</i>	Page 29
Irish Reality, English Politics: The Pope as Antichrist in James Ussher's Sermon at Wanstead <i>Kathryn Rose Sawyer</i>	Page 40
The Celtic Theme of Soul Friendship <i>Tarek Haider</i>	Page 51
Theotokos: The Roots of Mariology <i>Rachelle Cournoyer</i>	Page 61
139 Revisited <i>Brent Walker</i>	Page 76
Enchiridion Christiani <i>Ian Van Heyst</i>	Page 81
Images:	
Morning Church – <i>Natalia Marshall-Ryan</i>	Page 12
Cloudlight – <i>Karen A. Snair</i>	Page 28
Paul's Journey – <i>Patrick Brendan Shearing</i>	Page 49
Expressive Bavarian Sky – <i>Karen Courtland Kelly</i>	Page 60
Nunc Dimittis – <i>Wilfred Osuri Alera</i>	Page 75
Racing the Light – <i>Karen Courtland Kelly</i>	Page 80
God's Self Sacrifice in a Hindu Temple – <i>Adrian Gorea</i>	Page 86

Word from the Chair

Karen A. Snair

Our latest issue of Word in the World "*Sacred Spaces*" Volume 5 (2012-2013) is finally here and it is my great pleasure to present it to you.

Our journal Word in the World comprises many voices from Concordia's Theological Studies Department and beyond. Every year, the journal has a new theme, a new story to tell. Every year as the team changes, we receive a large selection of poems, pictures, paintings, academic essays, personal insights and more. It saddens me when we have to reject certain pieces because they don't fit our criteria.

This year, the name "*Sacred Spaces*" was selected because it reflects the beauty and gifts of God that can be found in buildings such as churches, through the interactions with family, friends, and strangers, and even in the puffy clouds on a sunny day. Other people find peace by looking at or walking in the mountains. People can also search for an understanding of God through the study of theology such as Female Mysticism, Mariology, and Celtic spirituality. They also express their connection with the spirit through poetry, short stories, photographs and artwork. Sacred spaces are individual and unique. The possibilities are endless but it is my wish and hope as Chair of Word in the World that our readers enjoy reading and looking at the pieces that were selected by our editorial committee.

As Chair of the 2012-2013 issue, I was challenged to step into the big shoes of the previous Chair, Calogero A. Miceli, who served on the journal committee for two years. He knew his position very well, while I was a newly admitted graduate Theology student and new on the committee. I remember going to the first meeting wondering: what have I gotten myself into? My courage to remain came from Professor Pamela Bright because she saw my potential and encouraged me to get involved in it. I knew that, if she didn't think I could do it, she wouldn't have recommended it. They say it takes one person to transform a young person's life. She was one of many wonderful caring professors that Concordia's Theological Studies Department has, who encouraged their students to step

towards the task or dream ahead. Unfortunately as we were getting ready to go to print, she passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. Sacred Spaces is dedicated to her memory because she saw the potential and loved students as her own children. Her love for God was felt through every word she spoke. She had a great dedication to the sacred being, as a devoted Christian, wife, teacher, colleague, mentor and friend. Dr. Lucian Turcescu writes a wonderful eulogy describing what a wonderful person she was. The eulogy was included in this issue because the late Dr. Bright's presence will be forever missed.

It was a wonderful experience because I got to work with a team of wonderful people whose knowledge, hard work and dedication has enabled this journal to become a reality. I have learned a great amount and it saddens me that I cannot continue as "Chair of the 2014 issue." Ever since the journal began, our team has changed. Some have remained for years and others only for the year. Transition is normal because the graduate program is so short. Every year, the Word Executive committee tries to leave something for the next year's staff to build upon. The greatest gift we can give is the gift of persistence, teamwork and strength. We have overcome several obstacles in this 2013 issue including health issues and computer problems. This journal would not be possible if it weren't for Lily-Catherine Johnston, Natalia Marshall-Ryan, Rachelle Cournoyer and our faculty advisor Dr. Lucian Turcescu. I would also like to thank our three former members Calogero A. Miceli, Elisa Pistilli, and Matte Downey for their help and their guidance as they remained on staff during the transitional first couple of months.

I hope all the readers of this journal will enjoy it and get inspired somehow to get involved. We also are always in search of people to join our Executive Committee, help out with editing, maintenance of our website and more. Since the journal is multi-disciplinary, the editorial committee is always on the lookout for new talent including: essays, short stories, poems, photographs, paintings, and more.

We would also like to thank our sponsors without whom this journal would not be possible. They include: Department of Theological Studies, Concordia Graduate Student Association, Concordia Council on Student Life and Concordia University Alumni Association

It was a pleasure and an honour to serve as Chair. I know I am leaving it in good hands. I look forward in seeing where the next committees will take it.

Karen A Snair (2013)

Chair of Word in the World

Acknowledgments

The Executive Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who contributed their time and expertise so that this issue would come to fruition.

Special thanks go to:

Luke Walker

Matthew Briggs

Matte Downey

Ashley Boutin

Dr. Matthew Anderson

Dr. Lucian Turcescu

Connie Di Frusca

Elisa Pistilli

Calogero A. Miceli

Editorial

Natalia Marshall-Ryan

At long last, it is here! The new edition of *Word in the World* is done, and it is an interesting one this year.

We were enthused by the interest from contributors, and the variety of submissions we received. The accepted ones are quite interesting and tend to be found on the fringes of theology, outside the usual areas of research.

In another sense, the various pieces in this edition all point to one thing—the continued vibrancy and variety which lives within the modern Christian conversation. The history of Christianity has never been monolithic or uniform; it teams with a myriad of perspectives, points of view which have served to elucidate and expand faith-based dialogue. Christians today are best served by keeping this tradition of diversity alive, while looking ahead to the development of new historical interpretations, new visions of the future and new answers to the inevitable questions the modern environment will raise.

With this in mind, the submissions for this edition answer the call admirably and will, no doubt, stimulate rich thought and discussion.

Lynn Barwell opening piece, “Ode to the Female Mystics and Their Theologies of Scripture,” offers a detailed and thoughtful exploration of the mystical tradition within Christianity as practiced

by female mystics, promising to shed light on this traditionally marginalized and misunderstood area.

After delving into medieval mysticism, we shift our focus to the Reformation period with “Irish Reality, English Politics: The Pope As Antichrist in James Ussher’s Sermon at Wanstead” by Kathryn Rose Sawyer. A revealing historical discussion of the intersection of faith and politics in (arguably) one of the most charged and tense atmospheres for the Christian faith that has ever existed, the article makes a salient demonstration that from common Biblical material, wildly divergent discussions may arise.

However, from the roots of discord, we cheerfully move on to brighter subjects with Tarek Haider’s “The Celtic Theme of Soul Friendship”, a piece which explores the rich Irish tradition of ‘anamchara’ or the concept of a spiritual companion who provides guidance, counsel and sustenance in the journey of faith. In turn, the soul friend is sustained and enriched by the supplicant and a remarkable bridging of gaps between fellow seekers takes place.

Although, as Haider points out “humankind is morally weak, fragile, and in need of constant support and sustenance,” there is always hope for redemption. This is amply demonstrated in “God’s Goodness: Tipping the Scales

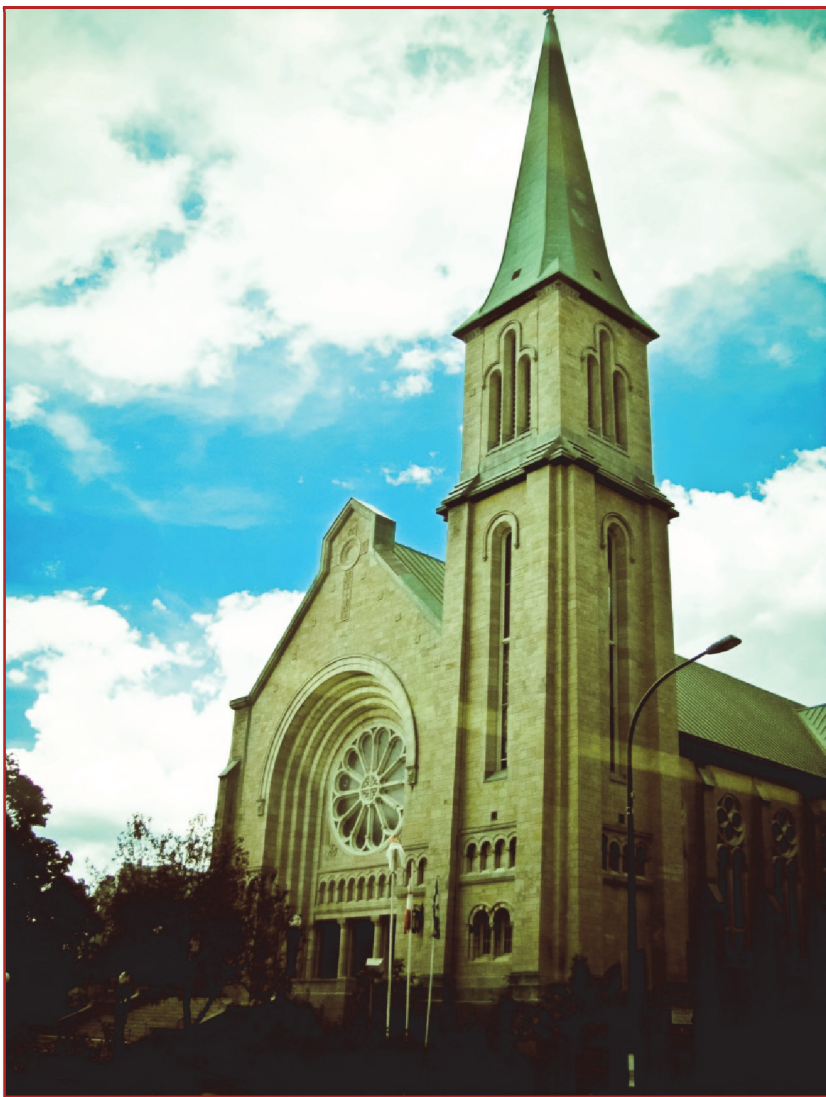
Against Evil In Origen and Rob Bell's Theology On The Restoration" by Miranda Purdy. In this piece, Purdy makes possible a historical exchange between Origen and Bell, centering around the concepts of restoration to, and reconciliation with, God's grace and love; themes common to the early Christian writer's thought and the theology of Bell.

Of course, no consideration of grace would be possible without a proper reflection of the trends and historical figures who made such consideration possible. We are reminded of this in Rachelle Cournoyer's "Theotokos: The Roots Of Mariology." The piece offers an exhaustive accounting of the

development of the tradition of Mariology stemming from Alexandria, eventually resulting in what Cournoyer aptly describes as the view of Mary as "Panagia (she who contains the divine)."

Finally, if there was any doubt that the modern Christian dialogue lacked freshness and diversity, those doubts can be laid to rest with the inclusion of two creative pieces, a poem by Brent Walker, "139 Revisited," and the short story "Enchiridion Christiani" by Ian Van Heyst.

With such a diversity of voices addressing the rich tradition of theological discourse, we hope you enjoy the newest volume of Word in the World.



Morning Church

Natalia Marshall-Ryan

Ode to the Female Mystics and their Theologies of Scripture

Lynn Barwell

Based upon my own personal experience, the writings of the medieval female mystics can elicit a number of emotional responses in readers such as shock, disbelief, and even aversion. And I am not alone; several authors mention the fact that the mystics can, indeed, provoke a variety of reactions in the reader.¹ When faced with medieval texts which recount mystical unions with Christ, detailed reflections on the crucifixion or descriptions of the mystics' extreme ascetic practices and illnesses, modern readers may prematurely dismiss these texts as too strange to be of any value in our current context. It is precisely because they evoke such a strong emotional response that propelled me to go beyond my initial reaction and research this topic with a view to building a better comprehension of the female medieval mystics (hereafter referred to as mystics), their writings, and their contributions with respect to the interpretation of Scripture.

When I first began researching this topic, my question seemed quite simple: how did the mystics interpret Scripture?

After an exhaustive search, I finally found the answer: during medieval times women were prohibited not only from interpreting Scripture, but also from undertaking any official role within the church such as teaching or preaching.² While it would seem that this would signal the end of this paper, on the contrary, it marks only the beginning! Despite the prohibition, the medieval mystics most certainly did interpret, preach and teach Scripture; however, understanding how they interpreted Scripture can, at times, challenge the modern reader. At the heart of this paper, therefore, is the desire to answer this fundamental question; a question which becomes loaded with meaning when applied to the mystics, depending upon where the emphasis is placed. For example, it may mean *how* the mystics dared to interpret Scripture considering they were not permitted by the church to do so. Alternatively, it may mean how the medieval mystics interpreted Scripture in the sense of the methods they employed. Finally, it may be further extended to encompass how the mystics interpreted Scripture given their lack of

¹ Dreyer, "Whose Story Is It," 159; Hollywood "Who Does She Think She Is," 7; Lewis, "Studying Women Mystics," 179.

² Coakley, "Christian Holy Women," 848; Hollywood, "Who Does She Think She Is," 8; Ray, There is a Threeness," 99.

education and literacy. This question also makes an important and very fundamental assumption which is that mystics did, indeed, *interpret* Scripture. In this paper, I will undertake a comprehensive approach to answering this complex question by consolidating and analysing information I have extracted from a wide variety of sources in order to build a broad overview on the topic.

Methodology and Organization

While the foregoing clearly outlines the specific questions I will address, I would like to elaborate on both my methodology and organizational approach. The methodology I employed was to systematically analyse each source with the explicit goal of extracting and compiling any content which clarified how the mystics interpreted Scripture. The paper itself is divided into three sections; three “hypothetical tunnels” the reader must pass through in order to recognize and value the multiple forms of scriptural interpretations inherited from the mystics. Although I have thematically grouped together various key elements within each tunnel, all the elements are, in reality, deeply interconnected. The first tunnel, which I have entitled *Dividing Lines*, was inspired by author Andrea Janelle Dickens, who pinpoints Latin as the dividing line which relegated the mystics’ writings to the domain of literature rather than

theology.³ In this section, I would like to extend this idea further and propose that there were many dividing lines which the mystics had to cross in order to both access and interpret Scripture. I specifically address how the surrounding patriarchal environment both restricted and shaped their access to and their interpretation of Scripture. The second tunnel relates to both the methods the mystics employed to interpret Scripture as well as the many genres and forms of expression they employed to express these interpretations; hence the title *Creative Pathways*. My third and final tunnel is actually a bridge, as this theme groups together the many “gaps” I encountered when carrying out my research on this topic. Under this theme, called *Bridging the Gaps*, I will highlight several areas where I encountered a lack of available or concise information in my research, attempt to provide an explanation as to why there is a lack of information and describe how bridging these gaps could facilitate a better understanding of the mystics’ Biblical interpretations. Upon emerging from this third tunnel, I provide some concluding remarks regarding the untapped potential which remains to be discovered with respect to the mystics and suggest how applying a particular type of hermeneutical approach may help the modern reader’s endeavours to access the wealth of theological insights contained in these

³ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 4.

interpretations. I will close with a personal anecdote linking back to my introduction and, by then, have hopefully convinced you, the reader, to take a foray into the wonderful world of the medieval mystics.

Dividing Lines

The mystics were, without a doubt, living in a patriarchal and misogynistic environment. The concern of this present work is not to establish nor prove this to be the case as this has been researched and described extensively by many authors.⁴ What concerns this paper, is the practical repercussions this misogynistic environment had on the mystics' access to Scripture and their opportunities to interpret Scripture. In other words, what were the dividing lines which stood between the mystics and their ability and opportunities to interpret Scripture?

There were certainly many barriers which hindered women from interpreting Scripture, and this section first examines how becoming a mystic, which generally meant joining a monastery, permitted women to live a life of devotion to God and receive some form of education. In fact, many mystics, inspired and nourished by this cloistered lifestyle, began to interpret Scripture and record these

interpretations for others. In order to do so, however, as will be demonstrated, they often had to overcome tremendous obstacles and succeeded by capitalizing on these educational opportunities and using their ingenuity to gain authority to both interpret Scripture and play a key role in their community.

One of the first and foremost implications of living in a patriarchal society was that women were excluded from the world of education.⁵ As mentioned in my introduction, Dickens underscores Latin, a language reserved for the educated male, as a dividing line between what was considered "popular" knowledge and what was "institutional" or learned knowledge.⁶ Lack of formal education, therefore, was a very important and significant barrier which restricted women from both participating in and gaining any competence in the educational realm. One way to overcome this barrier, which was ultimately a lifestyle choice in a society where choices were very limited, was to join a monastery where women could escape the alternative of marriage and bearing children, and, to some degree, obtain some form of education.⁷ While the form this education took varied widely, there was no official or organized educational system. By taking a vow to live a life of

⁴ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages*, 2-4; Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 752; Dreyer, "Whose Story Is It," 158; Hollywood, "Who Does She Think She Is," 8; Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 4.

⁵Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 743; Coakley, "Christian Holy Women," 853; Hollywood, "Who Does She Think She Is," 8; Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 4; Ray, "There is a Threeness," 102.

⁶ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 4.

⁷ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 6,17; Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 4,28.

service to God, the mystics embarked on a path which could potentially allow them to go beyond the restrictive social and educational boundaries.

It would be virtually impossible for me to describe how each and every mystic was educated as they were all, in many ways, very unique. What I can do is highlight various features which mark how the mystics were educated and, more specifically, how they were able to access Scripture, as this had a profound impact on their mode of interpreting Scripture.

Even if a mystic could read Latin, as some mystics did, such as Hildegard of Bingen, access to books was extremely rare.⁸ That being said, some mystics did have access to books and one such book would have been the Psalter, a book of Psalms.⁹ Books aside, according to Powell and Henderson, what mystics did receive was a “solid and rigorous oral education,” which likely included some knowledge of the Church Fathers and rhetoric as well.¹⁰ Their knowledge of Scripture came primarily from their daily life experience in the monastery, through participation in daily prayers, liturgical services and constant exposure to readings and chanting of Scripture and sermons.¹¹

In addition to this oral form of education, mystics were also trained to develop their sense of vision. This may have taken the form of explicit visualization exercises, such as meditating specific Biblical texts, images, religious paintings or Jesus on the cross.¹² Over time, through rigorous training, the mystics developed the art of visualization so successfully that they were considered experts at the time and are recognized as major contributors to the development of visionary literature.¹³

Another important element which impacted upon the mystics’ access to Scripture, interestingly enough, pointed out in an article by June Mecham, was the architecture of the buildings in which they resided which restricted their exposure to the aural or the visual, as they were often cloistered behind windows, grills and doors.¹⁴ All of the aforementioned certainly explains why a significant group of mystical interpreters have been grouped together and classified as visionaries. In fact, McGinn marks a distinction between the mystic and the visionary wherein he describes the mystic as having an experience of God, versus the visionary who receives a message from God.¹⁵ While this may differentiate mystics from visionaries, regardless of the

⁸ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 17; Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” 743-744.

⁹ Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” 753.

¹⁰ Powell and Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 30-31.

¹¹ Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” 752; Newman, “What Did It Mean,” 14; Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, 6; Powell and Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 41.

¹² Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 454; Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, 6.

¹³ Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 852; Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 450; Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, 6, 20.

¹⁴ Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 453.

¹⁵ McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 335.

nature of the connection to the divine, both the mystic and the visionary were enabled by their respective relationship to God to overcome the official prohibition which banned them from interpreting Scripture.¹⁶

As many authors underscore, it was precisely because the mystics claimed to be merely “vessels” or “channels” of the divine which provided them with the authority to interpret Scripture.¹⁷ This, as Dickens explains, is what allowed them to “trump” the official interdictions, for it was not their voice which was speaking, it was God’s.¹⁸ Their avowed connection to the divine also brought with it an informal recognition of authority by their peers which permitted them to interpret, teach, heal and preach.¹⁹

If a mystic wanted to record her interpretations, which may have been received in the form of visions or through words, given many were illiterate, it was a monumental task to find the means to do so. Often, the mystics were able to overcome this difficulty and persevere precisely because they had received a direct divine command.²⁰ For the illiterate, this meant working with a confessor or

adviser who was willing to write down what the mystic dictated or described.²¹ For others it meant drawing, painting or utilizing other forms of artistic expression. Hildegard of Bingen, for example, found expression in many forms from music to art and writing and is one example of an extraordinarily gifted woman of this period.²² It is obvious that those of us who wish to decode these interpretations today are faced with the challenge of understanding interpretations expressed in forms other than the literary, and when in expressed literary form, the added difficulty of finding the female voice behind texts written by men who may have inadvertently or purposefully masked or distorted the message the mystic intended to transmit.²³ To summarize this section, first the mystics received a distinct form of education and access to Scripture, based largely on the senses, which often channelled them to express their learning in these same modes. Secondly, the mystics were able to overcome the social and official religious barriers which prevented them from interpreting Scripture by claiming an authority which came directly from God. This, however, is only one part of the puzzle. Other mystics crossed the dividing lines by expressing themselves in the vernacular and through other modes of expression such as tapestry and music,

¹⁶ Hollywood, “Who Does She Think She Is,” 8.

¹⁷ Grant, “Hildegard and Wisdom,” 126; Newman, “What Did It Mean,” 5; Ray, “There is a Threeness,” 99.

¹⁸ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 6.

¹⁹ Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 848; Hollywood, “Who Does She Think She Is,” 8; Newman, “What Did It Mean,” 5; Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, 27; Powell & Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 34; Ray, “There is a Threeness,” 101.

²⁰ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 6; Grant, “Hildegard and Wisdom,” 126; Ray, “There is a Threeness,” 99.

²¹ Coakley “Christian Holy Women,” 851.

²² Grant, “Hildegard and Wisdom,” 125; Powell and Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 32.

²³ Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 851; Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 6.

addressed under this next tunnel,
Creative Pathways.

Creative Pathways

While the mode in which the mystics received Scripture greatly influenced how they expressed their interpretation of Scripture, societal norms also permitted women other forms of expression which the mystics employed to diffuse their interpretations. Many of these creative interpretations can also be connected to the four senses of medieval interpretation as outlined in Holcomb and Beer: the allegorical, the literal, the moral and the anagogical.²⁴

If the mystics were channelled to develop a higher sense of oral and visual skills, they were also restricted, both by their lack of formal education and social barriers from expressing themselves in the scholarly realm. According to Petroff, even if a mystic was able to write in Latin, they were usually not comfortable doing so.²⁵ While to some degree this may seem limiting, it actually propelled them to find alternative and socially accepted forms for their writings and expressions. This channelling into other forms of expression ultimately served two purposes; it permitted them to express themselves in a realm of their own, a world “unmediated by men,” which had the added benefit of allowing other

women access to this knowledge as well.²⁶

In my research to date, several authors underscore the creativity and diversity of the wide variety of genres and forms of expression which the mystics employed to interpret Scripture including: liturgical tapestries, embroidery, textiles, dialogues, drama, music, devotional literature, poetry, visions and commentaries.²⁷ All of these creative expressions were extremely valuable in providing women, especially lay women, with access to Scripture which otherwise would have been impossible.²⁸

Unfortunately, the mystics have often been recognized precisely for their artistic and literary merits rather than their theological insights.²⁹ While on the one hand, thanks are owed to both the literary and art worlds for recognizing the value of these works, the mystics have not always been appreciated for the very reasons they undertook these endeavours, which was to communicate their insights regarding the divine. I am pretty certain that Mechthild of Magdeburg did not consider that she was writing poetry -

²⁶ Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 455-467; also underscored in Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 850.

²⁷ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 26; Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 852; Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 455-456; Powell & Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 31; Storey, “A Theophany of the Feminine,” 16.

²⁸ Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” 759-760, 766-767; Dreyer, “Whose Story Is It,” 157; Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 455-456; Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 3; Ray, “There is a Threeness,” 80.

²⁹ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 3; Lewis, “Studying Women Mystics,” 176.

²⁴ Holcomb, *Christian Theologies of Scripture*, 73; Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 33.

²⁵ Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 27.

she was expressing her theology. This brings to the forefront a fundamental and underlying premise that I have thus far been taking for granted, the basic notion that the mystics did, indeed, interpret Scripture. I think it is important at this point to address this question, as identifying the connection between Scripture and the mystics' writings is not always explicit and obvious. I will undertake this topic more fully in my third tunnel, where I describe how the relationship between mysticism and Scripture is quite complex. For the moment, however, I offer some commentaries on what several authors have pointed out with respect to distinguishing interpretation versus experience, since many mystics wrote based upon their personal experience.

According to McGinn, the "interdependence of experience and interpretation" must be recognized for the text to be fully appreciated and that favouring one element over the other can greatly reduce the theological value of the text.³⁰ Smart makes this same point and further explains that an experience will "gain its meaning in part from a range of doctrinal statements taken to be true."³¹ What can be drawn from these two quotes is that there is a fundamental relationship between experience, interpretation and doctrine. Unfortunately, with respect to the mystics, both their knowledge of

doctrine and the nature of their experience have, at times, been seen as inferior when compared to men. For example, doctrine was not taught to them explicitly; although Petroff underlines that they were certainly "exposed to doctrine daily" through prayer, sermons and art in the churches.³² Furthermore, the physical nature of their experience was "generally depreciated by traditional Christian thinkers."³³ Therefore, while determining the nature of the relationship between experience, doctrine and interpretation is quite complicated in the case of the mystics, I do not believe it should necessarily translate into the conclusion that their expressions, which have been sometimes negatively judged, do not constitute valid interpretations of Scripture. That being said, I am not proposing that all writings composed by the mystics merit the same theological value; some will obviously have greater weight and depth than others. This is evident; the mystics were not receiving a formal education and the creative ways in which they both expressed and experienced their interpretations may not necessarily be particularly enlightening for the modern reader. Nonetheless, given the personal nature of these recordings, it is possible to frame some of these interpretations within the traditional methods which existed during the medieval period.

³⁰ McGinn, *The Presence of God*. xiv.

³¹ Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience." 79.

³² Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 9.

³³ Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing." 360.

It should be mentioned that my research did not uncover any extensive description regarding the methods mystics employed to interpret Scripture. This being said, I did encounter some interesting and novel connections to the four medieval senses of Scripture; the allegorical, the literal, the moral and the analogical as outlined in Holcomb or Beer.³⁴ My goal for this exercise is merely to underscore how certain elements associated with the mystics fit within this scheme.

The allegorical

While mystical interpretation is often related to allegorical interpretation, due to the close connection to the divine, not all mystics interpreted solely from an allegorical perspective. Hildegard of Bingen, for example is specifically cited as utilizing all four senses in her interpretations.³⁵ One allegorical theme which was often present in the mystics' writings is a symbolic marital relationship with Christ as the bridegroom, an interpretation based on prior allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs.³⁶ Allegory was, without a doubt, an extremely useful method which permitted the mystics to voice their opinions regarding topics which could not be openly expressed, such as their sexuality.³⁷

³⁴ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 33; Holcomb, *Christian Theologies of Scripture*, 73-74.

³⁵ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

³⁷ Dreyer, "Whose Story Is It," 164; Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," 351-352.

The Literal Sense

Although allegory was a very useful method for interpretation, the mystics also interpreted Scripture literally. The visionaries, for example, would interpret the concrete visual details contained in their visions and subsequently analyse them allegorically.³⁸ It could be argued here that the mystics were actually first carrying out an allegorical interpretation of Scripture (a vision), followed by a literal translation, which lead to a final allegorical interpretation. The main idea here is that the mystics actually *created* a variety of languages, such as the visual, which lead to quite complex and unique interpretations.

Another way in which the mystics interpreted literally evolved from their meditations of Jesus on the cross, which often resulted in a very personal and intense physical experience.³⁹ This use of the physical senses, on the one hand often encouraged by the clergy, was often denigrated as an inferior form of knowledge.⁴⁰ This form of physical interpretation or experience, which may seem bizarre to today's readers, was of utmost value to the mystics as the experience often had an empowering and transformative effect.⁴¹ It most certainly played a large role in contributing to the theological understanding of the humanity of

³⁸ Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, 33.

³⁹ Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," 346; Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 12.

⁴⁰ Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," 352.

⁴¹ Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 14.

Christ.⁴² These are but two examples of how the mystics interpreted Scripture literally. There are, obviously, many others.

The moral

The mystics also interpreted Scripture as a guide to how to live a moral and virtuous life. One important contribution made by the mystics in this respect was to demonstrate, through their own experience, how to respond to the divine.⁴³ In reality, both the literal and moral sense were an integral part of the mystics' interpretations. As Millhaven explains, the mystics were very concerned with concrete knowledge which could be applied to the present and were less concerned with "universal truths."⁴⁴ This, I believe, is further corroborated by the fact that, as many authors suggest, the mystics played a crucial and pivotal religious role for the women of their time.⁴⁵

The anagogical

The mystics also undertook anagogical interpretations of Scripture in several interesting ways. First of all, both Mechthild of Magdeburg and Hildegard of Bingen made some very imaginative connections between heaven and

music.⁴⁶ Mystics also employed Scripture to envision the kingdom of God as a place where both women and men were equal; quite the opposite of the dominant worldview in which they lived!⁴⁷ Finally, the mystics interpreted their own physical deprivations and suffering as being redemptive and a form of salvation for others.⁴⁸

This brief summary, I believe, highlights but a small portion of the rich potential left to us by the mystics. Some writings have elements of all four types of interpretation; others may encompass only one, such as the literal. My analysis is, at best, only a rudimentary attempt to place some of the elements present in the mystics' interpretations into the traditional framework of medieval Biblical interpretation. My overall objective in doing so was to highlight how many mystics employed traditional methodologies, evidenced in their theologies, which played a valuable role in empowering the mystic and enlightening the surrounding community.

That being said, finding these theological insights within such a wide variety of forms of expression is no easy feat. When undertaking this research, I encountered many grey areas where I did not find the concise answers I was seeking. This is why I have entitled my

⁴² Coakley, "Christian Holy Women," 850; Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," 347.

⁴³ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 9; Coakley, "Christian Holy Women," 852.

⁴⁴ Millhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing," 357.

⁴⁵ Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 5; Mecham, "Breaking Old Habits," 455.

⁴⁶ Powell and Henderson, "The Power of Words," 37.

⁴⁷ Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 19; Storey, "A Theophany of the Feminine," 17.

⁴⁸ Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 12; Ray, "There is a Threeness," 89.

third and final tunnel *Bridging the Gaps*, where I will pinpoint several areas where I found a lack of information, briefly reflect on the reasons for these lapses, and propose how these gaps can be bridged and are being filled.

Bridging the Gaps

If I had to summarize why I encountered difficulties in finding the precise information I was seeking, it could be attributed to two main factors. The first relates to the fact that history as we know it has been mediated by men which has greatly impeded our knowledge of women's history.⁴⁹

Secondly, mysticism, to a certain degree, remains an uncharted territory. In this section I will briefly set out how these two factors combined rendered my research quite complex. In addition, I suggest how bridging some of these gaps through studies which specifically address the aforementioned two factors could help the modern reader profit from the theological insights inherent in these writings.

Mysticism in itself is a complex topic. Even Bernard McGinn, who has written a number of books on mysticism, is hard pressed to provide a short and concise definition of the mystic.⁵⁰ Often times, as McGinn and others explain, mysticism has been reduced to the simple criterion of transcendence or

experience of the divine.⁵¹ This creates several blockages; one of which is that it renders academic inquiry more complicated as transcendence is often seen as being incompatible with academic study.⁵² As several authors point out, it is the context that should actually be one of the key considerations when studying the mystic.⁵³ For, if the context is removed, as proposed in an article by Hollywood which cites the perspective of atheist Simone de Beauvoir, mystics were in all likelihood nothing more than mere narcissists!⁵⁴ Since, according to McGinn and Smart, it is the context that both induces and frames the mystical experience; it is imperative that any research which seeks to understand a specific mystic requires knowledge of the particular context in which she lived. If the context is of primary importance, so is the connection to Scripture. Here again, the difficulty lies in finding concrete connections to Scripture within the writings, which in this case is rendered even more complex because they were women *and* they were mystics. From the perspective of gender, as I have underlined in my first tunnel, *Dividing Lines*, the mystics' access to Scripture was not always direct; Scripture was often mediated to them and the mystics have often been mediated to us! In addition, they could

⁵¹ Ibid, xi.

⁵² Dreyer, "Whose Story Is It," 151.

⁵³ McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, x; Newman, "What Did It Mean," 3,6; Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience," 78.

⁵⁴ Hollywood, "Who Does She Think She Is," 12.

⁴⁹ Lewis, "Studying Women Mystics," 176.

⁵⁰ McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, xv.

not “wear their learning on their sleeves in the forms of quotations and citations.”⁵⁵ While the connections to Scripture may seem elusive at times, it should not, by any account, be taken for granted that they were inexistent. According to Katz, author of *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, “the role of scripture, contrary to much scholarly opinion, is essential to the major mystical traditions.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, Katz states that the evidence supporting this claim lies within the literature which has been produced by the mystical traditions.⁵⁷

If hindsight is 20/20, I also now realize that I approached this topic quite naively. Somehow, I expected to find my information in a rational and orderly manner, for example a book which would clearly state and explain “this is how the female mystics interpreted Scripture.” I now know much better! For I have come to realize that these writings are anything but rational and organized! They are affective, creative, artistic and literary and, as such, do not find place in the male dominated history of hermeneutics. In fact, I became somewhat obsessed by the fact that some of the sources I have encountered which describe the history of hermeneutics skip from Augustine to Aquinas, as if nothing new or interesting happened between these two

theologians.⁵⁸ In my struggle to understand why this is the case, I can only provide my own speculations regarding this lapse between the two theologians, as finding concrete answers would require a significant amount of research which is beyond the scope of this paper.

According to McGinn, up until the 12th century, mysticism was “inseparable” from exegesis.⁵⁹ After the 12th century, it would seem that mystical interpretation had become a separate and independent entity and it would be interesting to uncover why. One reason is likely that mysticism, at that point in time, did not fit within the developmental path mainstream theology was taking and, therefore, became excluded. Certainly, as already noted, the creative methods which the female mystics were employing were not part of the mainstream theology, and what had been valued with respect to the interpretation of Scripture was the dominant and rationalized male perspective. Unfortunately, this narrowed recognition of what constitutes valid Scriptural interpretation excluded the many diverse forms which did develop in the time space between Augustine and Aquinas. It is, therefore, not surprising that readers who are unfamiliar with mysticism and largely accustomed to mainstream interpretation would find

⁵⁵ McGinn, “How Augustine Shaped Medieval Mysticism,” 5.

⁵⁶ Katz, *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁸ Two examples are : Holcomb, *Christian Theologies of Scripture* and Alexander S. Jensen, “Word of God or Witness.”

⁵⁹ McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, xi.

reading the mystics akin to taking up a foreign language.

A final problem related to defining the mystics is due to the fact that “female-authored texts were viewed as not worthy of being described as theology” and “were relegated to the realm of mysticism.”⁶⁰ Consequently, regardless of the content of their writings, the mystics have been placed together into one big pot called “mystics,” which creates a phenomenal challenge to constructing an integrated framework regarding how the mystics interpreted Scripture. To some degree, each mystic is unique and, as underscored by Powell and Henderson, some mystics, such as Hildegard of Bingen, “defy categorization.”⁶¹ I am certain that there are many other gaps which I have not mentioned to be filled with respect to the mystics. Happily enough, some of these gaps are closing. Scholars have begun to bring the mystics into the modern world since the 1980s. Part of the reasons behind this flurry of recent scholarship owes itself to a re-interpretation of the mystics by several scholars.⁶² This recent scholarship proposes that, contrary to past interpretations which saw the mystics as repressed victims, the mystics were actually quite the opposite; women who employed Scripture and theology to

both empower themselves and others.⁶³ This reinterpretation has provided an incredible opportunity for renewed scholarship regarding the mystics and has brought new forms of theologies to the forefront, such as artistic and musical interpretations.⁶⁴ This reinterpretation of the mystics also connects nicely to a passage I read regarding feminist hermeneutics, which Johnson describes as “interpreting biblical texts with a view to naming long-forgotten women whose stories have been long-distorted and reclaiming their voice as contributing to the history of salvation.”⁶⁵ I think this same passage could easily be applied to the reclaiming of the mystics’ voices, which brings me to my conclusions.

Conclusions

My overall goal in writing this paper was to prove that in order to appreciate and uncover the theological value inherent in the wide body of work left to us by the mystics would require some form of general framework of understanding. In other words, I think that the modern reader must understand how to interpret the mystics in order to understand how the mystics interpreted Scripture! I came to this conclusion primarily through my own frustration at my inability to understand some of the

⁶⁰ Mecham, “A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing,” 457.

⁶¹ Powell and Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 51; see also McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 333.

⁶² Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 450.

⁶³ Coakley, “Christian Holy Women,” 850; Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, 6.

⁶⁴ Mecham, “Breaking Old Habits,” 448; Powell and Henderson, “The Power of Words,” 29; Schroer and Bietenhard, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 9.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Johnson, “Feminist Hermeneutics,” *Chicago Studies* 27, no. 2 (1988), 124.

bizarre and strange elements contained in these writings. This need for a methodology or a formative background was confirmed for me when I read two very relevant articles which expressly state the need for a methodological approach to reading the mystics.⁶⁶

In this paper, I have attempted to portray the mystics as very unique individuals who faced many challenges in order to find their voice and interpret Scripture. While we are fortunate to have these written and creative interpretations, issues such as access to Scripture, literacy, lack of research and the repercussions of the patriarchal environment in which they lived can greatly impede our ability to navigate through these interpretations. As I previously pointed out, mystics have often been appreciated and valued for their modes of expression rather than their theological insights. Despite the difficulties, I believe I have provided many answers to the complex question of how the mystics interpreted Scripture. I have demonstrated that they overcame the obstacle of being prohibited from interpretation by claiming divine authority and by utilizing a wide variety of genres and artistic media. I explained how their methods of interpretations can be seen to fit well within the traditional medieval four senses of Scripture (allegorical, literal, moral and

anagogical) and explained why linking mystics to Scripture is not always direct and linear, although this connection is a fundamental part of the mystical experience.

In addition to the three tunnels I have proposed, I also found an article by Susan Garrett regarding hermeneutics which was very helpful in providing me with a useful framework to employ when faced with the mystics' writings; "adopt a hermeneutic of generosity."⁶⁷ This includes considering that the "interpreter we are considering – whatever era, whatever religion, whatever ethnicity, whatever ideology – was probably not a raving lunatic."⁶⁸ Dr. Garret goes on to further explain how interpreters may be "quite rational and comprehensible if you grant their premises and understand their interpretive strategies."⁶⁹ This can be a useful guideline when faced with the mystics, as I will now demonstrate in the following anecdote.

At the beginning of this paper, I spoke of how it was the emotional content of the mystics' writings which drew me in. It reminded me of a course I took on Christian spirituality where I distinctly recall that the reading which drew the greatest response was by Catherine of Genoa.⁷⁰ One particular student, disturbed by what she read, decided that Catherine of Genoa was likely

⁶⁶ See Dreyer, "Whose Story Is It," and Lewis, "Studying Women Mystics."

⁶⁷ Garrett, "Biblical Studies and Real-world Hermeneutics," 75.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Tyson, *Invitation to Christian Spirituality*, 209.

psychologically deranged (although I must mention that she was a psychology student), thus dismissing any spiritual or theological value to the reading. Yet it was precisely the disturbing elements of this same reading which I found compelling and urged me to understand how Catherine of Genoa's experience of the divine brought her to express her faith in such a strange way. In the end, it is the bizarre, disturbing and emotional nature of the mystics' writings which, despite our discomfort, draws our interest and leads us to reflection. These writings were, to some degree, intended to be affective and whether or not we choose to persist and search for theological value in these interpretations will depend on our own personal motivation and interest. Armed with some basic background information such as I have proposed through my three hypothetical tunnels, could permit modern readers to persevere in their endeavours and find therein spiritual nourishment and theological insights. After all, I sincerely believe, as did the mystics, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

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Cloudlight

Karen A. Snair

God's Goodness: Tipping the Scales against Evil in Origen and Rob Bell's Theology on the Restoration

Miranda Purdy

Rob Bell and Origen of Alexandria both explore the notions of restoration, or reconciliation, within their theologies. As will be discussed in greater detail, this theological framework deals with the possibility of hell as being redemptive and corrective in order for souls to return into communion with God. For many this theory delves into the controversial topic of universalism, wherein all souls, regardless of profession of faith or deed, will receive salvation. For both Bell and Origen, God's love is stronger and more powerful than any force opposing it and therefore his ability to save through Christ is beyond any force attempting to resist.

Origen of Alexandria lived during a time of persecution in the Church¹. In fact, martyrdom was a reality at this time for many Christians and theologians. His father, Leonides, was thrown in prison and later beheaded due to his beliefs during the persecutions of Septimius Severus, which led to Origen's views on faith being lived out as a witness regardless of the consequences. This was even to the point where martyrdom was welcomed and even longed for by Origen². To his

disappointment, he was only martyred later in life. However, throughout his life he professed several teachings which have been received to various degrees by various groups since their propagation³. One of the most controversial of these views is that of ἀποκατάστασις, more simply apokastasis or restoration.

Restoration, in the view of Origen, is linked to his particular notion of pre-existent souls⁴. This theory speaks of what a soul began as at the beginning of creation⁵. When referencing back to the beginning of creation it is important to note that within this theory souls exist before the body and as such the soul exists in ways beyond what

Origen as saying: "It is of no use to me to have a martyr father if I do not behave well and honour the nobility of my ancestors, that is, the martyrdom of my father and the witness that made him illustrious in Christ."

³ Benedict XVI, *Fathers of the Church*. 23. According to the text, Origen urged his father to not "shrink from the supreme witness of faith", among other things. Based upon this, I would account a portion of Origen's zeal for propagating potentially controversial teachings to his desire to also enact this notion, as well as his desire for martyrdom.

⁴ It is of particular interest that many within the Church who claimed views on pre-existent souls were condemned because of its potential associate with reincarnation. Origen did not, however, claim any form of reincarnation within his theology; so his condemnation was not associated with this. Alexander Alekasis, "Was There Life beyond Life beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 55 (2001): 175.

⁵ Tom Greggs, "Exclusivist or Universalist? Origen the 'Wise Steward of the Word' (CommRom.V.1.7) and the Issue of Genre." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. 9. no. 3 (2007): 319.

¹ Justin S. Holcomb *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York City: New York University Press, 2006) describes Origen as having lived from 185 AD to 254 AD.

² Pope Benedict XVI. *The Fathers of the Church: from Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009. 23 quotes his Homilies on Ezekiel, 4, 8, showing

is corporeally created⁶. Before any soul exists within a bodily state, these souls are said to have moved away from God's 'divine warmth' and thus fell into a cooled state, from *psychesthai* to *physche*⁷. As the soul becomes part of a corporeal body, it must then be restored to its original state and in order to do this it must move back towards God's warmth⁸.

In order to return to this state a soul must be restored, and also changed in a manner that negates its original propensity towards doing evil. This is not quite as simple as it sounds. For Origen this process moves from the separated state of the soul to its participation in the Son of God, its purifying enlightening, and finally to a restored state where it can again be in communion with God's divine warmth.

Participation in the Son of God refers primarily to actions of a soul while on Earth⁹. It is even said that, "Origen's sense of salvation is grounded in participation... For Origen, human beings gain adoption as sons by participating in the Son of God; just as they receive wisdom in participating in Him as Wisdom, and are made holy and spiritual by participation in the Spirit."¹⁰ As such one can come to the awareness that life in this world does matter, and that devotion, prayer, and spiritual discipline can only then become united with Christ –

and share unity with the eternal Logos¹¹. What is particularly interesting, with regards to one's need to participate with the Son of God in order to move along in this process, is that one does not necessarily need to be aware of their participation. It is inferred that when intentionally done it may be easier as one would then have a motivation to live in a manner that reflects that they are made in the image of God. One may unintentionally participate but their participation can only then be limited as they would only have their own morality and conscience to fall upon, rather than prayer, devotion, and discipline to guide their participation.

Whilst participation in the Son of God primarily occurs when a soul is on the Earth, the proceeding state of purification begins for some souls while on Earth but mainly occurs in hell. The stage wherein purification takes place is most well known as restoration. The reasoning for this stage is that souls must atone for what is done throughout their existence¹². The method of atonement is enlightening punishment. If a soul suffers on Earth then this might be used as a mitigating factor when the time comes for them to suffer in hell. It is said that "those punished for sin in this life will forego punishment in the next."¹³ Hell in this framework is therefore to be considered as curative rather than punitive; whoever is saved is saved by fire, so that the fire may melt and dissolve any admixture the man

6 Tom Greggs. *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity*. Oxford Publishing House, 2009: 57.

7 Rowan A. Greer. *Origen*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979; 11. Greggs *Barth, Origen*. 56.

8 Greer, *Origen*. 13.

9 Greggs *Barth Origen* .61, speaks of the souls participation with Christ while in pre-existence as participation with the eternal Logos. However this speculation is not thorough as he does not have much Biblically as well as Platonically to base his argument on.

10 Greggs *Barth Origen*. 66.

11 Greer, *Origen*.

21. Greggs. *Barth Origen* .66.

12 Greggs, *Universalist?*. 317.

13 Mark Scott. "Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*. 18. no. 3 (2010): 351 , as discussing Origen's homily on Leviticus 14.4.2.

has of the leaden element, so that all may become good gold,... the more a man brings there of lead, the more he suffers burning, that the lead may be fully melted, so that even if there be little gold it may still be left in purity.¹⁴

As from the text above we see that the purpose of the fires of hell is to refine one's soul rather than to inflict pain¹⁵. Other texts have used the analogy of God in this manner as a physician, or educator, as in his mind the suffering inflicted is not that of a conqueror or destroyer¹⁶. As a physician the pain is meant to refine and purify. As an educator the suffering is meant to teach why goodness is necessary.

Equally important are the nuances placed on the substance and length of one's punishment. Hell, in Origen's view is not necessarily eternal. His justification for this includes the apparent misuse of the word eternity in our biblical translations. He asserts that the Greek word *aeon* refers first and foremost to a "remarkable period of duration"¹⁷ and the implication of a period of duration is that it has an end. As well, the Greek reading of *perpetuum et aeternum tempus* is cited as referring to an illimitable age rather than an unending age¹⁸. Having no limitations implies that time is not a factor, and almost seems as though God can wait until the purification is complete. The importance is placed on the restoration rather than how long it would take.

For any particular soul the length of their torment is described as being a length of time that is proportional to the "degree and excellence of their merits"¹⁹, which shows that it differs for each individual.

Regardless of the length of time a soul remains within this state, the more important aspect is that in Origen's theology on restoration, souls will eventually be sufficiently and fully purified and able to re-enter into communion with God.

It is also particularly interesting to note that whilst Origen held the aforementioned beliefs on purification through the fires of hell and its temporary nature, he did not always openly proclaim this belief. Instead, he is often quoted in his homilies as having proclaimed the Church's traditional teachings on hell and ignoring any mention of it being eternal. Greggs came to note that genre of preaching altered his pedagogical approach²⁰. Greggs thinks Origen sees himself as did Paul within his letter to the Romans, as a 'wise steward of the word', guarding certain mysteries for those who were more able to understand them²¹.

Another scholar, Scott, presents a similar argument for the duality of Origen's teachings. He not only looks at genre, but also at the audience of a particular message. For example, a homily would be intended for a broader audience which would include those who are less spiritually mature. As well, it is even shown that if during a homily he came across the topic of

14 Harry Robins. *If This be Heresy. A Study of Milton and Origen..* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963, 114.

15 Greggs, *Universalist?*. 322.

16 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 358.

17 C. A. Patrides. "The Salvation of Satan." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 28. no. 4 (1967): 477.

18 Greggs, *Origen Barth* . 78.

19 Greggs, *Origen Barth*. 69.

20 Greggs, *Universalist?*. 315, 319.

21 Greggs, *Universalist?*. 316.

hell and the devil he would guard his words, even to the point where he would catch himself in the middle of a sentence and change the topic quite abruptly before expounding any non-recognized teaching on hell²². Within this framework we can see Origen's attempt, in a manner again similar to that of Paul, to keep 'stumbling blocks' from those he was influencing. He continued expounding the traditional teachings of the Church on hell then, not as a un-truth, but with the pastoral function for the "spiritually immature to prevent impiety."²³

An alternate view of restoration comes from modern theologian Rob Bell. He is the founder and one of the teaching pastors at Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan. He was named as one of the 2011 Time 100 most influential people in the world²⁴ As well, Bell received his undergraduate education at Wheaton College as well his graduate work at Fuller Theological Seminary.

While much has been written based upon the Origenist views of restoration, it is more difficult to compile the views of Bell since he is a modern theologian and reliable secondary sources are sparse. However, based upon his various published sources, one can infer several things. First and foremost, to Bell restoration takes upon the language of reconciliation. In essence, to be restored into communion with God, a form of reconciliation must occur²⁵.

To Bell, we have communally and individually moved away from God. He even goes so far to ask in one of his videos, "Is our world supposed to be like this, or is something wrong? Why is it that so many of us have this sense deep down that something is seriously out of whack? We see the violence and injustice and disease in the world, and something in us says that this is not the way it's supposed to be..."²⁶ He then goes on to attribute our movement away from God to our free will. We were, in Bell's theology, created in a way that gives us choice as to how we live, but it is paramount to understand that God created us to live a particular way. This way of life involves our active participation with God not only in the future, but today as well.

According to an interview with Mark Galli we find that Bell holds the belief that "God has a plan to put the world back together" and that our participation in that is a "living, breathing demonstration of the reconciling power of Christ."²⁷ This participation would take the form of acting in manners of social justice, whether on the small scale or large scale. One example he gives from his *The Gods Aren't Angry* tour outlines the case of a woman with four children who had recently been left by her husband. She had no way of feeding her children and was about to lose their house and all of their possessions. He knew another family who then shortly thereafter picked her up one day, drove around the corner to a house and handed her the keys to a house which they had decided to buy

22 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 354.

23 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 352.

24 Meacham, *TIME* 100.

25 Rob Bell. *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York: Harperone, 2011, 125.

26 Bell, Rob, "Corner," *Nooma*, DVD.

27 Mark Galli. "The Giant Story" *Christianity Today*, April 2009, 35.

for this newly single mother and her children. He refers to people such as those who would live in such a manner as living “very in tune with the reconciliation of all things.”²⁸

We see this recurring theme of social justice in many of his Nooma publications, including the one entitled *Corner* wherein Bell speaks of how one's outlook on life changes as their status in life changes. The point is made that collectively we lose our perspective that life is a gift and that our possessions do not determine anything for the progress of our souls. He then goes on to state that perhaps it is because we do not share our possessions with those in need and uses the biblical example of gleaning as his support. His point is that all are called to act to help one another because God is the one who allows us to have all that we have. As such, God is handing out responsibility.²⁹ The rationale is that as we are acting in a manner to fulfill our responsibilities we are participating in the grace that God extends to us and that we are furthering reconciliation by extending it to others.

Similar theological points are also affirmed in his other publications where he goes on to say that he holds the belief that God will do something with the world and that Jesus works to retell each of our individual stories in order for all things to “get repaired and restored in some beautiful, amazing way at the end of time.”³⁰ Love Wins emphasizes this point by stating that

our eschatology shapes our ethics³¹ and that when we turn our focus to God and take what is to be seriously, we then “understand what we do with our days and energies now, in this age.”³² The reason for the focus on how to live in the present age is because of Bell's framework that eternity begins now, as opposed to after death.

As well, from this we find that Bell's view on participation with the Son of God in reconciliation is focused on the needs of others, as opposed to Origen's view that participation is done through prayer and devotion. One might ask, ‘how does this infer participation with the Son of God?’ The answer for Bell is that as all are created by God with a purpose, choosing to participate in any way to aid others is in fact choosing to live in the manner in which we were first created to. Reconciliation is therefore focused on returning, with our actions and then our hearts, to the way in which we were originally created. This, in essence is the return to God.

This connects to Bell's theology wherein we find that hell is not necessarily eternal. He introduces *Love Wins* by asking several questions. One of the most emphasized is, “... does God punish people for thousands of years with infinite, eternal torment for things they did in their few finite years of life?”³³ This sets the stage for the further

28 Bell, Rob, "The Gods Aren't Angry," DVD.

29 Bell, Rob, "Corner," *Nooma*, DVD.

30 Bell, Rob, "Trees," *Nooma*, DVD.

31 This point is also emphasized elsewhere in his published works. One example of this can be found within the annotated version of the Discussion Guide for *Resurrection* where he states "... our eschatology and our ethics go hand in hand, -in other words, if we think we're going somewhere else when we die, then why work for justice, peace, and equality here and now? The biblical story is about the redemption and restoration of this creation, and that makes all the difference in the world." Bell, Rob. "Resurrection Discussion Guide."

32 Bell, *Love Wins*. 44.

33 Bell, *Love Wins*. 2.

discourse throughout the book on the necessity of discussion within the Christian community on issues such as the various approaches to the topic of eternity.

As previously discussed Bell holds to the belief that eternity starts now. In this, he is not simply referring to heaven, but hell as well. The example he gives is that of the Rwandan genocide³⁴. Hell can be seen here on earth when one acts in a manner that harms any other. As well, this is how Bell refers to sin; any act that harms anyone else, including God. While Bell affirms that eternity begins now, be it in the form of heaven or hell, eternity does go on after this life in the 'age to come.'

Bell also translates the Greek word *aeon* and translates it as the word *age* or *period* of time. He ensures that a nuance is given to understanding that an age has a beginning and an end. When the word refers to an experience the emphasis is placed upon the intensity of the experience and the fact that it can transcend time³⁵. It is also asserted that the Greek word *kolazo* is used with the word *aeon*, and Bell translates this as a horticultural term where it refers to "the pruning and trimming of the branches of a plant so it can flourish." The significance of this is that Bell believes that eternity after death is really just a "time of trimming" for flourishing, or an "intense experience of correction."³⁶

Similarly to Origen we find Bell speaking of corrective wrath and includes multiple examples from scripture to back up his

framework³⁷. For Bell, the prophets from the Hebrew Bible gesture towards crushing in order to bring about correction and to refine. This punishment however will not be forever and is justified by passages from Lamentations, Hosea, Zephaniah, and many others³⁸. This corrective wrath is said to prepare one's heart in order to be ready for heaven, and that within the theological framework of Bell, death in fact occurs in order to lead on to life. Life not on this earth in the present age, but life in the sense of returning to God and reconciling a broken relationship³⁹.

Origen and Bell hold similar theological frameworks with respect to restoration or reconciliation. For Origen restoration occurs primarily after death but the corrective, refining torment is proportional to what is required for a soul after their life on earth. While Bell does not have a public view on pre-existent souls, one is able to see that he holds the view that one's actions on this world can begin to atone for themselves but ultimately after death corrective consequences occur. Beyond that, an interesting comparison can be made by exploring their individual theological frameworks on the destruction of the devil (for Origen), or the destruction of evil (for Bell).

It seems as though one of the more controversial aspects of Origen's view on restoration was based on inferences and assumptions on whether or not the devil himself could re-enter into communion

34 Bell, *Love Wins*. 70.

35 Bell, *Love Wins*. 57.

36 Bell, *Love Wins*. 91.

37 Bell, *Love Wins*. 85.

38 Quotations and passages are given from Lamentations 3, Hosea 14, Zephaniah 3, Isaiah 57, Hosea 6, Joel 3, Amos 9, Nahum 2, Zephaniah 2, Zechariah 9 and 10, as well as Micah 7.

39 Bell, *Love Wins*. 76.

with God. After all he would have had a soul that moved away from God's divine warmth and as such it would be assumed that with enough time for refinement and purification ; he could be considered restored to his original goodness. This however is not exactly so, and these inferences played a role in the condemnation of Origen.

However, the conception of the devil as being created with sin is where the problems lie. He posits that the devil was created firstly as a sinless being who later fell and became what we now consider the devil and embodiment of evil⁴⁰. As the devil would also be considered a created being, purification does not destroy him, which in Origen's theology is true for any soul. The purpose of restoration is far from destruction, it is simply to refine the soul until it is in an ever-sinless state once more. How this would occur for the soul of the being who is known as the devil is ever so slightly different than any other. Origen has been quoted as having written:

“But concerning the devil the Apostle says 'Death, the last enemy, is destroyed' because death is truly conquered.”⁴¹

In the above passage it must be noted that death as the last enemy is a reference to the nature of the devil. In that it can be construed that when the devil undergoes purification, his function changes as evil dissipates⁴². As such we find that the purified devil has lost its embodiment of evil and will be simply the being whom he

was already created as, before his fall from grace⁴³. He will again be a sinless creature and his function will have changed significantly. As he is no longer the embodiment of evil, it can then be inferred that the evil within him has been destroyed, while the original creature who held this evil will remain.

Bell on the other hand speaks of a passage from Paul's first letter to Timothy, wherein someone is said to have been “handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”⁴⁴ The discourse continues with Bell speaking of a theme throughout portions of Scripture where it is found that God uses Satan for transformative purposes and that it is redemptive and renewing. Reference is also made to Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians as saying that a certain man was to be handed “over to Satan for the destruction of the sinful nature so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.”⁴⁵ For Bell, Satan and hell can be, and are, used to correct the human heart in order for reconciliation with God to take place. It is a transformation and refinement that cannot take place in any other way.

Within both the theologies of Origen and Bell, one of the most crucial points that can easily be overlooked if blinded by the negative connotations and misconceptions of universalism, is the motivation behind the need for a second chance for redemption and reconciliation beyond this life. For both theologians the point seems to be that God's love and mercy are beyond any human conception and that in the

40 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 350.

41 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 353.

42 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 360.

43 Patrides, *Salvation*. 468.

44 Bell, *Love Wins*. 89.

45 Bell, *Love Wins*. 90.

cosmic battle between good and evil, between love and evil, is that God's love is always more powerful than evil. Bell even goes so far as to title one of his books in a manner that is alluding to this: *Love Wins*.⁴⁶

For Bell, the necessity of hell is that justice and mercy must unite in order for all to become once again the people God created, including the purpose he intended each person to have⁴⁷. This need for justice and mercy is part of the root of God's love,

“If we want hell, if we want heaven, they are ours. That's how love works. It can't be forced, manipulated, or coerced. It leaves room for the other to decide. God says yes, we can have what we want, because love wins.”⁴⁸

One of the interesting aspects of Bell's form of 'universalism' is that it is not necessarily universal. Free will still exists, and it is because of that free will that God demonstrates his love. However, it is interesting that while holding this perspective he also claims that, “... no one can resist God's pursuit forever, because God's love will eventually melt even the hardest of hearts.”⁴⁹ For Bell it is hard to conceive of anyone resisting God forever, even if allowed the option to do so. In the end, it is God's love that is stronger and more powerful than even the hardest of hearts.⁵⁰

We find a similar view in Origen's theology, except more emphasis is placed on the defeat of death as being the demonstration of God's love. While Origen remarks that the devil is the embodiment of evil, he also affirms that God is the embodiment of infinite love, justice, and mercy⁵¹. This is important to note as it is due to God's justice that torment within restoration occurs, and it is due to God's love that he would wish to restore creation to what it had been in order to draw all back to Him.

While many theologians and scholars have had issues with the restoration of the devil, it is due to God's infinite love that this must in fact occur. According to Origen there are three very important assertions that are made:

Firstly, “God's power to heal far outweighs the devils power to destroy.”⁵² Through this statement it is found that in Origen's framework regarding the cosmic power struggle, God cannot lose as he is more powerful than the devil. This is not only fixed to His power to heal, but also with His power to love. With regards to the balance between the powers of destruction and healing, God as the creator of the devil would instinctively have more power⁵³.

Secondly, “... Christ's saving work as greater than the transgression of Adam;”⁵⁴ When one examines this statement one

46 Bell, *Love Wins*. Besides this book, Bell also presented a sermon entitled *Love Wins* at his church in late 2009.

47 Bell, *Love Wins*. 39.

48 Bell, *Love Wins*. 119.

49 Bell, *Love Wins*. 108.

50 Bell, *Love Wins*. 109.

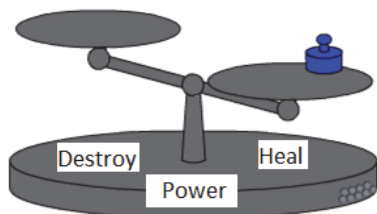
51 Patrides, *Salvation*. 472.

52 Scott, *Pedagogy*. 360.

53 As a person coming from a mathematical and science background this makes most sense when explained using physics, in that energy can be transferred and adapted but cannot be created or destroyed. It would not be possible to create something with more power than oneself in this manner..

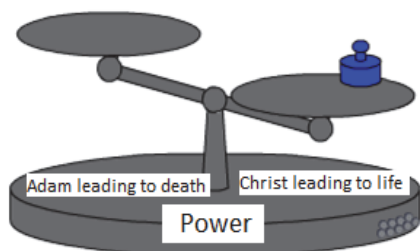
54 Greggs, *Universalist?*. 319.

finds that Origen is comparing opposing ends of the spectrum with respect to the sins of humanity and their salvation. From this it can be inferred that although sin separates all from God, through Christ's redemptive act and saving power that stems



from it, it is impossible for any sin to be unsaved. The power of God and love through Christ is found to be more powerful than any possible human action.

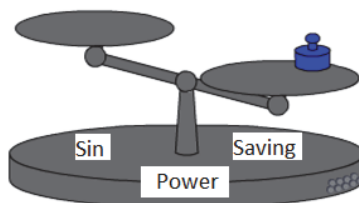
And thirdly, it is paramount that "Christ leading more back to life than Adam led to death."⁵⁵ The second point dealt with God through Christ's ability to save. A distinction must therefore be made to separate this idea from Christ's power to lead back to life, since both involve soteriological points. Christ leading back to



life not only refers to his ability to save, but in a definite action wherein change is more obvious. Leading back to life must occur in order for his saving power to be undertaken.

From this one can infer that in the framework of Origen, God through Christ has more power in leading souls to the path they were created for; leading souls back to God's divine warmth from which they left at the fall through Adam leading to death⁵⁶.

For both Origen and Rob Bell the frameworks surrounding restoration and reconciliation are quite similar. Both deal with the possibility of hell as being corrective, refining, and temporal in order for souls to return into communion with God and his divine warmth. Origen himself claims that, "... to be restored is to be how



God intended."⁵⁷ Bell similarly states that "Restoration brings God glory; eternal torment doesn't. Reconciliation brings God glory; endless anguish doesn't."⁵⁸

Within the theologies of both men God's love is stronger and more powerful than any force opposing it and therefore his ability to save through Christ is beyond any force attempting to resist. Bell in *Love Wins* poses the question, "Which is stronger and more powerful, the hardness of the human heart or God's unrelenting, infinite, expansive love? Thousands through the

⁵⁶ For Origen the story of Adam and Eve is interpreted allegorically as souls are pre-existent and the fall occurred from that state, before bodily creation. However it is important to understand that the image of the fall in the story is utilized for theological purposes by Origen. Mark S. M. Scott, "Suffering and Soul-Making: Rethinking John Hick's Theodicy," *Journal of Religion*: 324.

⁵⁷ Greggs, *Barth Origen*. 100.

⁵⁸ Bell, *Love Wins*. 108.

years have answered that question with the resounding response, 'God's love of course.'⁵⁹ This sentiment is echoed throughout Origen's theology as well and the analogy of a balance can be used to describe God's power and love in his desire for healing versus the power of evil to destroy. In the theologies of both Rob Bell and Origen, God's love must always, and does always, tip the scale against evil and is always s more powerful than any resistance.

⁵⁹ Bell, *Love Wins*. 109.

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Irish Reality, English Politics: The Pope as Antichrist in James Ussher's sermon at Wanstead

Kathryn Rose Sawyer

“Apocalyptic interest had always seemed to thrive when the godly were both persecuted and geographically estranged.”¹ This quote by Crawford Gribben was used in the context of the 800 English exiles in Geneva, Zurich, and other continental hotbeds of mid-sixteenth century Protestantism, who had fled persecution under the English Queen Mary when she re-instituted Catholicism in England in the 1550s. I find it appropriate to apply this same quote to the situation of the Church of Ireland, the minority protestant church in Ireland, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Due to immigration in the latter decades of the sixteenth century, the theology of the Church of Ireland was heavily influenced by the Marian exiles about whom Gribben was speaking in the opening quote. One of the ways in which this was most evident was the Irish use of apocalyptic language and imagery, that is, of the battle between good and evil at the End of Days, to describe and explain their situation at home, surrounded as they were by a very large and increasingly hostile Catholic majority. This obsession, if you

will, with seeing themselves as players in the final battle of good and evil, and with exposing the Pope as the Antichrist at work in the world, reached a fever-pitch in the first few decades of the seventeenth century. In this paper, I will examine this apocalyptic element of Irish protestant theology as it is evidenced in a sermon preached by James Ussher, bishop of Meath, before King James I of England in June of 1624. In particular, I will pay close attention to Ussher’s description of biblical passages which employ apocalyptic language and his application of them to the situation in Ireland, as he sought to convince the king of the need for a harsher suppression of the practice of Catholicism in Ireland.

First, a bit of background on Ireland in the 1620s: Scholars generally agree that by the end of the sixteenth century, the Reformation efforts of the English monarchy in Ireland had failed.² But it was just at that time, due to the establishment

¹ Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millenium: Literature & Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 57.

² Indeed, the modern study of the Reformation in Ireland began with the question of when exactly this failure took place, and why: see the beginnings of this discussion in Brendan Bradshaw, “Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland.” *The Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 475-502; Nicholas Canny, “Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: Une question mal posée.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979): 423-450; and K. Bottigheimer, “The Failure of the Reformation in Ireland: Une question bien posée.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 196-207.

of Trinity College, the protestant university in Dublin, that a uniquely Irish element was beginning to take hold in the minority established Church. Trinity College had originally been largely staffed by dissenting English immigrants to Ireland,³ and their influence ensured that the earliest Trinity students were trained as preachers, ministers, and evangelists for the Church of Ireland in a particularly puritan manner. This influenced the development in the Church of a slightly different theology than that of the Church of England, to which the Church of Ireland was closely tied. This Irish element saw the incorporation of English puritan and Scottish Presbyterian views that favored simplicity in worship and liturgy, an emphasis on returning to the purity of the primitive Church, and a focus on the role of the Pope as Antichrist operating in the world.⁴ This last point concerning the papal Antichrist, and the vehemence with which it was pursued, is one of the defining characteristics of the Church of Ireland's theology in the early decades of the seventeenth century.

This attachment to apocalyptic theology, and its growth in the early 1600s, can be explained by the combination of the Church's minority status in Ireland amongst a Catholic majority, its dismal material and financial state, and the growing theological distance between it and the increasingly traditionalist Church of

England. As the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wore on, the Catholic population of Ireland became increasingly hostile to the presence of the protestant church, seeing them as the symbol of a foreign government which was trying to intrude into the way they had governed Ireland for hundreds of years. A bad situation got worse. The Church of Ireland was hedged-in and isolated, and seeing themselves as a faithful remnant of God's people in a time of trouble offered a theological explanation as to why, despite the Church's best efforts, the Irish Catholics refused to be converted to the true Gospel. As Gribben puts it, "The Irish puritans simply could not afford the luxury of Laodicean pessimism, for their Catholic counterparts were not simply complacent about reform – they were violently opposed to it. The vulnerability of the Irish church developed into eschatological theorizing."⁵ The Irish obsession with the presence of the papal Antichrist only grew stronger.

The Church's desperate material and financial situation did nothing to assuage this need for an apocalyptic explanation. In his article, "Economic Problems of the Church: Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland," Steven Ellis demonstrates through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Church of Ireland records that, compared to the dioceses and parishes in England and Wales, the Irish protestant church livings were both tiny and severely underpaid.⁶ The Epistle Dedicatory of the Gaelic language

³ Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41-47.

⁴ This more "puritan" tendency of the Church of Ireland is discussed in Alan Ford, "The Church of Ireland, 1558-1634: A Puritan Church?" in *As By Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation*, Alan Ford, James McGuire, and Kenneth Milne, eds. (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995), 52-68.

⁵ Gribben, 96.

⁶ Steven G. Ellis, "Economic Problems of the Church: Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 239-265.

version of the Book of Common Prayer, which was published in 1608, gives us a taste of how Irish protestants at that time viewed their material situation. The author refers to “the miserable desolation of this poor decayed Church, which (were it truly described,) would amaze the mind of any Christian,” and he decries the state of the churches, “which tyrannous impiety hath made waste, with greater fury than they were at the first erected with zeal, the ruins whereof do cry for vengeance in every corner of the Land.”⁷

The reasons for this dismal state of affairs are varied and complex; however, one factor that cannot be denied is the fact that, thanks to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII in the 1530s and ‘40s, much of the Church’s resources and revenues from the seized lands were now in the hands of the ruling families of Ireland. Unfortunately for the Church of Ireland, most of these ruling families eventually embraced their Catholic heritage as a means of expressing political discontent with the changes in English government policy in Ireland. One result of this was that protestant ministers were paid less than living wages by their Catholic landlords, and were charged extremely high rents besides. As a result, the protestant clergy in Ireland, especially outside of Dublin, tended to be both poor and undereducated, since the Church of Ireland had no way to

compete with the financial offerings of similar posts in England.⁸

Adding to the pressure of living among the Catholic followers of Antichrist at home, the Church of Ireland also felt a growing alienation from the traditionalist factions in the Church of England, whose doctrinal and liturgical changes seemed to their Irish brethren to be too close to the rejected Catholicism to be acceptable. This traditionalist movement, alternately called “Arminianism” or “Laudianism,”⁹ espoused a protestant worldview which, among other things, lacked the emphasis on apocalyptic theology and the role of Antichrist which had come to define the Church of Ireland in recent decades, thanks in part to the Genevan theologies brought over by the Marian exiles of the previous century. Despite the independent outlook that had been developing in the theology of the Church of Ireland since the turn of the seventeenth century, the Irish Church was still closely tied to its sister in England, and

⁸ Aidan Clarke, with R. Dudley Edwards, “Pacification, Plantation, and the Catholic Question, 1603-23” in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. III: “Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691,” ed. T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 228-229; and John McCafferty, “Protestant Prelates or Godly Pastors? The Dilemma of the Early Stuart Episcopate” in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 62.

⁹ English Arminianism actually had little in common with the European theological movement after which it was pejoratively nicknamed by its detractors. In the English context, the term “Arminian” meant someone who favored a more “traditionalist” and ceremonial liturgy, as opposed to the simple “puritan” service. In the 1620s and 1630s in particular, it was also sometimes referred to as “Laudianism”, after William Laud, who embraced and enforced this form of worship in the Church of England, especially after his elevation to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Which of these terms is used today depends largely on the preference of the author, as neither is entirely satisfactory (see the discussion of these terms in Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7-9.

⁷ Huilliam O’Domhnuill, *Leabhar na nurnaightheadh geomhchoidhiond agus mheinisdraldachda na Sacrameinteadh, maille le gnathaighthibh agus le hordaighthibh oile, do réir eagalse na Sagsan, ata so ar na chur a gclo a Mbaile athá Cliath* (Dublin: 1608), 2.

it was ultimately still under the headship of the English monarch. Unfortunately for the puritans in Ireland, the rising influence of Laudianism in England extended to the king's court.¹⁰ It was therefore in the very time of need for the Church of Ireland, as they faced growing threats from both the Irish Catholics and the English protestants, that they could not count on their king to protect them. It seemed that the Antichrist's influence was even beginning to reach into the nearby Church of England, and the theology of the Irish bishops reacted accordingly as they stressed even more fervently the omnipresent threat of Antichrist and his operating in mysterious, malicious ways. A deep mutual suspicion between the two churches only increased as the 1620s wore on, and the leadership of the Church of Ireland saw themselves as being more isolated than ever in their godly quest.

This state of living under constant pressure and perceived threat caused the protestant church in Ireland to develop a strong attachment to the idea that their reforming struggles were part of a larger battle between good and evil,¹¹ with the Church of Ireland and the godly forces on one side, and Antichrist (the Pope) and his followers on the other. They saw themselves as a tiny remnant, faithful to God but living in a land of darkness, whom God would soon liberate and bring into the light of day. One characteristic of the papal Antichrist that developed very strongly in this tradition was the idea that Antichrist works in the

world as a "mystery of iniquity",¹² not spreading his heresies in an obvious manner, because then he would be instantly recognized. Instead, he operates under the veil of piety (as the Pope), and so he is able to spread his lies and false teachings amongst those who might otherwise have recognized his evil ways. The role of the faithful remnant, then, was to take every opportunity to expose Antichrist's identity to those who did not recognize him, so that they would then have the opportunity to turn from their heresies to worship God truly. We can see this belief play out in Ussher's sermon before the king, where he repeatedly brings up the dangers of Antichrist and the need to educate the people, so that they can be taken out of darkness and brought into the light of the Gospel.

Ussher draws on a rich variety of apocalyptic imagery from various biblical passages to illustrate his reasoning for identifying the Pope as Antichrist. He includes in his discourse on the universality of the church a description of the imagery in Revelation chapter 17, and then applies it to the Roman Catholic Church.¹³ He goes through the meanings of the Woman, the seven mountains upon which she sits, and the many waters which she rules over, as the angel explains it in Revelation 17: 8-18. Ussher then attempts to show the king that even God himself when writing the Bible

¹² 2 Thessalonians 2:7. *Nota bene:* All Bible quotations are taken from the King James (Authorized) Version.

¹³ James Ussher, *A Briefe Declaration of the Universalitie of the Church of Christ, and the Unitie of the Catholick Faith professed therein: Delivered in a Sermon before His Majestie the 20th of June, 1624. At Wansted, by James Ussher, Bishop of Meath* (London: Robert Young, 1625), 7-8.

¹⁰ Gribben, 97.

¹¹ Gribben, 82.

used this antichristian imagery to describe the essence of the early modern Catholic Church. Ussher explains, “For, this *Woman* is the particular Church of *Rome*, the *City-Church*; which they call the *Mother-Church*, the holy Ghost styleth the *Mother of all harlots and abominations of the earth*. Those *peoples, and multitudes, & nations, and tongues*, are such as this proud *City* reigneth over: the *Catholic Roman* Church they are commonly called by themselves; but by the holy Ghost, the *Beast*, upon which the *Woman* sitteth.”¹⁴

This explanation of the imagery in Revelation sets the stage for more in-depth explanations of the papal Antichrist. Ussher’s personal favorite among his vast array of possible proof-texts about Antichrist is 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, which unsurprisingly makes an appearance in this sermon. Ussher calls upon this text in his discussion of “What we may judge of our Fore-fathers, who lived in the communion of the Church of Rome?”¹⁵ Ussher, as a protestant historian and antiquarian, is very conscious of showing that the early Christian church was pure, and as-yet uncorrupted by the pernicious influence of Antichrist. Indeed, the point of his sermon is to show the universality of the protestant Christian faith, as opposed to the Catholic claim that the Roman Catholic Church is the one universal Church. Therefore, the question of how to resolve the ecclesiastical allegiances of the Church Fathers to what would now appear to be an

institution run by Antichrist is a very important one, which Ussher resolves in part through his application of the seventh verse of 2 Thessalonians 2, as we shall see.

But first, he must resolve the question of whether the Catholic Church is a true church at all. For, according to 2 Thessalonians 2: 4, Antichrist sits in the Temple of God.¹⁶ How could he reconcile the protestant claim of holding onto the true faith, if the Roman Church must be recognized as a true Church before he could claim that Antichrist sits there? Ussher makes the distinction between “the *Papacy* from the *Church* wherein it is; as the *Apostle* doth *Antichrist* from the *Temple of God*, wherein he sitteth. The foundation upon which the Church standeth, is that *common faith*, ... in the *unity* whereof all Christians do generally accord.”¹⁷ Therefore, those who hold to the true faith such as it was passed down from the apostles can count themselves true Christians and followers of Christ, and concede that this true faith was present in the Catholic Church at least in some of its members up to the Reformation. This is possible because the “Church of *Rome*” is not the same thing as the “Catholic Church”: “the Church of *Rome* by infidelity may be cut off, as well as any other congregation: and yet the Catholic Church subsist for all that, as having for her foundation neither *Rome*, nor *Rome’s* Bishop, but *Jesus Christ* ...”¹⁸ However, Antichrist has taken over God’s Temple and

¹⁴ Ussher, 8. *Nota bene*: The spelling of all quotations has been modernized for clarity’s sake, but grammar and punctuation are kept true to the original.

¹⁵ Ussher, 23.

¹⁶ 2 Thess 2:4: “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

¹⁷ Ussher, 23.

¹⁸ Ussher, 9.

corrupted it with his own lies: “Upon this old foundation Antichrist raiseth up his new buildings; and layeth upon it, not *hay* and *stubble* only, but far more vile and pernicious matter, which wrencheth and disturbeth the very foundation itself.”¹⁹

Among these false beliefs spread by Antichrist, which Ussher elaborates on in his sermon, is the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, or the belief in the bodily presence of Christ in the consecrated Host.²⁰ According to Ussher, Antichrist has lain these fallacies on the true foundations of the primitive church; but the question now is, how has he managed to do so undetected?

2 Thessalonians 2:7 offers the answer: Antichrist has operated as a “mystery of iniquity”²¹ in the Church, deceiving the ignorant with his false teachings, and, being ignorant, “our ancestors” cannot be blamed for believing in that which they did not truly understand.²² Antichrist is like the enemy spoken of in Matthew chapter 13, who comes into the field at night to sow tares among the wheat, which are not noticed until it is too late and the harvest is being gathered.²³ Thus, errors have slipped into the church over the centuries, unnoticed by most people, until Ussher’s day when the light of the Gospel was able to shine through the darkness of errors. He explains, “neither is the Church *reformed* in our days, another Church than that which was *deformed* in the days of our fore-fathers; though it hath no agreement, for all that,

with *Popery*, which is the Pestilence that walked in those times of darkness, and the destruction that now wasteth at noon day.”²⁴ The Reformed protestant churches are, therefore, not a new faith, but simply the one true faith separated from its papal errors, as the wheat is separated from the tares. Indeed, Ussher places the blame for “the most cruel schism, that ever hath been seen in the Church of God”, that is, the Protestant/Catholic split of the Reformation era, squarely on “our Romanists”.²⁵

However, Ussher’s concern is not just an apocalyptic one over the workings of Antichrist, but he applies it directly to the situation of the reformed movement in Ireland, and its hitherto unsuccessful efforts at converting the general populace of Ireland to protestantism. Ussher realizes that the “common people” do not necessarily have the ability to discover the lies of Antichrist on their own.²⁶ He repeatedly stresses to the king the ignorance of the Irish people and their need for education in the correct faith. Ussher seems certain that, if only the people were to be properly catechized, they would embrace the true faith of the Gospel.²⁷ He repeatedly bewails the state of ignorance in which the Irish people dwell: “the woeful estate of the poor country wherein I live, is much to be lamented, where the people generally are suffered to perish for want of knowledge: the vulgar superstitions of Popery not doing them half that hurt, that the ignorance of

¹⁹ Ussher, 23.

²⁰ Ussher, 23-25.

²¹ 2 Thess 2:7.

²² Ussher, 25.

²³ Ussher, 31; referring to Matthew 13:24-30.

²⁴ Ussher, 31-32.

²⁵ Ussher, 7.

²⁶ Ussher, 25.

²⁷ See the story he tells demonstrating the people’s ignorance of the doctrine of transubstantiation, at Ussher, pp. 24-25.

those common principles of the faith doth, which all true Christians are bound to learn.”²⁸ And he specifically attacks the inefficacy of the protestant preachers in this endeavor, implying that they spend too much time fighting against Catholic missionaries than banding with them to teach the basic tenets of the Christian faith: he says, “But what for the jealousies, which these distractions in matters of religion have bred among us, & what for other respects, the motion took small effect: & so betwixt us both, the poor people are kept still in miserable ignorance, neither knowing the grounds of the one religion nor of the other.”²⁹ Ussher’s pastoral concern for his Catholic neighbors is grounded in his understanding of Antichrist. Antichrist operates as a mystery of iniquity and deceives people with his lies. Therefore, despite the growing tensions in Irish politics and society at that time, Ussher holds fast to his conviction that if only the Irish people were to be properly catechized in the true faith, they would recognize the errors of Antichrist and turn from the Church of Rome. The protestants in Ireland must never cease in their mission to expose Antichrist to the world and thereby strip him of his power over the people.

Ussher continues his nuancing of the True Church from the Roman Church, and Antichrist’s followers from the uneducated masses in this passage: “If you demand then, Where was *Gods Temple* all this while? the answer is at hand: There where *Antichrist* sat. Where was *Christs* people?

Even under *Antichrists* Priests. and yet this is no justification at all, either of *Antichrist*, or of his *Priests*; but a manifestation of God’s great power, who is able to uphold his Church even there *where Satans throne is*. Babylon was an infectious place, and the infection thereof was mortal: and yet God had his people there, whom he preserved from the mortality of that infection.”³⁰ This last sentence gets to the heart of how we are to understand, and indeed, how Ussher and his contemporaries understood their position as a tiny protestant minority that was daily surrounded by and in contact with the Catholic followers of Antichrist. Crawford Gribben sums this situation up by saying, “Unlike his fellow puritans in London, [...] Ussher was surrounded by the adherents of this false church. Irish protestants existed as a besieged remnant, a faithful elect in a nation which retained a superstitious allegiance to Rome. The reality of this situation dramatized the Irish protestant identity and was the basis for the unity of its reformed church.”³¹ We can sense Ussher’s urgency in his sermon as he tries to convince the king not to allow any kind of toleration for the practice of Catholicism in the land. It is more than simply a matter of good international relations or even peace and security in Ireland: for Ussher and his Irish protestant confrères, this was literally a question of life and death, for themselves and for their Irish brethren.

The sermon at Wansted was part of a more general effort on Ussher’s part to convince King James that toleration towards

²⁸ Ussher, 33.

²⁹ Ussher, 34.

³⁰ Ussher, 30.

³¹ Gribben, 81.

Catholics in Ireland, and, by extension, the traditionalists in the Church of England, should be avoided at all costs. In 1624, Irish protestant panic regarding the prevalence of the Catholic Antichrist in their midst had reached a new climax, while at the same time the politicians of the Irish Catholic gentry were equally desperate to pressure the English government into recognizing their traditional rights as the ruling class of Ireland. James' stricter enforcement of anti-Catholic legal measures was tempered by his attempts to make a match for his son Charles with the princess of Catholic Spain.³² The process of the "Catholic match" had dragged on for several years, and naturally, the harsh oppression of Irish Catholics would not help the English prince's chances of making a match with one of the most powerful Catholic monarchies in the world. James sent instructions to the authorities in Ireland to suspend measures against the practice of Catholicism.³³ The Catholics, feeling the pressure of these measures yet also knowing the reality of the situation the Crown was in, "used every opportunity to press the King and his ministers to grant formal toleration."³⁴ This was an alarming development to the bishops in the Church of Ireland, to say the least, seeing their king and the champion of the protestant cause in danger of bending to the demands of the followers of Antichrist. It was against this background of the threat of tolerance towards Catholics in Ireland that Ussher delivered his sermon to King James, a sermon which was ostensibly on the universality of the reformed Christian

church, but yet was side-tracked again and again by Ussher's attempts to sway the king's opinion in the direction of the Antichrist-fearing Irish protestant leadership.

Ussher's sermon repeatedly resorts to imagery that equates the Antichrist of the Book of Revelation with the Pope in Rome, and which describes the state of the protestant, minority Church of Ireland as the remnant, faithful to God, which would be preserved despite its being surrounded by the infectiousness of Babylon. However, despite Ussher's vehemence that the Catholics were the followers of Antichrist and the English government should in no way allow them to continue in their wicked ways, he was ultimately unable to convince the king in protestant England of the immediacy of the danger that was facing protestants in Catholic Ireland. The "Catholic Match" which James had been pursuing was completed shortly thereafter. While the match planned for Charles with the *infanta* of Spain was unsuccessful, Charles did indeed take a Catholic wife in Princess Henrietta Maria of France.³⁵ Within a decade of Ussher's sermon at Wansted, and with Charles now on the throne, the Church of Ireland would be restructured and brought into conformity with the Laudian Church of England, which no longer recognized the Pope as

³² Clarke *et. al.*, 225.

³³ Clarke *et. al.*, 225.

³⁴ Ford, *Ussher*, 118.

³⁵ Aidan Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours, 1624-32" in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. III: "Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691", T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 234.

Antichrist.³⁶ For a church which had built itself upon this very idea, the Irish protestants thus found themselves powerless to preserve their identity. Their obsessive fear of Antichrist in their midst had seen the threat move from far-away Rome to neighboring England. As Gribben observes, “No wonder puritan hearts were failing them for fear.”³⁷

³⁶ McCafferty, “Protestant Prelates”, 67.

³⁷ Gribben, 93.

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Paul's Journey

Patrick Brendan Shearing

The Celtic Theme of Soul Friendship

Tarek Haider

Introduction

“For anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head”¹

This statement, made by St. Brigit (450-525CE), demonstrates the importance of having an intimate friend in whom we can confide and be ourselves without trying to pretend certain values. The concept of having a soul mate, or what the Scots and the Irish call “anamchara” a term defined as “the friend of the soul” or “soul friend” (Sellner, 1998: 409), is a Christian Celtic theme clarifying how essential it is to human growth and spiritual development. It refers to a person who acts as a teacher, a confessor or a spiritual guide. Since Celtic saints were living in double monasteries where men and women could worship with one another, it is notable that the soul friend expression, dominant in that period, meant that monks could have both male and female soul friends. These soul friends were able to listen and strengthen one another. This theme continued alive in the Irish style of life as seen in a poem written by an anonymous Irish writer who emphasized the kind of positive change the soul friend could add in someone’s life:

*When Rocks had torn the seams of my Proud
Crests to spume
And peace was brief a pause between
The ebb and flow
Beneath my studied calm, the undertow
Was sandwash wearing marrow from the soul
He plucked my shell words gently from the tide
And heard the echo of the pain inside
Then walked with blessed feet on my spent wake
Delighted by the patterns I could make*

– Anonymous²

Continuities and discontinuities were among the paradoxes in the insular church (the church of Ireland and the British Isles). The soul friend concept was a real example of the continuity as Celtic Christians learned it from what they were told by druids - pagan Celts who were experts in science and philosophy and who believed in the divine effect on creatures and loyalty to the clan. The druids were able to create a distinct criterion for a person to be a soul friend. Such criteria included being mature and wise enough by having a decent experience in life as well as being perceptive and compassionate. The druids combined the disciplines of philosophy and natural sciences; they were oriented toward the unity of the universe, which meant that animals, plants and humans are all related

¹ Halt, Bradley (2005) *Thirsty for God: A Brief History Of Christian Spirituality* (2nd ed.)

² Sellner, E.C. (2004) *Stories of the Celtic Soul Friends: Their Meaning for Today*, (New York: Paulist Press), 11-12

to each other in a mysterious spiritual way. As a result, it was normal that people took advantage of having several things in common to communicate with one another. This communication developed into other forms of relationships, such as the shepherd being a soul friend to his sheep. Another example is depicted in the way druids advised their kings, they were their kings' soul friends. They were a source of wisdom in their era due to years of learning languages and the study of varied disciplines. The Christian Celts did not consider the past as something dead but a route to pursue the future. They adopted the druids' traditions and, as time went on, they added more characteristics to soul friends like dependency on God as the primary guider and the generosity of the soul friends. They valued anyone who acted as a teacher, confessor or a counselor. They established soul friend relationship between saints and this friendship did not end in death, as they believed in the spiritual powers which had neither time nor space limits.

The concept of soul friendship in the Celtic church, originally inherited from the pre Christian Celts, can be well clarified by the lives of famous Celtic saints who played an important role in establishing Christianity in that part of the world, and in passing its traditions on to other parts of Europe. These saints spent their whole lives teaching Christian faith, not by preaching to ordinary people, but by being an example of soul friends by sharing their experiences with others and learning from their sins. They did not consider sin a

destructive event in their lives but rather as a motivation for their futures by being closer to God. This was achieved by their openness to other saints who enriched their faith by praying and practicing the ascetic life with each other so that they could avoid being weak and attracted to sins. Although sharing their experience in worshipping God, and helping other people, was encouraging for them to maintain their pattern, it was at the same time a struggle for most soul friends. They overcame this struggle by making time for people whom they served and by finding a place from where they could listen to God's messages on a regular basis. This pattern of integrating friendship and solitude was expressed by modern monks like Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a monk and a spiritual writer, who referred in his Journal shortly before he died, to his happiness with certain friendships, as well as being in a hermitage in the silence, "...in the shadow of a big cedar cross, to prepare for my death and my exodus to the heavenly country, to love my brothers and all people, to pray for the whole world." (Sellner 1998: 415)

A paradox of seeking solitude and sharing experience with others might have started with Coptic saints who isolated themselves in the Egyptian desert to get closer to God. They shared this exile with one another as they had an appreciation towards friendship and considered it a way to get support and courage to continue their life-styles. Their life was torn between care for others and care for themselves. They attempted to find a source of balance for both their needs of community and for solitude. The Egyptian

monks needed other people so that they could resemble what Jesus did in his life when he had intimate friends - the apostles. As the influence of Coptic monks reached the British Isles through the Coptic saint Cassian (who died in 350AD) who immigrated to Gaul after the certain events happened in the Coptic Church, the Celtic monks were influenced by certain themes of Coptic Christianity as well as Pagan Celtic tradition. We are still unable to trace the Coptic concept of a soul friend in the Celtic church, but it might have had an influence as many traditions were transmitted to that area such as monasticism, which had soul friendship as one of its values. But what is the importance of the soul friendship theme to be transmitted between different parts of the world? It is the essential role of the soul in forming the perspective of our lives. For Plato, it was the soul that gave rise to knowledge, and as the faculty of knowledge, the soul that both directs conduct and contemplates truth (Adler, 1992: 134).

St. Patrick

In retrospect, St. Patrick (387-461AD), whose efforts were essential in transmitting Christianity to Ireland, showed how the concept of a soul friend changed his whole life. St. Patrick tells us through his confession letter, a biography of his life, how the vision of a person called Victor inspired him to go back to Ireland after years of abandoning the country due to his enslavement there. St. Patrick said in his confession, "one night I saw the vision of a

man called Victor, who appeared to have come from Ireland with an unlimited numbers of letters. He gave me one of them and I read the opening words, which were, 'the voice of the Irish'... 'we ask you, boy, walk and walk once more among us'" (Sellner 2004: 53). Scholars could not identify the character of Victor, but if we read the *Confessio* we can find only two other names mentioned, Patrick's father and grandfather, which means that Victor was an important person in Patrick's life. During the seventh century a monk of Armagh - a large settlement of Northern Ireland - whose name was Murichu, was able to identify Victor as "a guardian spirit who guided him throughout his life" (Sellner 2004: 53). As a result, we can see that Victor became the first soul friend to be considered in the history of the Celtic church. If we also read carefully the *Confessio*, we notice that Victor was revealed to St. Patrick several times during his captivity in Ireland when Patrick was sixteen years old. In these visions, Victor was advising Patrick and guiding his way, resembling an ideal figure of a soul friend. When Murichu showed Victor as a soul friend, he started describing the concept of the soul friend in the Celtic church. By saying "a spiritual advisor to the ordained" (Sellner 2004: 53), Murichu determines one of the priest's priorities, that of being a soul friend for his people. Patrick previously followed this rule as he converted the people around him to Christianity and in doing so, became Ireland's first Christian soul friend. This required Patrick to be a spiritual guide. As a teen-ager he was abducted against his will and taken to

Ireland to work as a slave. This specific experience separated Patrick from his family, and made him more intuitive giving him the initiative to pursue his own life. As a result, when he came back to Ireland as a missionary after his vision, it was reasonable for him to help people finding their own way under God's leadership. In Patrick's soul friendship, he experienced the love of God by returning to Ireland to spread God's will. Patrick conveyed this love by radiating it to others through being intimate with them. As a result, like many previous Coptic saints, who were living with one another in coenobitic kinds of monasteries, Patrick was able to balance between believing in spiritual power by being close to God and putting this spiritual power into reality by sharing it with other people.

Patrick showed how being respectful to suffering and pain during one's life can lead to a real experience. This experience can be translated into spiritual guidance for ourselves and for others especially when we become totally perceptive of our limitations as humans so we can justify our failures. This can motivate one to relate to other people having similar experiences. Thus, our wounds will set us free to create new and strong bonds with our surroundings, which is the core of the soul friend theme. This paradigm of being immersed in pain to the stage that we can heal the pain demands a lot of patience and courage. Sharing our battles with our surroundings helps us overcome the pain. As a result a new set of soul friends is established. In addition to experience and sharing, Patrick found

himself able to be a soul friend and to give love and spiritual power to people because he was beloved by this guiding power, which was represented in Victor. He was attentive to his dreams and considered them a communication with God to provide him with a practical direction. The courage to continue walking in God's path is not only meant to rescue ourselves, but also to rescue others, especially by liberating them from false attachment and false loves. As a result, we can confront and challenge the style of life of the people whom we care about. Thus, they can help themselves to get rid of their weakness.

Patrick also showed us that being a soul friend means first achieving a positive change individually, and then sharing it with others. In this way we inspire others to reach a higher spiritual level. Influencing our friends and guiding them should be far removed from controlling their lives, because that eventually means keeping them immature, unable to make their own decisions and dependent on us, which is contrary to being a soul friend. With a spirituality of letting God helping us in the way we act, we might find our resentments diminish as we give our friends and loved ones the freedom to be who they are. So they will be capable like us of making the right choices, as well as making mistakes and learning from them. Because when our spirituality is centered in God, our expectations of our selves and our surroundings become more realistic (Sellner 1998: 414)

St. Brigit

The Celtic theme of the soul friend continued with St. Brigit (452-524CE), the first Irish saint, who tried to establish monasteries all over Ireland to worship God. Her idea of double monasteries being lead by abbots and abbesses created the atmosphere of establishing a relationship between the abbots and abbesses themselves and between them and other people, so they became soul friends.³

Brigit was well known for her generosity, which brought her closer to people. An example of this generosity was depicted in her biography, which was written by Cogitosus (during the seventh century) when Brigit turned her bath water into beer for her clerical guests (Sellner 2004: 99). Brigit was able to establish rapport with people and especially with monks to encourage them to help her to build monasteries. This special rapport turned into a real soul friendship. Brigit's motivation to establish cities of God, which began with Kildare in the east of Ireland, posited her as an important female wisdom figure who was able to make decisions and move forward in her life. Like Patrick, another characteristic of Brigit was her courage. Starting from childhood, when her mother excluded her from the family because of her generosity, Brigit depended on no one but herself and faith to survive and achieve something for herself and for the people around her. Inspired by the

words of Jesus, "everything is possible for one who has faith" (Mark 9:24)⁴, Brigit found in her faith in God a source of power that allowed her helping many people. When a young nun turned to her in distress when, as a result of a fall from grace, she found herself in the family way. Brigit prayed over her, "exercising the most potent strength of her ineffable faith", and the fetus disappeared (Woods 2000: 69). Brigit maintained her faith in God to build monasteries by protecting herself through being engaged in prayers most of the time, which enabled her to listen to her soul instead of being distracted by external surroundings. This devotion to God as the primary source of power and her connections with other monks made Brigit always encouraged to remain optimistic and wise enough to make a balance between her spirit and her instincts. Therefore, she showed a realistic example of being a soul friend because, as we saw with Patrick, a soul friend is not born with certain characteristics but his experience and his trust in the divine power lead him to guide others. Brigit seems to have travelled extensively in her chariot, obtaining freedom for captives, offering advice where it was wanted and probably where it wasn't. She negotiated the release of hostages, healed lepers, assisted the poor, returned sight to the blind and speech to those who were dumb (Woods 2000: 67-68). All that made her a significant soul friend in Irish history. Therefore in Ireland, a traditional greeting is still "Brigit and Mary be with you" (Woods 2000: 70).

³ The word "abbot" is derived from the original word Abba that was used previously in the Egyptian desert to refer to the father who took care of the physical and spiritual need of his family.

⁴ New Jerusalem Bible

Columba

The great monasteries that Brigit and other pioneer saints established in the early Celtic church were dedicated to the education of young leaders and provided a place where they had a chance to strengthen alliances with their teachers. Columba (521-597CE) continued this path by starting the first monastery outside of Ireland in Iona, an island located at the western coast of Scotland. The students who studied in this monastery were able to learn from the shared experiences between them and the teachers, establishing a friendship between them as well. Some were even able to maintain this friendship for a life long term as Adomnan (627-704CE) described when he wrote the life of Columba. This long-term friendship between teachers and their students was considered the first sort of soul friendship the Irish carried outside Ireland. If we go back to the reason of Columba's exile from Ireland, as mentioned in Michelle Brown's book *How Christianity Came to Britain and Ireland* (2006), a battle started against him as he was accused of plagiarism and was claiming to have written a novel which was originally written by his teacher Finnian of Moville. As a result, Columba chose to leave the country on a journey, which led him to Iona where he showed his reaction against his past. By expressing his passion for learning and showing his intense feeling of spirituality, Columba became a teacher, a soul friend and a shepherd for his disciples in order to prove himself in front of his family in case he went back home. Like Patrick, the soul friend aspect of Columba's

life was encouraged by the experience and the type of life he had led. As soon as he got to Iona, around 567 CE, he tried to create a new image of himself.

Columba was an avid learner in Iona. He was attached to its land and sea and he showed a great capacity for friendship. Like Brigit, he tried to enrich his spirituality by praying, being attached to nature, studying and writing. As a paradox, Columba did not consider this type of ascetic life as a severe, harsh or austere style to live through. He found it was the only way to move to a higher level of spirituality so that he might find in it an alternative refuge to what he had in the past among his family. Like Brigit, Columba was able to make a balance between his soul and his instincts, so that his personality was filled with joy and others perceived him as a friend, "Columba never could spend the space of even one hour without study, or prayer...and still in all these activities he was beloved by all for a holy joy shown continuously on his face revealing the joy and gladness with which the Holy Spirit filled his inmost soul" (Sellner 2004: 154)

Since the soul friend is able to transform the wound into a new beginning of life, Columba was a real example of that when he did not allow his suffering caused by leaving Ireland to depress him but considered it an occasion to start a new phase full of leadership and monastery life. In addition, he wanted to be surrounded again by a nurturing atmosphere, so he showed great empathy towards friends, hoping that he could be loved as well.

Besides love, wisdom was one of his main traits, which came from the fact that Iona was a small island with a slightly insular location. That meant that its people were always seeking advice and guidance.

Columba was in a great position, as a monastery founder, to respond to people's worries so his wisdom was enriched by the need to reassure people. Beside love and wisdom, which we also previously saw as characteristics of the soul friend in Patrick's and Brigit's life, hospitality had a great value in Columba's life. And as he had lost his homeland, he was avid to provide a home for whoever needed one. That might have been his favorite way to console his loss. This hospitality attracted many students to his monastery. Just as we can find hospitality in Brigit's biography when she says, "Every guest is Christ" (Sellner 2004: 162), Columba's hospitality was shown to his students by certain actions, so they didn't learn so much by listening to him teach but rather by living with him and observing him closely. He did not let his busyness in praying and studying make him less accessible but always hospitable to people by advising them and sharing his life with them. Therefore, as Patrick was well known for his courage and Brigit for her generosity, Columba's significant characteristic was hospitality, which was translated, in his genuine interest in his students and all sorts of people who inhabited Iona.

Conclusion

Humankind is morally weak, fragile and in need of constant support and sustenance.

Hence the role of Anamchara who receives weary pilgrims with hospitality and strengthens and restores them (Conolly 1993: 162). It has become clear that soul friendship is initiated by two elements that are related to each other alongside other common qualities. The two elements are: valuing our life experiences as a way of salvation and relying on spiritual powers, like prayers and divine messages, in addition to our own discipline. The qualities are mainly represented in suffering, perception, love, compassion, patience, wisdom and hospitality. The Celtic church adopted these values after years of being born in a different part of the world. Jesus Christ was the first soul friend to all the people who sought him as a refuge, followed by the Coptic Church where Egyptian monks were soul friends to one another to receive enough strength to pursue an ascetic life. Then in the British Isles and Ireland, before Christianity reached its people, the druids were pagan soul friends who used their knowledge and their belief in the spiritual way to guide their tribes. Since the insular church in Ireland and the British Isles used the sea as bridges to connect it with its neighbors, the Celtic Christians were influenced by the soul friendship theme. This theme was firstly applied by Patrick's soul friendship with the Irish people and was followed by other saints, each of whom showed an additional trait of being a soul friend. In these days as the life rhythm becomes faster and intimacy is decreasing between people, I believe that the concept of the soul friendship should be revived. Many people realize that God is the primary soul friend

but do miss a material figure, a human who can be a soul friend with whom life stresses can be shared, and from whom advice can be taken. However in psychoanalysis⁵, psychologists believe that to move to a higher level of maturity, a real change in the person needs to happen. This change can occur through acquiring and evolving wisdom. Psychoanalysis ultimately seeks to change mankind by showing that “I is another” (Roudinesco 2001: 17). Wisdom evolves within a relational context and Psychoanalysis is in a choice position to bring that process to fruition (Rucker 1994: 133). We saw that wisdom as a main characteristic of the soul friends but we couldn’t track down the amount of wisdom their followers had. Even though soul friendship seeks eventually each person’s independency, it is still hard to know what kind of characteristics - “the receiving side” - of the friendship had in the past, especially since most of our examples were focused on famous saints who had quite confident personalities, whereas their followers were almost unknown. But we can definitely say that soul friendship is a place of sanctuary where the worst part of us can be acknowledged, so that genuine change can begin to occur (Sellner 1998: 414). What makes one wise is not solely or even largely experiences with problems or tasks – even interpersonal tasks- but rather, deep, multilayered connections with others. Through relationships, our intellect, emotion, and subjective experiences are integrated. (Rucker 1994: 136).

⁵ A school of thought, founded by Sigmund Freud, emphasizing the influences of the childhood and unconscious mind on behavior

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Expressive Bavarian Sky

Karen Courtland Kelly

Theotokos: The Roots of Mariology

Rachelle Cournoyer

In this article, I will argue that Mary became Theotokos through the mingling of three streams: Logos theology as expressed in Wisdom literature and the prologue of the Gospel of John; Paul's theology of kenosis, or of the self-emptying of the Logos in Phil 2: 6-9, and the birth narrative of Luke where Mary's willing consent to being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and bearing a son brings her into relationship with God. Luke and Matthew's gospel picture of Mary was completed by a popular apocryphal work: The Protoevangelium of James. Mariology emerges from Christology because Mary is the guarantor of the Incarnation. Mary is Panagia (she who contains the divine) and becomes a model for the Church. I will focus on Alexandria because it was from Alexandria that the Theotokos was championed during the Nestorian crises to become the accepted doctrine of the universal Church. This marked the beginning of Mariology in the Church.

It was in Alexandria that the theology of the Incarnation of the Logos was developed, and it was here that the Protoevangelium of James, a mid-second century apocryphal text, about the early life of the Virgin Mary had a great impact. Many Christians were simple folk who did not have a formation in the great culture of the city. Egypt had been home to the cult

of the goddess mother, Isis, so the population would not have been reticent in giving the Mother of Christ the honour she was due. However, it is clear that it was the Incarnation, and Mary's willing participation in it that was the source of early Christian marian piety, and not syncretism. The first church built in Alexandria by Theonas (282-300) was dedicated to the Virgin as theometer, which also means mother of God.¹

The Gospels are very sparse in their mention of Mary. Mark mentions her only once, peripherally, in recounting the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth. ("Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary..." (Mark 6: 3)). In Matthew, we see Mary from Joseph's perspective. She is "found to be with child from the Holy Spirit", and he wonders whether or not to dismiss her when he receives a visitation from an angel in a dream. Matthew recounts the visit of the wise men, the flight into Egypt, and the family's return after the death of Herod. The text is clear that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary, and that Jesus is not his natural son. The most important part of the birth narrative in Matthew seems to be to announce the accomplishment of the prophecy in Isaiah

¹ Asis S Atiya, editor in Chief. *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. (New York, Toronto. Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991.) 2255

7: 14: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.” (Matthew 1; 23) After the birth narrative, Matthew mentions Mary only twice: when his mother and brothers want to speak with him, and a parallel recounting of the incident in Mark. (Is not his mother called Mary? Matthew 13: 55). John mentions Mary, not by name, but as “woman” twice: at the wedding at Cana, and at the foot of the cross. However, John’s account of Jesus’ birth is highly theological, and we shall return to it later. It is in Luke that the birth narrative seems to be told from Mary’s human perspective. There is the Annunciation, where Mary is visited by the Angel, who tells her she has found favour with God, and will conceive of a Son from the power of the Most High. Then Mary visits Elizabeth and pronounces the praises of the Magnificat. After three months, she returns home. Joseph takes her to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. A sign is given to the shepherds. Eight days later, Jesus is taken to the Temple to be circumcised, where Simeon blesses them and says to Mary: “a sword will pierce your heart too.” (Luke 2: 33). The story of Jesus lost and found in the Temple is told, and very little is said of Mary after that. Mary and Jesus’ brothers attempt to visit him, but have difficulty because of the crowds, and when a woman from the crowd blesses the Mother of Jesus, he responds: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” (Luke 11: 27). That Mary became a disciple of Jesus is clear in Acts 1: 14 where Mary is included among the women who constantly devoted themselves to prayer. Three strong themes

emerge from the Gospels: Mary’s virgin conception of Jesus, her total acquiescence to the will of God given in her Fiat at the Annunciation, and her discipleship by her presence at the Cross and in the Cenacle.

That Mary should appear only when required to tell Jesus’ story is only normal, given that the focus of the Gospel writers was exclusively on Jesus. However, the early Christians wanted to know more about the young woman who was his mother and disciple. This need was filled in the very early non-canonical Proto-Evangelium of James, ascribed to James the Lesser.

Many details that emerge from this account have become part of the unofficial story of the Church told in iconography, devotions to Saint Anne (whose name appears only in this text), hymns, homelies and our view of Mary as ever-virgin. The Early Church Fathers refer to the Protoevangelium in their writings. It is taken seriously because of its antiquity and testimony of the popular faith of early Christians. It may even have been drawn from oral traditions about the mother of Jesus that may have a base in fact, though this is impossible to verify. The Protoevangelium may have been written to answer directly to Gnostic Docetism which saw Christ’s body as mere appearance or phantasm. So while the Protoevangelium may be all about Mary, it is also Christological in intention.

Jaroslav Pelikan points out that Valentius, an Alexandrian Gnostic, taught that Jesus passed through Mary like water through a

tube, and that Mary had no physical involvement in the gestation and birth of Jesus. The Protoevangelium, with its depiction of Mary's virginal childbirth might lend itself to an erroneous interpretation, but Pelikan does point out that this impression was corrected in the emphasis given to a visibly pregnant Mary in iconography.²

The tone of the Proto-Evangelium is popular, but uses Old Testament imagery and symbols that refer the believer back to Biblical archetypes. I shall argue that it is this early document that established the concept of Mary's perpetual virginity, by providing multiple proofs before, during and after Jesus' birth. These proofs also make clear that no human male was Jesus' father and that the Incarnation took place because of divine intervention. Right from the start, Mary is marked in a special manner, as the story parallels Hannah's conception of Samuel. Both Joachim and Anna are barren, and both pray and fast so that God will give them children. An angel appears to them each in turn to tell them that God has answered their prayers. Anna's response of thanksgiving is to vow that Mary shall be given to the temple. So we have a unique conception, willed by God, and the child is given a unique vocation as a servant to the Lord, even before she is born. All the

indications that Mary is going to be special are there.

Anna does everything she can to keep Mary ritually and spiritually pure. She is given the breast only after Anna is purified. Mary is kept in a sanctuary in Anna's bedchamber so that she does not touch anything unclean. Her playmates are undefiled. On her first birthday, the priests of the Temple give her a "supreme and unsurpassable blessing."³

At three years old, Mary is brought to the Temple to stay. The High priest greets her with a prophecy that refers to the Mary's future role in salvation history:

*"The Lord has magnified your name among all generations; because of you the Lord at the end of the days will manifest his redemption to the children of Israel."*⁴

When Mary is placed on the steps, she dances for joy, and without a backward look at her parents, climbs the steps to her new life. The Presentation of Mary to the Temple has entered into the traditions of the Church at large. This event is a popular theme in iconography, and many churches bear the name of the Presentation of Mary. A testimony to the impact of the Protoevangelium of James in Alexandria is that the Egyptian Coptic Church celebrates two liturgical feasts based on the Protoevangelium of James: that of the

² Jaroslav Pelikan, Mary through the Centuries :Her Place in the History of Culture. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). 47-48

³ The Protoevangelium of James. Mary :Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus. Studies on personalities of the new testament. Beverly Roberts Gaventa. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press. 1995) 136

⁴ . --- Protoevangelium of James. 1995. 136.

Annunciation of Mary's birth to Anna and Joachim, and the Presentation of Mary to the Temple.⁵

As a sign of divine favour and purity, Mary is fed by an angel, just like the prophets of old, and like Jesus after his fast in the desert. When she reaches twelve, an angel appears to the high priest and instructs him to summon the widowers of Israel. Each brings a staff so that the Lord can indicate with a miraculous sign to whom she is to be entrusted. Joseph is chosen. However, Joseph protests: he is too old for a wife; already has sons; and fears ridicule. This response serves to explain the brothers and sisters of Jesus in the Gospels, allowing Mary to remain virgin after the birth of Jesus, and removing any doubts created by Matthew's statement: "...he did as the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son..." (Matthew 1: 24-25). Joseph's age makes his assignment as the celibate guardian and protector of the Virgin credible, and he is depicted this way in many icons and statues. The priest instructs:

"Joseph, to you has fallen the good fortune to receive the virgin of the Lord; take her under your care."⁶

Joseph leaves for four years to work on construction projects. In his absence, Mary continues to work as a consecrated virgin to the Temple. It is while she is preoccupied

with weaving a veil for the Temple that the angel tells her that she will conceive of the Word of God. Mary accepts, and says she is the handmaid of the Lord. Later Mary brings her weaving to the temple, where the High Priest confirms her destiny in words that parallel the Magnificat in Luke:

"Mary, the Lord God has magnified your name, and you shall be blessed among all generations of the earth".⁷

Mary leaves to visit Elizabeth, but in a strange departure from scripture, she forgets the angel's visit. She wonders why Elizabeth calls her blessed. She is especially bewildered by her pregnancy. After three months, Mary returns to Joseph's house and hides. When Joseph returns home, his reaction parallels the one recounted in Matthew. He questions Mary, thinks of renouncing her, but hesitates because the Child has been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then the angel visits him to reassure him. However, this is not enough for the Proto-Evangelium of James. There must be further proof. A scribe denounces the visibly pregnant Mary. In order to prove that the child is not Joseph's, and that Mary and Joseph have never had relations, Mary and Joseph both undergo the test of the bitter waters, described in Numbers 5: 11-31. Both emerge healthy and this proof attests to Mary's virginity, and the fact that she did not have relations with Joseph or anyone else. Joseph's test of bitter waters proves

⁵ Atiya, Asis S, editor in Chief. *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. (New York, Toronto: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991.) 2256

⁶ --- Protoevangelium of James. 1995. 137

⁷ --- Protoevangelium of James . 1995. 138.

his continence. The miraculous conception of Mary's child is proven.

On their way to Bethlehem, Joseph finds a cave to shelter Mary during childbirth and finds a midwife. The tradition of Jesus having been born in a cave has its origins here. Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) refers to the Protoevangelium of James in Chapter 78 of the Dialogue with Typho:

*"But when the Child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ and placed Him in a manger, and here the Magi who came from Arabia found Him."*⁸

Joseph tells the midwife so that she, as well as the reader knows whose child this is:

*"She is Mary, who was brought up in the Temple of the Lord, and I received her by lot as my wife. And she is not my wife, but has conceived of the Holy Spirit."*⁹

At the cave they see a cloud (symbol of God in Exodus) overshadowing the cave, followed by a great light (possibly the same light as that of the Transfiguration) in the cave as the child is born. The midwife cries out in prophecy:

"My soul is magnified today, for my eyes have seen wonderful things; for salvation is born to Israel".¹⁰

The midwife leaves the cave and encounters Salome. She tells her that a virgin has given birth. Salome demands proof:

*"...unless I put my finger and test her condition, I will not believe that a virgin has brought forth." And the midwife went in and said to Mary: "Make yourself ready, for there is no small contention concerning you." And Salome put forward her finger to test her condition."*¹¹

This direct and earthy approach to confirm Mary's virginity resulted in a punishment for Salome, whose hand took fire.

However, she repents, prays, and an angel appears to advise Salome to touch the child. The miracle takes place and Salome is healed. There are now two witnesses of Mary's virginity after birth: the midwife and Salome. Clement of Alexandria in chapter 16 of the Stromata indicates a familiarity with this passage of the Protoevangelium of James when he states:

*"But, as appears, many even down to our own time regard Mary, on account of the birth of her child, as having been in the puerperal state, although she was not. For some say that, after she brought forth, she was found, when examined, to be a virgin."*¹²

⁸ Christian Classics Ethereal Library
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iv.lxxviii.html> Consulted Nov 31, 2009

⁹ --- Protoevangelium of James. 1995. 141.

¹⁰ --- Protoevangelium of James. 1995. 142

¹¹ --- Protoevangelium of James. 1995. 142.

¹² Clement of Alexandria. Stromata Book 7; Chapter 16; Christian Classics Ethereal Library,
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.iv.vii.xvi.html> Consulted Nov 30, 2009.

The doctrine that Mary retained her virginity (*virginitas in partu*) while giving birth to Jesus may have its roots in the Protoevangelium of James. In any case, it is clear that in the Proto-Evangelium, she is virgin before the birth, during the birth, and after the birth.

The Protoevangelium of James ends by recounting the visit of the wise men, and the massacre of the innocents. Mary's response is to wrap Jesus in swaddling clothes and lay him in an ox manger. But Elizabeth flees with her child into the mountains, and is miraculously hidden by a mountain. Herod demands that Zacharias turn over his baby son, and when Zacharias refuses, has him murdered in the Temple. Zacharias' blood is turned into stone, his body mysteriously cannot be found. Symeon, who had seen Jesus after his presentation to the Temple is appointed priest in his stead.

There is, in this sometimes crude narrative, an attempt at going deeper, a search for understanding why Mary was chosen, what was special about her, with a stress being put on her purity, her innocence, her holiness and on her everlasting virginity. Whatever shortcomings there are in the Protoevangelium of James, it stands out as a witness, both because of its great antiquity, and its testimony of the piety of early Christians and how they perceived Mary. However, some pagans greeted it with scepticism, if not outright mockery. Origen (185-254 CE) gives such an account in *Against Celsus*:

*"...For he represents him (a Jew) disputing with Jesus, and confuting Him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having "invented his birth from a virgin," and upbraids Him with being "born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God." Now, as I cannot allow anything said by unbelievers to remain unexamined, but must investigate everything from the beginning, I give it as my opinion that all these things worthily harmonize with the predictions that Jesus is the Son of God."*¹³

We can thus know that the controversy around the Protoevangelium of James initiated a deeper development of the

¹³ Origen *Against Celsus* 1, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.ix.i.xxix.html>, consulted Dec 1, 2009.

theology of the Incarnation and the essential character of Mary's virginity.

Clement of Alexandria (150-211), in *Stromateis* 1:21, states that the genealogy in Matthew starts with Abraham and is continued down to Mary, Mother of the Lord (of God). And in 324, Alexander I of Alexandria uses the term *Theotokos* in a refutation of the Arians in an encyclical letter at the time of Nicea. So we can see a continuum in Alexandria of the development of an understanding of the *Theotokos*, or God bearer, that involved all strata of society, and included simple works of popular piety such as the Proto-Evangelium of James, and later, the great works of its highly cultured theologians who were well skilled in the Logos philosophy of the Greeks.

In 381 AD, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed included Mary as a guarantor of the Incarnation: "...Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man..." Mary achieved prominence because of the necessity of explaining the Incarnation to pagans so that they could understand it, to counter Gnostic teachings that Jesus was pure spirit, and later, to counter the Arians who did not believe in Jesus Christ's divine nature. Mary was essential to coming to a true understanding of who and what Jesus Christ was.

John's Gospel speaks: "And the Word (Logos) became flesh and lived among us."

(John 1: 14). The concept of the Logos was well established in Greek philosophy. It was defined as the divine mind of the cosmos, an intelligence similar to that of human beings, but which permeated all things and gave them order, form and meaning. The Stoics perceived the Logos as the "soul of the universe."¹⁴ The Neo-Platonist Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria linked the Logos to the figure of divine Wisdom active in the act of creation as described in Proverbs 8: 22-36:

"The LORD created (begot) me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ... then I was beside him, like a master worker, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race. And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Happy is the one who listens to me, ... For whoever finds me find life and obtains favour from the LORD; but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death."(Proverbs 8: 30-36)"

For Philo, the Logos is the Word of God as manifested in the Law and the work of the Prophets, (whose actions are always prefaced in Scripture by: Thus says the LORD). The Logos presided over the cosmos as "the mediator between God and the world. Later this aspect of Logos as the

¹⁴ logos. Encyclopædia Britannica. *Ultimate Reference Suite*. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009)

way to life is clearly stated by Jesus Christ in John 14: 6: "I am the way, the truth and the life."

In Sirach 24 we see the Logos as especially residing in Israel:

"I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was a pillar of cloud. Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depth of the abyss. Over waves of the sea, over all of the earth, and over every people I have held sway. Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide? Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said: "Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance"...(Sirach 24: 3-8)

Philo referred to the Logos as "the first-begotten Son of God, the man of God, the image of God, and second to God."¹⁵ Paul, in Colossians 1: 15-17 describes Christ in a similar manner:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rules or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He

himself is before all things and in him all things hold together."

The early apologists of Alexandria Greek philosophy in the tradition of Philo applied the concept of the Logos to John and Paul's conception of the Logos/Jesus Christ. In doing so they elevated the intellectual content of Christianity and increased its appeal. John McGuckin, in his book, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* explains the doctrine of the Image of God in Christ:

"...the invisible and unapproachable Godhead was fully "imaged" in the Logos. This image retained the character of the Absolute One, but was not specifically ontologically characterised, as was the One, by its unapproachable invisibility and, in consequence, when the divine image "imaged itself" in creating the world, it thereby became the one source and medium of all divine revelation. The Supreme God was revealed to the world only through the Logos, and the world could only approach the unapproachable through the Divine Logos who had given creation (particularly the soul of man) the capacity to relate to him through the mirror of his own life-force which he had left within the human soul, that is the spiritual intellect or Nous of man. Thus, the One and the Many were bridged in a way that did not compromise God's transcendence, nor

¹⁵ Philo Judaeus. Encyclopædia Britannica. *Ultimate Reference Suite*. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009)

weaken the biblical sense of his providential nearness to his people.”¹⁶

The prologue of the Gospel of John identifies Jesus as the pre-existent Logos, as Word of God made flesh, fulfilling the prophecy of Sirach 24.

“In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1-5)...He was in the world and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him. But all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. (John 10-13)

John makes it clear that it is the actual Word of God, not just a prophet, who was made man.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full

of grace and truth...From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the father’s heart who has made him known.” (John 15-18)

So the baby that Mary is to bear is the Logos, the intelligence active in the cosmos, as manifested in wisdom and the law, who is the Word of God manifested throughout the existence of Israel, enfleshed and made man. She holds within her womb the great power of the cosmos. The Incarnation within her is a great mystery. Cyril of Alexandria explains in his second letter to Nestorius:

“We must ...realize what is meant by the Word of God being made flesh and made man. We do not say that the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, nor that he was transformed into a perfect man of soul and body. We say, rather, that the Word in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner, ineffably united to himself flesh animated with a rational soul and thus became man and was called Son of Man. This was not effected only as a matter of will, or favour, or by the assumption of a single prosopon. While the natures that were brought together into this true unity were different, nonetheless there is One Christ and Son out of both. This did not involve the negation of the difference of natures, rather that the Godhead and

¹⁶ John McGuckin. *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*. (Crestwood, New York. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004). 177.

*manhood by their ineffable and indescribable consilience into unity achieved One Lord and Christ and Son for us.*¹⁷

To understand the mystery of the Incarnation, we must also consider kenosis, that self-emptying of the Logos, as expressed by Paul in Philippians 2: 5-11.

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (Phi 2: 5-8)”.

This self-emptying of what was most holy into the womb of Mary is what makes her Theotokos. Cyril continues:

“Yet the Word ‘becoming flesh’ means nothing else than that ‘he shared in flesh and blood like us’ (Heb. 2.14), and made his very own a body which was ours, and that he came forth as a man from a woman, although he did not cast aside the fact that he is God, born of God the Father, but remained what he was even in the assumption of the flesh. Everywhere the orthodox faith promotes this doctrine. We shall also find that the holy Fathers thought like this, and this is why they called

*the holy virgin ‘Mother of God’. This does not mean that the nature of the Word, or his divinity took the beginning of its existence from the holy virgin, rather that he is said to have been born according to the flesh in so far as the Word was hypostatistically united to that holy body which was born from her, endowed with a rational soul.”*¹⁸

Because of the union of two natures in Christ, whatever one can say about the divine nature, one can also say about the human nature, or vice versa, because both natures are united in the same person. This is the principle of the communications of idioms. Mary is Theotokos for she gave birth to the person of Jesus Christ. Even though he only took his human nature from her, she is mother to his total person.¹⁹

Christian meditation on this mystery of the Incarnation, and Mary’s role in it brings other implications with regards to how bearing the Logos would have affected Mary. KK Fitzgerald points out this aspect of the meaning of the term Theotokos:

“...the Greek title Theotokos also conveys a subtle nuance of meaning that may be overlooked in its usual English translation as “Mother of God,” or worse yet, “Birth-giver of God.” The term not only communicates the idea of divine maternity, but also conveys the sense

¹⁸--- Cyril of Alexandria. 2004. 265.

¹⁹ Gambero, Luigi. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* [Maria nel pensiero dei padri della Chiesa.English]. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.) 235

¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria. Second Letter to Nestorius. In *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004). McGuckin, 263.

of "she who contains the divine." This bears witness to the complete kenosis, the self-emptying of God in order to become human. Demonstrating the ineffable, infinite love God has for His creation, this self-emptying is unconditional. Nothing is held back."²⁰

And it is interesting to note, that nothing is held back from Mary's side either:

"Then Mary said: 'Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word'." (Luke 1: 38)

Christ's indwelling within her happens with her full and willing consent and participation. She is virgin, completely dedicated to the Logos, with a unique purity. So if Christ is seen as the second Adam, Mary becomes the advocate of the first Eve.²¹ Adam had to be restored in Christ who, in the words of Paul, took on the form of a slave. Mary on her part, in the words Luke ascribes to her, became handmaiden of the Lord and undoes in her virginal obedience the disobedience of the virginal Eve. This is Paul's doctrine of the recapitulation;

"As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (First Corinthians 15:22).

Through Christ as Logos, all things are made new again. Mary thus participates in that new life, in the economy of salvation and by bearing the new Adam, brings that regenerated life to all believers. Irenaeus put it this way in *Dei Incarnatione*: "He (the Logos) became man that man might become god."

McGuckin explains Cyril of Alexandria's understanding of the incarnation this way:

"The point he wishes to make is that of the intimacy of the connection between the two realities in Christ: one a reality of the glorious power of the godhead, and the other the tragic reality of the human condition. In the incarnation of the Logos, Cyril posits the intimate union of the two realities as a salvific act or life-giving transaction."²²

Human nature was raised, or divinized as a result of being infused by the Logos. Jesus, both man and Logos, the new Adam, restored human beings to their original state. Mary, who carried the Son of God in her womb was also affected by the divine presence, and because of her full assent and cooperation with the Divine Plan was seen as the new Eve, who by obedience, undid the disobedience of the first Eve. This very early belief (Justin Martyr was the first to express it, and it was subsequently developed by a long line of Early Church fathers: Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ephrem, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem) led

²⁰ Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald. 2001. A person in communion: The witness of Mary, the Mother of God. *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 46, (3-4) (Fall): 233.

²¹ Gambero, Luigi. 1999. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* [Maria nel pensiero dei padri della Chiesa. English]. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.) 54-56.

²² John McGuckin. *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004). 185.

to the perception of Mary as being holy, and as playing a special role in our salvation. She becomes the instrument through which salvation came, and very quickly enters into the prayers and piety of the Early Christians. Thus the Theotokos is seen as "All-Holy," Panagia and "immaculate" (archrantos)."²³

Christian meditation on the parallel between Jesus Christ and Mary Theotokos, the new Adam and Eve, led to a deepening of the spiritual understanding of the meaning of Mary's virginity:

"...the understanding of virginity (parthenia)... implies something more... the discipline that seeks to cultivate purity of heart. Purity of heart may be briefly described here as a kind of unconditional personal integrity in the presence of the living God. At the same time, this is also a dynamic process of growing relationship with the eternal, loving God. The concern not only of the monastic but also of all believers is to conquer their selfish desires and develop a pure heart before God. This is expressed in the words of the Psalm which says: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps 50 [51]: 10). The description of Mary as aeiparthenos invites us to reflect deeply upon her personal inner state of integrity before God."²⁴

Athanasius, in his "Letter to the Virgins" uses Mary Theotokos as a model for consecrated virgins, both male and female. Just as Jesus Christ had dwelt in the womb of Mary, Origen saw that spiritually virgin souls by their willing reception and cooperation with the Word of God could have Christ indwelling within them. Origen saw the Church as bringing new believers through this process of giving birth to Christ, making a figurative and allegorical link between Mary and the Church. The idea of the indwelling of the Logos in imitation of the Theotokos was further developed by the Cappadocian Fathers and became a focus of early monastic life.²⁵ Mary Theotokos increasingly played a larger and larger part in Christian piety and liturgy. Cyril of Alexandria wrote the following hymn, within a larger homily preached at the First Council of Ephesus that celebrates Mary's role in the economy of salvation:

We hail you, O Mary mother of God, venerable treasure of the entire world, inextinguishable lamp, crown of virginity, sceptre of orthodoxy, imperishable temple, container of him who cannot be contained, Mother and Virgin, through whom it is said in the holy Gospels: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mt 21: 9).

Hail you who held the Uncontainable One in your holy and virginal womb!

²³ ---Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald. 2001. 236.

²⁴ ---Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald. 2001. 235.

²⁵ Judith Mary Forster. 2008. *Giving Birth to God: The Virgin Empress Pulcheria and Imitation of Mary in Early Christian Greek and Syriac Traditions*, Master's Thesis, Concordia University, Montreal. 82-86.

Through you the Holy Trinity is glorified; the precious Cross is celebrated and adored throughout the world; heaven exults, the angels and archangels rejoice, the demons are put to flight, the devil, the tempter, falls from heaven, the fallen creation is brought back to paradise, all creatures trapped in idolatry come to know of the truth".²⁶

Conclusion:

Thus we see that the root of Mariology in the Church at Alexandria developed within the context of a fuller understanding of the Incarnation. A very early document, the Protoevangelium of James written for the populace, expressed the piety of ordinary people, carried seeds of ideas that later were taken up by the broader church in its popular memory of Mary, particularly in iconography. Working in parallel, and in full knowledge of what the Proto-Evangelium said, the Fathers of Alexandria, deepened their understanding of the Incarnation by applying the Logos philosophy of Philo, and through their apologetics in defending the two natures of Christ against the Gnostics, the Arians and the Nestorians. Mary, the Theotokos emerged as essential. In meditating on the self-emptying of the Logos in Paul, and Mary's complete obedience in the Annunciation of Luke, and in Paul's view

of Jesus Christ as being the New Adam, Mary became the New Eve, and the instrument through which salvation as come. The recognition of the relationships between Mary and Jesus lead to the increasing awareness of the holiness of Mary, and she became a model of the Church, as well as a model for all Christians to follow. Her virginity throughout her life was embraced as a model for Christian aestheticism. The praises given to her for her role in the Economy of salvation as Theotokos are at the root of Mariology.

²⁶ Cyril of Alexandria. Homily IV Preached at Ephesus against Nestorius. In *Mary and the Fathers of the Church : The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* [Maria nel pensiero dei padri della Chiesa.English]. Luigi. Gambero. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009). 247-248.

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Nunc Dimittis

Wilfred Osuri Alera

139 Revisited

Brent Thomas Walker

Τῆ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη,
οὐχ ἑκοῦσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐπ' ἐλπίδι·

The grace of groaning
inescapable desire burning
darkness and light dancing, and
the only way through is
the tension between
not having anything
but by each other.

“I asked Him, why?” she said,
“*Sin is behovely*” He answered.

Such knowledge is too high for me
I cannot attain it, but then...
who has been His counsellor, and
who has known His mind?

You gave me freedom to choose
then gave me a choice I couldn't refuse.
You subjected me to vanity
and you call this fall happy?

My sin is so great. You pile it on:
pulsing, racing, insatiable
I cannot escape it. It is
greater than the earth itself
something...not fixable.

“I asked Him, why?” she said
“*Sin is behovely*,” He answered.

Creation was subjected to vanity said the mystic,
not willingly— not of its own—
but by God who subjected it
in hope.

And all the time and penance in the world
could not rid my soul of the shame and
pain—vain my universe of sin.

My beginning was my end Thomas.
My journey into darkness, and
all you could say was,
“*Be still and wait without hope*”

For hope would be hope for the wrong thing."

And so she says this *sin is behovely*,
 the ministering death
 the servant of the incomprehensible,
 holding me down
 its knee upon my chest.
 Its great black dirty hands over my mouth
 suffocating...suffering the last breath of
 hope out of me, screaming all the while
My many, many atrocities, until
 I can hear nothing else, until
 it is the only reality I see.

Finally, there is no fixing anything
 There is no remedy for the situation and
 my last breath is
 a feeble exhale.
 Selah.

You gave me freedom to choose
 then gave me a choice I couldn't refuse.
 You subjected me to vanity
 and you call this fall happy?

All this You did.
 You are to blame.
 You are to blame for it all,
 for even my fall.

And from Golgotha's screaming mouth, You
 accepted *the* blame
 accepted *my* blame
 accepted *all* blame
 You are to blame for it all.

You knew it was the only way to feel:
 grace, mercy, forgiveness, and
 all the wonders of Your multifoliate Love that
 reason can never comprehend.

Sin is behovely?

Such knowledge is too high
 You are to blame for death;
 You knew it was the only place
 from which we could taste life.

You are to blame for all hate.
 You knew it was the only womb from
 which we could awaken to the otherness of
 unconditional unprejudiced love.

You are to blame for the limits of time.
 You knew it was the only precipice from

which we could see the gift of eternity.

You are to blame for my helplessness
that in the end I have
no other choice
than the choice to give up
give in
be chewed up
swallowed up and...
consumed by
Your love.
Until...
I am still—
and there is nothing left except
the consciousness of
our union...

You are to blame for leading me
through the valley of the shadows
where vanity seduced me and
death was my lover,
and then, when I made my bed in hell—
You were there.

You knew darkness was the only
way home to
You, from where I came.
For You, the Light shines as the day,
and the darkness and light are the same.

You are to blame for waking me up
to unthinkable Love.
Felix culpa, Felix culpa, Felix culpa.

Sin is behovely and all shall be well
for the whole of creation was made subject—in Hope.
Felix culpa, Felix culpa, Felix culpa.

You are to blame for You hedged me in
before and behind and
all my days were written in you
before and behind
I was formed.
You fashioned my days when
there was yet none of them.

And she took me
Sweet Julian,
and drew me to her breast and held me
whispering,
“*God sees our wounds, and
sees them not as scars but as honors. . . .*
For God holds sin as a sorrow and pain to us.
He does not blame us for them.”

You! You are to blame.

You hedged me in
 You wrote my days
 You made me fall
 You took my fall
 Became the fall and
 the blame for it all.
 All of this...you did.

And He has made from one blood
 every nation of people to dwell on all the face of the earth,
 and has determined their preappointed times and
 the boundaries of their dwellings,
 so that they should desire Him,
 in the hope that they might grope for Him and
 find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
 for in Him we live and move and have our being,
 as also some of your own poets have said,
 ~~~ 'For we are also His offspring.' ~~~  
 You gave me freedom to choose  
 then gave me a choice I couldn't refuse.  
 You are to blame for  
 waking me up to Love.

*Felix culpa, Felix culpa, Felix culpa,*

You knew the only way to feel love:  
 was to feel Sin for *sin is behovely*.  
 You stepped into my darkness and met me in hell.  
 You became sin that I might become Love.  
 You are to blame for birthing me in  
 the dark soil where you planted me...  
 You do not  
 Blame me...

*Felix culpa,*

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
 I cannot capture it. I cannot grasp its measure.  
 Oh how precious are your thoughts towards me,  
 Your loving thoughts towards me  
 ...are more than all the grains of sand  
 on every shore

*Quick now said the bird,  
 Here, now, always—  
 A condition of complete simplicity  
 (Costing not less than everything)  
 Sin is behovely, and All shall be well  
 And all manner of thing shall be well  
 When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
 Into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one.<sup>1</sup>  
 Felix culpa Selah...*

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Italicised sections are taken from Julian of Norwich, *Showing of Love*, and T.S. Eliot, "The Four Quartets."



## **Racing the Light**

**Karen Courtland Kelly**

# Enchiridion Christiani

## Ian Van Heyst

---

A slight chill hangs in the air this late afternoon. Another winter, probably my last, is not so far away. The sun-pressed hint of olives and citrus still lingers in the yard. I watch a white silky seed waft over the brick wall above me, soar across the rough stone pavement against the steely sky, then slowly settle into the garden. I feel the heat that remains in the brick from the setting sun. My wine cup rests emptied before me.

Young Mary works to clear up from supper in the house. I call her that, but she is probably fifty-five. She is yet so young and beautiful, as if protected somehow against the worst of what time does to us all. I came to this house over twenty years ago, and she was already then a servant to my dear host Eliel, my protector and friend. I've often thought I'd known her in that life before, and I catch her sometimes watching me, as a mother her child, as if she'd known me too. I am like her brother now, and she my sister.

What dark, grim times we live in! The world reels, truly mad, consuming its own flesh with wild abandon. He is gone now well over thirty years, and so many no longer remember Him, nor know of Him. The Believers have been so hunted and slain. Our work, it seems, for naught. Doubt, like syphilis, gnaws me raw. My despair seeps in. Forgive me.

Fear not the noises without. Jerusalem writhes and burns, though the great Roman fires are sure still to come. I have some moments yet to inscribe this testament. Hear now, then, my solemn words.

My name is Adomar, and these old sticks have walked this earth now nearly seventy years. I was born here, of the streets, wilder than the desert creatures outside these walls. I did no good except for myself. Survival was my only scripture; my trinity solely one of violence,

theft, and deceit.

I was caught stealing from the Temple stalls, and became the slave of Caiaphus, the High Priest, who called me Malchus. He had to put his personal stamp on all he touched. I was a petty criminal until then, but this leader of the Jewish people taught me much of the great wide road to this life's pleasures.

I had been a slave to Caiaphus already ten years by that particular Passover, four years longer than the law proscribed, but, understand, my master was the law. I had never seen him so anxious and unbalanced as he was with that desert prophet's arrival into the City. Unshorn, half-clad, and riding a mule - - how could anyone believe he was the Messiah? But many did, and this scared Caiaphas, who saw a real threat to his wealth and authority: the Romans would raze the Temple and all of Jerusalem to quell any Jewish unrest.

"Cut them through their very hearts!" Caiaphus roared grinning to no one when I arrived at his chambers. He waived me in, but ignored me. He was working out another one of his schemes in his head. His robes flowed like great sails as he rushed about the room, hands gesticulating wildly, in another language it seemed. Some thought him mad, but his mind worked differently than most, much swifter, and on such a grander scale. "Get them to betray each other." The smile on his face was cold as the pavement in winter, and just as slippery. "And, with any luck, Pilate will do our dirty work." He shook his head in mock disbelief, as if at the brilliance of his own plan. "Our will, by his hands, shall be done."

"Malchus," his voice, sharp and sudden, caught me, "You are the man for this." His cruel stare only fired my prideful flames

within.

“Thy will be done, master,” I bowed, with a reciprocal smile to confirm my double bond of filial duty and personal pleasure in his scheme.

“There is one among them called Judas, Ish Karioth,” he paused, as if weighing the other in his mind, Judas’ capacity for evil, for that was Caiaphus’ genius. “Make him believe we are working with him to make the Messiah known to the World, at last.” He paused again as if he saw the events unfolding in his mind, through to the end. “Take thirty pieces of silver from the Treasury. You probably won’t need them. He’d do it for nothing. But give them to him anyway. Tell him: ‘As a contribution to the cause.’”

Judas accepted our ‘help’, just as Caiaphus said he would. I snickered aloud after that meeting, at the unwitting victim of the grand manipulator.

**Fool!** I called him in my mind, as if I was so much the wiser! I did not see, then, that I was also being played. We are often blindest when we think we see most.

Word came from the Betrayer the following day. Midnight. The Nazarene and his followers would be in Gethsemane. Always prepared, expecting some resistance, I secured a dozen armed men to help make the arrest.

“The one I shall kiss is the man,” Judas instructed impatiently as he moved quickly to the gate as soon as we arrived, as if he could not wait any longer for the unveiling of his Messiah. “Take him.”

“Whom do you seek?” Jesus asked, staring at me, though I did not lead the group, as if he could see Caiaphus’ there in me. I was silent, struck as if by an invisible blade, but someone mumbled a reply.

“Whom do you seek?” the question rose again, again for me.

“Jesus of Nazareth,” my voice rose. I moved forward to catch a better look at that desert

prophet. I did not yet know enough to be afraid. His eyes did not leave me.

“I am he,” the simple answer came, sharp in that weighted silence and lurking dark.

I heard his words as an answer to a question I had not even thought to ask until that very moment. I stepped forward to see his eyes, for that was my special talent, to read a man in how he looked upon the world, and how the world held him.

But his Second, Peter they called him, intercepted me. His sword flashed from beneath his robes, and arched over me. I turned my head too late. The blade sliced off my right ear.

The pain seared through me, like a grievous glaive through my mind. I fell to the ground.

I suddenly smelled the earth and the grass pressed into my face. I remember what happened, despite the pain, and the dark, and the confusion.

I heard swords drawn on both sides for a massacre. But then Jesus’ voice rose against that end.

“Put your sword away,” he commanded Peter, moving between the two opposing forces, his hand pushing against the tip of the blade.

Peter would not yield right away, not until he saw the blood trickling from his master’s hand.

“The cup my Father gives me, shall I not drink of it?” Jesus asked, as the sword fell away, turning suddenly to me, as if expecting no response.

“Adomar, my brother,” Jesus spoke, cradling my head in His lap, bending in close, whispering for me alone, “I am He.” I saw it in His eyes, windows to the throne of God.

And then He lightly set His own bloodied hand upon my wound, and healed me. Our blood would run forever together. His spirit coursed through me in that instant, cauterizing the thousand festered wounds of a



broken, wicked life. Like Lazarus, I rose from death, a death in life I had been living.

“As with your faith, so with your flesh and heart,” He whispered, his face softening, despite knowing all that was to come. Enough of His future passed through to me in my baptism of His blood.

I rose also, set to unmake the plans of Caiaphus and *his* master. My soldiers were rounding up the followers of Christ.

“You seek me,” Jesus spoke to the whole assembly, though cast His gaze on me in the end. “Let these men go.” He stared at me. I would free them all, Him most of all. He stared through me, though, to hold me from unmaking what I did not understand.

I nodded for the others to be released, and motioned for the prisoner to be bound. His followers forsook Him like frightened sheep, all their former courage flowed from them, like blood into the parched earth. How could they abandon *Him*?

“Great work, Malchus!” Caiaphus cried overloud, slapping me hard on the shoulder upon my return, taking the opportunity to inspect the side of my head. “The rumours of your injury are clearly exaggerated.”

“Missed me entirely,” I responded quickly, having practiced my response, knowing that reports would fly to his ears faster than thought.

“Quite a lot of blood, though,” Caiaphus commented as he poked at the surrounding hair, “But the ear seems fine.”

“The blood is his,” I lied, in part, laughing, “These desert dross are not soldiers.” He heard enough of truth in my deflection to let the matter pass, his cracked smile returning. “He stands before Annas as we speak.”

“Now, the fun begins,” he rubbed his hands together, as if to warm them, or to clean them. “Bring him to me when he is done.”

I rejoiced inwardly. The Christ would shake of His fetters, and rise as King and Messiah, blasting Caiaphus and his clan, and all the Romans, from this place. I would be free.

So calmly He stood before the High Priest, all the power and fear with which he held the court as naught to Him. He played Caiaphus beautifully. The High Priest was nigh spitting in his rage. I waited for Him to reveal Himself.

“I adjure you,” Caiaphus shouted into the face of his new sworn enemy, spit flying in the lamp light. “By the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!”

I held my breath. It seemed as if all the world waited on the words that were to come. My heart rose in anticipation. Faces turned to Him, in that long silence. He had them then.

“*You* have said so,” Jesus answered, slowly, purposefully.

It seemed suddenly all wrong, as if he had no power at all, still bound hand and foot, as if he was a common rebel, caught in the machinations of a political press. Such a weak voice then, in all that darkness, against all that hate. The court hissed against the Nazarene. I felt my heart restrict, and my own invisible bonds tighten once again. I would not be free. I was not usually so easily fooled. My lips, too, drew back with ophidian sibilance, doubt and anger full blown in me.

“But I tell you,” Jesus offered further, “Hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Caiaphus was upon him at once, his trap sprung.

“Blasphemy!” his voice boomed, and echoed in the room. “Blasphemy!” His hand gripped Jesus’ robe high on the shoulder, and tore it wide open across the back. “He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy.” Caiaphus was in control again. “What is

your judgment?”

Whispers at first only filled the room, as if some fear remained, but Caiaphus raised his hands for the response he knew they had in them.

“Death,” the whispers yielded to a common sentiment, and then to angry shouts. “Death! Death!” And my voice rose among them.

We mocked and taunted, and spat upon the heretic. Caiaphus only nodded, holding back the guards from any intervention. But when we started to kick and punch the criminal, Caiaphus sprang up, having Jesus removed before we finished his work too early. He was so pleased with himself, his crooked smile wider than I’d seen it in some time. He was sending Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate found no crime in the prisoner, though, and wanted to release him. But Caiaphus prepared me for this. I had coached the crowd to shout for Barabbas’ release and the crucifixion of Jesus. My heart was cold stone even when Pilate had him scourged and mocked in regal gown and paraded before the crowd. My blood should have risen in recognition and kinship with his own, running so freely down his face.

“Crucify him!” I yelled with all the rest.  
“Crucify him!”

My pen falters in my shaking hand. Darkness is nearly full upon me in the yard. I see Mary in the doorway, watching me, as if she knows. I motion that I need a minute more, and she vanishes. I bow my head, and beseech His forgiveness and mercy, as I have done all the days of my life since that time so long ago.

But let me finish -- but a moment more – my inhuman human self indictment, this sometime doubter’s testament. There will be time enough to hate and revile me fully for my great sins against the living God.

I refused him, as King, Messiah, Healer, and even as a man. I had no pity for the burden of

the cross he bore up that long sloped road, nor for the spikes they drove through his flesh against that coarse wood, nor for the rending sinew when the cross dropped into the hole and his body’s weight flew upon three grievous points. Two other criminals hung by his side.

I watched, for Caiaphus bid me see it through, else I might have missed that end of days. An air of carnival surrounded the foot of the cross, despite the dying men and the small crowd of mourners. The soldiers gamboled about, mocking him, drawing lots for his clothing, offering him vinegar to drink, cajoling him to save himself. One of them even pierced him in the side with a spear, like an animal, to see if he was living or dead. The inscription mounted over him gave them great amusement as they watched him suffer so, and die: “This is the King of the Jews.” I smiled at their antics.

I stood apart, forced witness, my hands crossed firmly against any involvement in that scene, even perhaps subconsciously contrary to his splayed arms.

Then the sky darkened, and his rasping breath was the only sound I heard. Two sharp intakes for every exhale, in quickening pace, death racing in his blood. I moved closer, for I heard His words in that three-beat panting struggle. I stumbled, as the veil lifted off me once more, as I remembered His hand upon my ear, and His breath upon my face.

“I . . . am . . . He,” Two fast gasps inward, then a quick sigh out. “I . . . am . . . He.”

My bowels wrenched in churning pain with sudden remembered knowledge. My heart cried out to Him, even as I fell against the rough green wood of the cross. I looked upward, suddenly and forever afraid. His grim visage held all our human pain.

I saw it from the corner of my eye. I did not flinch, or move. The drop of His blood fell upon my upturned face, blending with my tears, searing me anew, commanding me to steel myself against temptation, and burn a



zealot's rage against Evil's hand.

**Thy will be done**, I whispered in my mind.  
Thence I was reborn, and saved, in the  
shadow of His dying life and rising light.

I reached up my hand to Him. I wanted Him  
to know that He was not alone.

Utter darkness fell suddenly. The earth  
trembled.  
"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit,"  
Christ cried out, with His dying breath and  
strength.

I weep in darkness here once more, chilled  
right through my soul. I shiver with fevered  
remembrance.

I see the blade flashing over my head again.

I grasp desperately for the wine dregs in my  
cup from the table, to steady me against such  
haunting memories, this grim testament.

I feel His breath, and see His eyes again!

These old hands fumble in the dark.

I watch again the endless falling of that drop  
of blood. I turn skyward now again, as if I'm  
still there.

I lurch forward suddenly, as if stricken,  
stumble, but then rise without my cane.

I smash the wine cup, and also spill my ink. I  
feel the blood flow from the cut on my arm,  
and imagine it comingling with the ink and  
my fresh tears.

I reflexively wipe my face against my weeping  
eyes and memories, only to set such a mess of  
lines and smears of red and black upon the  
weathered parchment.

In a long intake of breath, my eyes turn to the  
stars in the sky, where I imagine you, all the  
generations.

We did all that when the wood was green,  
what happens now, and all the years to come,  
when the wood is dry?

I sigh.  
I pray this triune alchemy, of blood and ink  
and tears, transforms, bears witness in these  
pages to you all, that you might hear and  
believe.



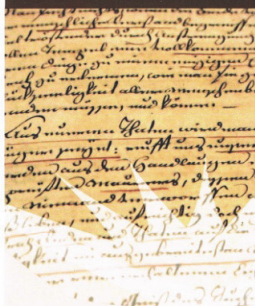
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Adrian Gorea

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