

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

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**JESUS OUR SAVIOUR: THE HEALER OF INNER  
BROKENNESS**

Supervisor

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Master's Degree in Theology

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis  
to my late father,  
Kplaku Komi Gabriel,  
and to my loving mother,  
Etse Afi Benedicta

## EPIGRAPH

ōThe Lord heals the broken-hearted,

He binds up all their woundsō

*Psalm 147: 3*

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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Motives and Aim of the Thesis

The idea to undertake this research on the topic of *healing of inner brokenness* came to birth on two different planes: one personal and the other academic. On the personal level, I discovered through Dr. Whitfield's book, *Healing the Child Within*, the effect of trauma on the human psyche. He describes how a false self emerges when the "Child Within," that part of each of us which is ultimately alive, energetic, creative and fulfilled<sup>1</sup> is not nurtured accordingly.

Recent breakthroughs in the realm of psychology and psychiatry have shown that specific parts of the brain play an important role in forming a healthy emotional relationship, especially during the first year of life. However, "significant interruption of healthy development by repeated trauma often leaves a child in an out-of-control "fight, flight or freeze" state, often called post traumatic stress disorder."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, our basic personalities depend on those who have either consciously or unconsciously loved us or refused to love us. Growing up in troubled families where sexual abuse, mental and emotional abuse, child neglect, and

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<sup>1</sup> C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, viii.

ignoring or thwarting the child's spirituality or spiritual growth are rife, disrupt and impair the child's integral human development.<sup>3</sup>

This can lead to some vices such as homosexuality, masturbation and many other difficulties pertaining to feeling arousal or pleasure as an adult. The crux of the matter is that, there is a strong connection between what happened to us when we were little and our daily repetition, compulsion, addiction and craving. A coherent childhood's story can easily account for our current type of personality. We are like the man under the law described by Paul: 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. [I] I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do' (cf. Romans 7:15.18-19).<sup>4</sup>

Discovering the 'Child Within' and its story is a pathway to personal growth, emotional and intellectual integration. Buddhists describe the Self as an endless peeling onion. To break free of being a victim or a martyr of our compulsive behaviour needs a thorough exploration and integration of the inner Self.<sup>5</sup> Christianity claims that the salvation of the human race has been achieved in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus-Christ. How can we call Jesus of Nazareth, the *Healer* of inner brokenness in this context of human psychological suffering? Can he make whole our puzzling inner wounds and alienation?

Over the years, people have developed an over-active brain and unhealthy defences due to the traumatic environment in which they have grown up. The language of the brain which is expressed through our feeling of fear, anxiety, anger,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, viii.

<sup>4</sup> In this study, we shall use the 'Revised Standard Version' of the Holy Bible. Also, the abbreviations 'Cf.' and 'ed.', respectively, represent 'Confer' and 'edited by'.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, ix.

rage and impulsivity is nothing else than stress response systems to increased excitation of the brain stem cells.<sup>6</sup> The healing of our stress disordered brain and body is indispensable for our mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Like the deer that yearns for running streams, our soul is yearning for a liberating healing from our childhood coping and survival response of anger that has long caused us unceasing problems.<sup>7</sup> With Jesus as the ultimate therapist can we start to relax in situations that used to trigger anger and rage? Is Jesus still relevant in our existential torture of loneliness and search for meaning?

In the hope of trying to answer these questions and clarify the nature of healing causality, I turned to soteriology, the systematic study of salvation, namely Jesus' saving work in our lives. Here comes in the second, more academic factor at the origin of this long essay. Having done an elective entitled, *How does Jesus Christ Save us*, and read Father Eamonn Mulcahy's doctoral thesis, *The Cause of our Salvation*, my quest for salvific healing was increased.

On the question: how are we saved by Jesus of Nazareth? The answer was: by the love mediated in the whole life of Christ ó incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> While we appreciate the many positive insights of this thesis, we shall attempt to articulate a *mystical soteriology of union or oneness* wherein all the major soteriological models find their expression ó revelation, redemption, liberation, divinisation, justification, sacrifice, satisfaction, substitution and reconciliation.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, x.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, xi.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 473.

## 2. The Presuppositions and Method of the Thesis

In this study, we want to look at the inner brokenness in the realm of psychology and thus it constitutes a limitation to our research. We also presuppose that the root of our brokenness lies in an inadequate nurturing of our True Self, the Child Within. What results is:

an interruption in the otherwise normal and healthy neurological and psychological growth and development of the child from birth to adulthood. In order to survive, the traumatized child's Real Self goes into hiding deep within the unconscious part of its psyche. What emerges is a false self or ego which tries to run the show of our life, but is unable to succeed because it is simply a defence mechanism against pain and not real. Its motives are based more on needing to be right and in control.<sup>9</sup>

In this vein, the detrimental effect of growing up in a traumatic and hurtful family ripples throughout the entire life. Adult children of trauma — adults, whose childhood had been traumatized — experience an array of mental disorders that range from depression to addictions and schizophrenia and some other physical disorders. These illnesses are strongly linked to a story of repeated childhood trauma. In order to release these past unresolved internal conflicts, many transferred their addiction to food, money, sex, work, unhealthy relationships or other self-destructive behaviours. That is why the proliferation of dysfunctional families is ever growing because they do not provide and support the healthy needs of their children.<sup>10</sup>

From this background, the crisis of meaning and the sense of lostness in modern society are traceable to that critical time in our development when we learnt

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<sup>9</sup> C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, xvi.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C.L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, xvi.

how to relate to ourselves and others.<sup>11</sup> Every woman or man finds her/himself divided within, against her/his own self. At the heart of our conscience, that secret part of our freedom, we experience some contradiction that subjects us to an ineluctable law of our actions, but with which we are freely accomplices. Even the pure innocence of a child is marked by emotional conflicts of violence that drive jealousy and possession.<sup>12</sup>

The psalmist proclaims: in guilt I was born, a sinner was I conceived (Psalm 51:5). From the same context, Paul's lament over his wretched body of death in need of deliverance continues to reverberate in humanity. Against such a background of excessive pain and suffering, what can it possibly mean to say that we have been healed by Jesus-Christ? This is the task that lies ahead of us in the course of the presentation of this thesis. In order to achieve this goal, we need to analyse the psychological factors which influence human behaviour so that people may better understand and relate with Self, God and Others. That is why the methodology pursued in this study has been primarily inductive, beginning with the effects of trauma and growing up in a dysfunctional family and world, before proceeding to offer a theological reflection on what it means to be human and fully healed of inner brokenness in the light of the Christ-Event.

However, we shall not stick rigidly to this method but follow the one laid down by Jacques Dupuis called a 'global theological method' that combines the deductive and the inductive methods in the hope of maintaining the contact between Christian memory and contemporary experience.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, we shall use various

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *What Are they Saying about Jesus?*, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. B. SESBOÜÉ, *Jesus-Christ l'Unique Médiateur*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. MCCABE, 'Christian Theology of Other Faiths' Class notes, Tangaza College, 12.

kinds of academic literature such as primary sources, secondary sources, monographs, journal articles, and Church documents.

### **3. The Structure and Content of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter analyses the effects of trauma and growing up in a dysfunctional family and world; in this chapter, we shall explore the human predicament from childhood to adulthood by showing the origin of our inner wounds and brokenness. After describing the brokenness of our human predicament, we shall offer a theological reflection on what makes us candidates for salvation. The second chapter deals with vision as criterion for healing; we shall make use of composition criticism as explicated by Dennis Hamm<sup>14</sup> to show Jesus as the enabler and the object of vision; it is only after seeing and experiencing personally the hanged healer that the journey of healing begins. The third chapter will tackle the mystical journey of love towards healing. Here, the call of love at the centre of our soul will provide a fertile ground for healing the inner division between the conscious and the unconscious mind.

In the fourth chapter, we shall explore the holistic picture of healing in the African cultures. In black Africa, life is defined as a vital web of relationships, encompassing not only the physical and psychological levels, but also one's relationships with the community of the living and the community of the departed and ultimately with God himself, the everlasting source of our own life. Thus, the human person needs healing in all these fundamental areas. Therefore, we will see

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", *Biblica* 67 (1990) 457-477.

in this chapter how Christ can truly be seen as the saviour and the healer of inner brokenness in the African context.<sup>15</sup>

The final chapter of our study will attempt to develop a theological reflection on healing. We shall use Bernard Lonergan's law of the cross, Peter Abelard's redemptive power of love and Karl Rahner's understanding of grace as the bases for this endeavour. All in all, healing is about reconciliation and forgiveness.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. DOMINGUES, *Christ our Healer*, 56.

## Chapter I

### The Effects of Trauma and Growing up in a Dysfunctional Family and World

#### 1. Introduction

Up to recent times, a deductive method dominated Catholic theology — beginning with the teaching of the Church or the data of Scriptures and drawing from these sources, principles for Christian thought and action. At Vatican II, there was a shift for a more inductive method — beginning with human experience and trying to discern the signs of the times in the light of Scriptures and Tradition.<sup>1</sup> In this vein Gustavo Gutiérrez defines theology as a “critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

By the same token, we shall proceed inductively, beginning with the analysis of the psychology of the person, the impact our past has on our present, with its joys and sorrows, hopes and deep questions, before proceeding to offer a theological reflection on human beings and their world in response to the context previously described. Therefore, we shall insist on the primacy of praxis over theory, of doing

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. McCABE, “Christian Theology of Other Faiths” Class notes, Tangaza College, 10.

<sup>2</sup> G. GUTIÉRREZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, 11.

over knowing as exercised by the liberation theologians.<sup>3</sup> That said, we shall begin by exploring the various dimensions, external and internal, of the child within.

## 2. Discovering the Child Within

The concept of the Child Within was not discovered in our contemporary time but has been there for almost two thousand years. Psychologists like Carl Jung and Emmet Fox, respectively referred to it as the "Divine Child" and the "Wonder Child". Psychotherapists Alice Miller and Donald Winnicott called it the "True Self". In the realm of addiction and chemical dependence, many called it the "Inner Child".<sup>4</sup> According to Charles L. Whitfield, the Child Within is "that part of each of us which is ultimately alive, energetic, creative and fulfilled; it is our Real Self, who we truly are."<sup>5</sup>

If it is true that not everyone was mistreated or abused as a child, it is no less true that without a healthy amount and quality of love, guidance and other nurturing, a child could consistently form a healthy relationship and feel good about his or her personality.<sup>6</sup> Our Real Self is the most dynamic part of our being; it accepts ourselves, others and loves unconditionally. It feels feelings including appropriate anger and "allows them to exist as a valid way of assessing and appreciating life's events."<sup>7</sup>

Our True Self is spontaneous, expansive and loving, giving and communicating and also compassionate. It has the following characteristics: assertive, trusting, and intuitive. The extent of its openness and trust is so powerful

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. McCABE, "Christian Theology of Other Faiths" Class notes, Tangaza College, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 9.

that in it lies its Achillesø heel: vulnerable, surrendering to itself and others and ultimately to the universe. Our Inner Child enjoys having fun and lets itself to be nurtured. It opens up avenues to the unconscious, growth, and the ability to be childlike. In a nutshell, the Child Within is who we are without mask, pretension, and forgery.<sup>8</sup>

### **3. Stifling the Child Within**

None of us lives for himself or herself; we are born into a family, a network of relationships and a society organized hierarchically with state and rank. Being so, we are influenced by our parents, authority figures (superiors, teachers, policemen etc) and institutions such as education, organized religion, politics, and media and so on. So often, these authority figures tend to deny or stifle our Child Within whenever they use their status or position to negate or annihilate our valid human needs. We grow up without realizing that our needs have not been met. This leaves us in a state of confusion and unhappiness.<sup>9</sup>

Whitfield compiled a list of human needs that are indispensable for a harmonious growth and development of a child. The first on the list is survival, safety and security. During the prenatal period, the child lives in the motherø womb. Haematology, the study of blood and its diseases, ðhas revealed the changes in blood chemistry which occur during the traumatic moments of human life.ö<sup>10</sup> Almost everyone has experienced heart palpitation and perspirationø beads on their foreheads and in the palms of their hands pertaining to emotional swings. Scientists

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 31.

explain these physical effects of our emotions as the flushing of adrenaline into our blood streams.<sup>11</sup>

These same impulses and effects are experienced by the foetus or embryo dwelling in the mother's womb. Equally true is the muscular contractions' transmission of the mother's body to the foetus who records these experiences and retains them both in its brain cells and nervous system which is formed during the period of gestation.<sup>12</sup> Thus the period of pregnancy is very critical to the survival, security and safety of the child because the more a pregnant woman is consistently upset emotionally, the more she transmits to the child via blood chemistry and muscular contractions the message that the world into which it is coming is a very insecure one.<sup>13</sup>

This transmission of information continues after birth under other forms and aspects since the newborn is still at the mercy of his or her caretakers. Here comes in the second need of touching and attention. Any abrupt, unexpected dropping and moving imparts a nervous signal to the child. The child arches its back as response and its muscles stiffen consequently. Only gradually will those muscles relax and become supple again.<sup>14</sup>

Touching is a fundamental need to the child because studies have shown that skin to skin contact makes us feel connected and cared for. Those who have been deprived of this need wither in their love and affection. Jesus touches people again and again. He stretched out his hands and touched the leper (Matthew 8:3). When

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 32.

Peter's mother-in-law was sick, Jesus touched her hands and the fever left her (Matthew 8:15), and when mothers brought their little children to him, he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

The next need is guidance and support, loyalty and trust. This involves advice and assistance, modelling and teaching appropriate and healthy social skills. With regard to support, the child is helped to explore all the potential that God has given him/her so that the Real Self can bloom and fulfil its dreams. Another kind of need is mirroring and echoing. It is a non-verbal language of the mother by facial expressions, postures, sounds and other movements that trigger the child's understanding as a feeling and thinking being. The denial of these needs result in physical, mental-emotional and spiritual pain and suffering.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, listening, participating and accepting are essential for the Child Within to be its authentic self and to grow. When parental figures demonstrate acceptance by respecting, validating and being tolerant of the feeling of the child's Real Self, it fosters a relational communication of the Child. Listening should go hand in hand with allowing the child to participate in activities appropriate to the child's age. These help the child in self acceptance.<sup>16</sup> Listening is the first commandment that the Lord enjoins on Israel (Deuteronomy 6: 4).

In addition to the previous needs is the ability to grieve losses and to grow. Life's experience is full of loss, pain and suffering be it the death of a relative, close friend or vicissitudes of life. In all these cases, there is a need to grieve our losses and grow. When this does not happen, we fall into inertia, lack of desire or ability to move on with life. The support that we get from others also helps us to let go of our

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 20.

losses. In this sense, loyalty and trust from both the receiver and the giver are very important because these are two pillars of any lasting relationship.<sup>17</sup>

Accomplishment is another strand of our human needs; by this we mean the potential to master an undertaking. On the deeper level of accomplishment lies the feeling that one made a contribution, which offers meaning to the task.<sup>18</sup> Adults from troubled families find it difficult to complete a project or to make decisions while others also from the same background are high achievers in some areas such as education or work. In any case, it is the duty of fathers and mothers to ensure that their child practices the skills of achieving or accomplishing under their guidance or control.<sup>19</sup>

The next need touches on one of the dynamic components of our being: sexuality. By it, we mean a range of potentials, from feeling good about being a man or a woman, to enjoying various aspects of being sexual, to discovering the man (*animus*) inside the psyche of the woman or the woman (*anima*) inside the man.<sup>20</sup>

The last but one highest order of human needs is nurturing; some parents have used their infant to satisfy their own unmet needs. They are themselves mentally and emotionally so impoverished that they tend to use others in an unhealthy and inappropriate way to get their needs met. Anyone in their immediate environment, anyone close to or near them, including infant and children, will be

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 21

<sup>20</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 22.

unconsciously used.<sup>21</sup> This situation stifles the child's True Self and as a result a co-dependent or false self emerges.

The final need listed by Whitfield is unconditional love. Love is the most tremendous energy that is manifested by a commitment and a will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's total growth.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Aquinas defines love as promoting the good of another human being.<sup>23</sup> Were this the case, repeated childhood trauma will only cause serious damage to the Child Within. A person might grow with the assumption that he does not need love because whenever he lets people into his life, it yields only hurt and rejection. Consequently, "frozen feelings" or an inability to fully experience feeling and emotions emerge.<sup>24</sup>

All along the course of this presentation of human needs, we may realize that some of our needs were not or are not being met. Rarely do we find parental figures that are capable of providing or helping us to have all our needs met. Like the closed bud of the flower which opens after receiving warmth from the sun and nourishment from the mothering soil, so too, we ourselves must have our human needs (warmth of human love, assurance and the nourishment of parental affection) met if we are to open and expose the unique beauty that God has placed within us.<sup>25</sup>

Once the bud of a flower is injured by hostile forces — unseasonal frost — it will not open. The same holds true for the Inner Child who must endure the chilling absence of praise and affection in replacement for the warm encouragement of love.

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<sup>21</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 22.

<sup>22</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Summa Theo*, II-II, q. 26a 3.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 24.

The worst of all is to live with an unfulfilled abusive parent or an alcoholic home or other chemically dependent set ups.<sup>26</sup>

### ***3.1 Parental Conditions that Tend to Stifle the Child Within***

We have observed that the more impoverished the parental figure is, the less the child's human needs are likely to be met. First and foremost, some parental conditions interfere with getting our needs met. The first one is alcoholic and other chemical dependences. It is a condition that is harmful for the True Self because it leads to self blame and guilt, fights and arguments among family members.<sup>27</sup>

The result of addiction can be horrendous to the person's mind, body and soul. The drinking habits of a family member can make other members feel depressed or angry. They are quite often distracted from their responsibility not to mention the financial problem of the family due to the person's drinking. Alcoholic or chemically dependent homes are the most unsafe dwelling places.<sup>28</sup> This is the basic root of our next condition called co-dependence.

Co-dependence is defined as "any suffering and/or dysfunction that is associated with or results from focusing on the needs and behaviour of others."<sup>29</sup> It is a lost selfhood and at the same time a condition that stifles our True Self. When one becomes so focused and preoccupied on the needs of others, it leads to a process of non-living. Co-dependence begins with the denial of our own needs and happiness to the benefit of other people.<sup>30</sup> When our observations, feelings and reactions are

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 28.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 28.

repressed by parental figures, we begin slowly to invalidate and neglect them altogether.

By so doing, we continue to stifle our feeling to the extent that we become tolerant of emotional pain that lead ineluctably to numbness. All this process blocks our growth and development in the mental, emotional and spiritual aspect of our being.<sup>31</sup> At this point, compulsive behaviours with projection of pain onto others spring up in order to lessen the pain and stress related illness (headaches and pains) develops. Progressively shame and low self esteem build up such that we experience extreme mood swings, difficulty with intimate relationships and chronic unhappiness.<sup>32</sup>

Co-dependence is one of the most common parental conditions that stifles the Child Within, but others include extreme rigidity and punitiveness, judgementalness, perfectionism and a chilling relationship with children and family members. Needless to say that child abuse – physical, sexual, mental-emotional and/or spiritual – is the most blatant and horrendous parental conditions.<sup>33</sup> Other conditions of troubled families are the following:

Neglectful, mistreating, inconsistent, unpredictable, arbitrary, denying, having one or more secrets, disallowing feelings, disallowing other needs, rigidity, chaotic families, criticising, shaming, humiliating, degrading, inflicting guilt, disgracing, laughing at, manipulating, deceiving, tricking, betraying, hurting, being cruel, belittling, patronizing, threatening, inflicting fear, overpowering or bullying, controlling, limiting, withholding love, not taking seriously, discrediting, invalidating, misleading, making light or minimizing your feelings, needs or wants, breaking promises, raising hope falsely, saying 'you shouldn't feel such and such, e.g. anger, saying 'if only I e.g., you were better or different.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 41-42.

By and large we have seen that some unmet human needs and parental conditions stifle and retard the child's development and growth in the crucial mental, emotional and spiritual areas of their life. Consequently, the psychological scars that we have acquired over the years generate some basic emotional problems namely low self esteem, anxiety, guilt complex, inferiority complex, ego defence mechanism, confusion, pain, suffering, co-dependence and so on. The answer lies in the liberation of our True Self by Jesus of Nazareth.

Nevertheless, our presentation of the Child Within with its story of wounds and brokenness is not an exoneration of responsibility, but a recognition that we have been mistreated and that there is a way out because of the life, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit by Jesus-Christ. On the other hand, we acknowledge that human beings are mystery. Therefore, this explanation does not claim to exhaust all the anthropological understanding of human nature. In the following lines, we shall identify what we need saving from?

#### **4. What Do we Need Saving from?**

O'Collins alludes to a strong psychological connotation of redemption which implies that the human problem is interior, namely mental suffering. He argues that some suffering may be necessary for spiritual growth and yet not all suffering is educational. He underlines the connection between sin and suffering but for him the call for the redemption of human beings and their world lies in the power, pollution and alienation of sin.<sup>35</sup>

Nicholas Fogliacco takes this idea further by arguing that sin produces not only loneliness but also causes the inner decline of the sinner. The two scripture

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<sup>35</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus our Redeemer*, 47.

texts quoted by him cast light on the nature of this decline: loss of psychological balance on account of evil desire (Genesis 3:7.11, the discomfort and shame of feeling 'naked'), and death (Genesis 3:19).<sup>36</sup> In this way, the person falls into blindness which in its turn generates selfishness that is characterized by self affirmation and self glorification.<sup>37</sup>

O'Collins describes the bondage of sin as 'inner demons' meaning 'the various compulsions and addictions that take over the lives of many persons.'<sup>38</sup> People find themselves dependent on drugs, alcohol and sex, unable to get rid of their addictions and consequently lose control of their existence. They are locked up in their compulsive behaviour to the point of slavery. Such a horrendous behaviour comes to the fore as 'haunting fears, depression, paranoia and a consuming bitterness that broods over the past.'<sup>39</sup>

Their childhood trauma has caught up with them and continues to reverberate in their lives. The inner demons that threaten our life today are the product of many layered repeated childhood trauma. Thus the stifling Child Within is still crying and wailing for salvation and redemption. To sum up, O'Collins sees evil, suffering and sin as the triad from which we need saving from. This triad expresses themselves in humankind as 'oppression', 'contamination' and 'wound within'.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, he explains evil as 'the absence of good, the absence of appropriate relationship, of life

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<sup>36</sup> N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of All Consolation*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of All Consolation*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus our Redeemer*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus our Redeemer*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, 136-139.

and of meaning and truth while sin implies broken relationships, lost being and absence of meaning.<sup>41</sup>

For E. Mulcahy, what makes us candidates for salvation is the existential torture of intense personal loneliness of people searching for meaning in the post modern labyrinth of absurdity.<sup>42</sup> He explains further that loneliness, meaninglessness and absurdity follow from giving absolute value to a limited, finite reality which he calls idolatry.<sup>43</sup> Idolatry is what we need saving from because the lives of so many people are being taken over completely by gambling, pornography, sex, work, exercise, shopping, computers, video games and technology.

These new addictions are indications that the needs of the Child Within have not been met properly. That is why we compensate through these various psychological dependencies in order to fill the vacuum left by unfulfilled childhood. Adult children from dysfunctional families ensnared in a life of addictive or compulsive patterns of behaviour need to be set free from these false conceptions of life. They need to be told that they have escaped as a bird from the snares of the fowler because of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ; the snare is broken and they have escaped (Psalm 124:7).

The opening years of the twenty-first century have witnessed the so called 'economic recession' that which began as a housing market meltdown in the United States turned out to be a 'global economic catastrophe'. Millions of people lost their jobs with the lives of families turned upside down, forced to leave their home because they can no longer meet the demand of paying the rent. Now, the

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<sup>41</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Christology*, 280-281.

<sup>42</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 48-49.

question to ask is what triggers this crisis? The greed of some of the wealthiest people in the world is the answer.<sup>44</sup>

Their love for luxury has jeopardized their enterprises on a huge scale that in no time, the world is face-to-face with this intractable crisis which stubbornly rejects all remedial measures.<sup>45</sup> Over and over again, the imbalance of the Child Within comes to the fore. A feedback in the life's story of these men and women might account for their greed, their craving for more wealth that blinded them to see that they are sinking their companies.

The same scenario of unhealthy Child Within is also in action for the escalating spiral of violence in many parts of the world. Whenever the freedom, potential, creativity and power of the True Self is suppressed over time such that the threshold, the endurance capacity is crossed, nature often seeks either the anesthetic of the unconsciousness or erupts rebelliously against humanity. What emerges is a misanthropic grudge of humankind that results in wars, sectarian conflicts, terrorist attacks and counter strikes, ethnic clashes, group rivalry and so on.<sup>46</sup>

One of the common cases is the Arab Spring that we have witnessed since January 2011 all over the Arab world leading to the resignation or flight of heads of state. Where does a selfish agenda come from? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside our own selves? (James 4:1). Our own selves are the Child Within each one of us that yearns for a salvific liberating power. The frustration of our own

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. T. MALIPURATHU, "Self Emptying Love for Life Enhancing Mission", 22.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. T. MALIPURATHU, "Self Emptying Love for Life Enhancing Mission", 23.

<sup>46</sup> T. MALIPURATHU, "Self Emptying Love for Life Enhancing Mission", 23.

selves often leads to the first act of violence, which if not tamed in time, snowballs into spiralling violence, into armed conflicts and full blown wars.<sup>47</sup>

What is even more disturbing about this dismal scenario is the pointing finger that is directed towards Christianity as a major contributor to the rise of conflict in the world. It is against the background of these stark realities of the contemporary world that salvation in terms of the healing of relationship is imperative.<sup>48</sup> As the working definition of 'salvation' in this study, we shall take the one put forward by Edwards Schillebeeckx: salvation is the conquest of all human personal and social forms of alienation; salvation is the being in wholeness of the human person.<sup>49</sup>

The root sense of salvation refers to health and wholeness. This root meaning brings out clearly the internal reality of salvation. However, the concept of health and wholeness is pregnant with meaning be it physical, social, psychological, moral, spiritual, political, economic and environmental. The word salvation preserves its original meaning of 'health', 'being whole' and 'integrity' in Romantic and Germanic languages. Etymologically, salvation comes from *salvia* in Greek from the verb *salō*, *salō*, and *salus* in Latin, and means 'wholeness', 'health' or 'well being'.<sup>50</sup>

Thus salvation is primarily the reality of a person living a whole, authentic, integrated human life. It is very relevant to the plight of our society today torn apart with broken families, wounded relationship and so forth. For our purposes, salvation

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<sup>47</sup> T. MALIPURATHU, 'Self Emptying Love for Life Enhancing Mission', 23.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. T. MALIPURATHU, 'Self Emptying Love for Life Enhancing Mission', 23.

<sup>49</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus*, 624.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 16.

can be defined as 'the process of the making whole of brokenness, the healing of fractured relationship and the attaining of authentic fulfilment and liberation for human beings in all the dimensions of our lives. Salvation is to be understood as the liberation of all that dehumanises us.'<sup>51</sup>

The same meaning is rendered by Küng who argues that 'being saved' is nothing other than being radically and genuinely human. In *Jesus*, Schillebeeckx [í ] suggests that it amounts to what we mean by 'humanization.'<sup>52</sup> Thus, we can begin to see that salvation is not something that we attain; rather it is our natural state. Beneath all our suffering, confusion, unhappiness, addiction, idolatry, craving and so on lies salvation itself.

## 5. Conclusion

We conclude with the following poem by Charles C. Finn which describes many of our struggles with our false self and illustrates very well the brokenness of our human predicament:

*Don't be fooled by me.  
 Don't be fooled by the face I wear.  
 For I wear a mask, a thousand masks,  
 Masks that I am afraid to take off,  
 and none of them is me.  
 Pretending is an art that's second nature with me,  
 but don't be fooled.  
 For God's sake don't be fooled.  
 I give you the impression that I am secure,  
 that all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well as without,  
 that confidence is my name and coolness my game,  
 that the water's calm and I am in command,  
 and that I need no one.  
 But don't believe me.  
 My surface may seem smooth but my surface is my mask,  
 ever-varying and ever-concealing.  
 Beneath lies no complacency.*

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<sup>51</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *What Are they Saying about Jesus*, 39.

*Beneath lies confusion and fear and aloneness.  
But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it.*

*I panic at the thought of my weakness and fear being exposed.  
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,  
a nonchalant sophisticated façade,  
to help me pretend,  
to shield me from the glance that knows.  
But such a glance is precisely my salvation. My only hope and I know it.  
That is, if it's followed by acceptance,  
if it's followed by love.  
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself,  
from my own self-built prison walls,  
from the barriers I so painstakingly erect.  
It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure myself,  
that I am really worth something.  
But I don't tell you this. I don't dare. I am afraid to.  
I am afraid your glance will not be followed by acceptance,  
will not be followed by love.  
I am afraid you'll think less of me, that you'll laugh,  
and your laugh would kill me.  
I am afraid that deep-down I am nothing, that I am just no good,  
and that you will see this and reject me.*

*I don't like to hide.  
I don't like to play superficial phony games.  
I want to stop playing them.  
I want to be genuine and spontaneous and me,  
but you've got to help me.  
You've got to hold out your hand  
even when that's the last thing I seem to want.  
Only you can wipe away from my eyes the blank stare of the breathing dead.  
Only you can call me into aliveness.  
Each time you are kind and gentle and encouraging,  
each time you try to understand because you really care,  
my heart begins to grow wings,  
very small wings,  
very feeble wings,  
but wings!  
With your power to touch me into feeling  
you can breathe life into me.  
I want you to know that.  
I want you to know how important you are to me,  
how you can be a creator ô a honest-to-God creator ô  
of the person that is me  
if you choose to.  
You alone can break down the wall behind which I tremble,  
you alone can remove my mask,*

*you alone can release me from my shadow-world of panic and uncertainty,  
from my lonely prison,  
if you choose to.  
Please choose to. Do not pass me by.  
It will not be easy for you.*

*A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.  
The nearer you approach to me  
The blinder I may strike back.  
It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man,  
often I am irrational.  
I fight against the very thing that I cry out for.  
But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls,  
and in this lies my hope.  
Please try to beat down those walls  
with firm hands  
but with gentle hands  
for a child is very sensitive.*

*Who am I, you may wonder?  
I am someone you know very well.  
For I am every man you meet  
and I am every woman you meet.<sup>53</sup>*

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<sup>53</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 13-15.

## Chapter II

### Vision As Metaphor: Criterion for Healing

#### 1. Introduction

The use of vision ó physical seeing ó as a metaphor for spiritual insight is among the commonest of all metaphors. In fact, in scripture as in Christian worship, the power of seeing itself is strongly embedded in revelation as light coming from a distant source. The task of Christian theologians, said R. Hazelton, is to see and make seen òthe revealedness of all things *sub specie Christi*.ö<sup>1</sup> Our endeavour in this chapter is to show that *Vision* is the criterion for healing.

A quick look at the semantics of the noun ðvisionø shows that it signals òmoments of extraordinary insight, a kind of superception, which comes as a ðrelease to the tension of inquiryøö<sup>2</sup> while the adjective ðvisualø is generally tied to sense perception. Actually, this same meaning is rendered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* which specifically defines vision as òsomething which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight: especially an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character or having the nature of a revelation.ö<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. HAZELTON, òBelieving Is Seeing: Vision as Metaphorö, 411.

<sup>2</sup> R. HAZELTON, òBelieving Is Seeing: Vision as Metaphorö, 406.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, XII, 249.

In a nutshell, the word *vision* goes beyond the primary sensory awareness that it evokes. Though its vehicle may be the registering of optical impression, at its deepest level, it refers to *seeing more than meets the eye*.<sup>4</sup> However great the danger of confusing *percept* with *concept*, *image* with *idea*,<sup>5</sup> *vision*, that inner eye of love, that metaphors of sight for insight, will never cease to be operative and controlling in religious thought and speech simply because that is the way all the mystics see, including the historical Jesus.

The evidence of healing the physically blind in the historical ministry of Jesus is undeniable. Each of the evangelists has his own way of telling the account of the healing from blindness as the symbol of realities that transcend the mere physical fact. For instance, in Mark, a true disciple is the one who *sees* who Jesus really is and is thereby enabled to follow, whereas for John, believing is seeing the coming into the world of *the true light which enlightens everyone* (John 1:9). The man born blind in chapter nine illustrates the prototype of this coming into the new vision of faith.<sup>6</sup>

Luke too has his own specific way of developing the symbolic dimensions of blindness and of physical seeing as a metaphor for blindness and spiritual vision. By his usage of Isaian images, by his writing and narration of the material in 18:18-19:10 (the rich ruler, the blind beggar near Jericho, Zacchaeus), by his presentation of the healing of the Samaritan leper, by his production of vision under the cross and by his presentation of the Emmaus revelation, the third evangelist presents Jesus as enabler and object of the deepest seeing, meaning a faith-motivated experience in

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<sup>4</sup> R. HAZELTON, *Believing Is Seeing: Vision as Metaphor*, 406.

<sup>5</sup> R. HAZELTON, *Believing Is Seeing: Vision as Metaphor*, 405.

<sup>6</sup> D. HAMM, *Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke*, 457.

which our true likeness is disclosed to us.<sup>7</sup> We shall substantiate through the article of Hamm that *Vision* is the criterion for healing our brokenness.

## 2. Jesus as Enabler of Vision

Dennis Hamm, the author of the article entitled, "Sight to the blind: vision as metaphor in Luke," considers "Luke's special treatment of Jesus' healing of the physically blind, especially as this implements the core of the Isaian program orchestrated in Luke 4:18; 7:22 (with a glance at 2:29-32 and 3:6); and 18:18-19:10."<sup>8</sup> Our focus is on Jesus as *enabler* of vision.

### 2.1 *Sight to the Blind: the Center of the Isaian Program (Luke 4:18; 7:22)*

Luke shows the power of seeing itself, namely, the proclamation of the recovery of sight to the blind – center of the Isaian scenario – in his treatment of the traditions regarding Jesus' healing of the physically blind by applying the quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 to the work of Jesus at Luke 4:18.<sup>9</sup> The chiasmic structure of Luke 4:16-20 as explicated by D. Hamm is as follows<sup>10</sup>:

- A And he *stood up* to read
- B And there *was given* to him the book of the prophet Isaiah
- C He *opened the book* and found the place where it was written
- D "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
- E *to proclaim the good news* to the poor
- F He *has sent* me to proclaim release to *captives*
- G and recovering of sight to the blind, [*kai typhlois anablepsin*]
- F' *to set at liberty* those who are oppressed,
- E' *to proclaim*
- D' the acceptable year of the Lord.
- C' And he *closed the book*,
- B' and *gave it back* to the attendant,
- A' and *sat down*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. HAZELTON, "Believing Is Seeing: Vision as Metaphor," 411.

<sup>8</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke," 458.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke," 458.

<sup>10</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke," 459.

In the above chiastic form, there is a balanced concentricity between A and F and Fø and Aø hinging around G, which shows that the stress is laid on the recovering of sight.<sup>11</sup> The clue to understanding this passage is provided by Luke 7:18-29, where John the Baptist sent his emissaries to enquire whether Jesus is the Coming One. To this ðQö tradition (cf. Matthew 11:2-3), Luke adds verse 21 (í and he gave sight [*echarisato blepein*] to many blind people), a summary statement of Jesusø healing ministry. It is a statement sandwiched between the question and the answer.

**Question:** Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another? (Verse 20).

**Answer:**

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me (7: 22-23).

Jesusø answer shows that he is the *One who is to Come* (confer 7:19) in that he performs a series of healings. These cluster of cures are drawn from Isaian (Septuagint) passages: 61:1 (blind, poor), 35:6 (blind, deaf, lame), and 29:18 (blind, deaf, poor). The occurrences of the end-time healings point to Jesusø identity as the end-time agent ô *ho erchomenos*. In the presentation of Luke, the healing of blindness is of prime importance. Such healing appears last in the summary statement of verse 21 and first in verse 22.<sup>12</sup> Thus Johnø emissaries have to report that Jesus is really the *One who is to Come*, because he enables to ÷seeø Vision is the criterion for healing.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, ðSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 459.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, ðSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 460-461.

## **2.2 More Isaian Imagery in the Prelude: Light for the Gentiles, Salvation Visible (Luke 2:29-32; 3:6)**

Luke's interest in the image of physical vision began at the outset of his two volume work. When Jesus was presented in the temple, Simeon took the child Jesus in his hands and prayed the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32). This prayer celebrates Jesus entirely in terms of vision through the wording "salvation" (*salvation*), "light" (*ph*), and "glory" (*doxa*). What Simeon sees in the infant is the Isaianic hope of being a light to the Gentiles (Is 42:6; 49:6) which will be fulfilled only in the unfolding of volume two of the account: resurrection and preaching through his Church (confer Acts 13:47 and 26:18.23).<sup>13</sup>

In the following chapter of Luke where John the Baptist comes on stage, the theme of "seeing the salvation of God" is echoed again at 3:6 in the extended quotation of Isaiah 40:3-5 that all flesh shall see the salvation of God.<sup>14</sup>

## **2.3 Three Blind Men: The Rich Ruler, the Jericho Beggar, and Zacchaeus (18:18-19:10)**

The metaphor of seeing as a way of recognizing Jesus' identity is given a remarkable place by Luke within the context of the journey narrative (18:18-19:10). This long section deals with: the journey with a rich ruler (18:18-30), a passion prediction (18:31-34), the healing of the blind beggar near Jericho (18:35-43), and the conversion of Zacchaeus (19:1-10).<sup>15</sup>

### **2.3.1 The Jericho Beggar (18:35-43)**

Luke retells the Markan account (Mark 10:46-52) by making some few changes to it. The Markan Bartimaeus becomes *nameless*, the address *Rabbouni*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", 461.

<sup>14</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", 461.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", 463-464.

(Mark 10:51; Luke 18:41) becomes the title *Kyrios*; Jesus' imperative is no longer *ōGoö* (Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42) but *ōSeeö*. Although the blind man does not see physically, he recognizes in Jesus, the Son of David, the saviour, and the presence of God whereas the crowd calls Jesus only *ōthe Nazoreanö*. This is the kind of faith that opens his eyes and set his feet free to follow.<sup>16</sup>

Vision leads to walking as a renewed and saved creature, a perfect illustration of what is described in the final verse of the *Benedictus* *ō to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peaceö* (Luke 1:79). The truly evangelised disciple is one who *ōseesö* who Jesus really is and is thereby enabled to follow him.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.2 *Zacchaeus (19:1-10)*

In Jericho, Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus yields some striking similarities with the nameless blind beggar met by Jesus previously as he approaches Jericho. Both are in the same predicament: the *nameless* beggar is physically blind while Zacchaeus' blindness is a spiritual one, his wealth. They are unable to see Jesus (19:3), experience the murmuring of the crowd (19:7; confer 18:39), remain resolute in their quest (19:8; confer 18:40), and are finally transformed through faith in the Jesus whom they acknowledge as Lord (19:8; confer 18:41).<sup>18</sup>

Through faith, Zacchaeus arrives to salvation (19:9). His only aim was to *ōseeö* Jesus, and by seeing him, he has gained salvation. It is this vision that saves him. Once again *Vision* is the criterion for healing.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, *ōSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö*, 462.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, *ōSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö*, 462-463.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, *ōSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö*, 463.

### 2.3.3 *The Rich Ruler (18:18-30)*

Luke invites us to another parallelism between the rich ruler and Zacchaeus by making him similar to the latter. Both are wealthy men and need to be cured of a kind of blindness pertaining to their wealth. Unlike Zacchaeus, the rich ruler acknowledges Jesus only as "good master", clings to his earthly property and goes away sad, whereas Zacchaeus receives Jesus with Joy, calls him "Lord", and resolves to give half of his goods to the poor (confer Luke 19:8).<sup>19</sup>

This section of the journey narrative is of paramount importance because the impediment to true "faith healing" from blindness is precisely the attachment to material goods or any finite, limited reality which we described in the first chapter as idolatry. Therefore, our study of the metaphor of vision in Luke shows that when Luke presents Jesus as enabler of vision, he is pointing to "the deeper seeing which is faith that perceives Jesus' true identity and acts upon it."<sup>20</sup>

## 3. Jesus as the Object of Vision (False and True)

Zacchaeus' account depicts Jesus not only as the enabler of vision but also as the object of vision. We shall look in this second part of our presentation, at some texts which focus more on Jesus as the object of vision, be it false or true vision.

### 3.1 *False Seeing: The Blindness of Israel's Leaders*

Beside the authentic vision of those who perceive Jesus the healer correctly, there are also others (Herod, the crowd, the Pharisees) who are driven by false modes of seeing. Here are some instances.

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<sup>19</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", 464.

<sup>20</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke", 458.

### 3.1.1 Herod (Luke 9:9)

Herod Agrippa is a prototype of false seeing for he is presented in Luke 9:9 as ðtrying to see Jesusö (*ez tei idein auton*) but when his desire was fulfilled at 23:8-9, he sought only a performance of a sign rather than to ðseeö who Jesus is. ðHerod was very pleased when he saw Jesus, for he had heard about him and had been wanting to see him for a long time [*thel n idein auton*]: he was hoping to see him perform some signö.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.2 Hypocritical Blindness

Jesus labelled the crowd ðhypocritesö at Luke 12:56 for they knew how to forecast the weather but were unable to interpret the present signs of the times. They failed to see Jesus' identity as a sign of the present time. That blindness is a failure to perceive Jesus correctly as the one who had to come, the one sent by God to evangelise. With such kind of blindness, there is neither healing nor salvation.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1.3 The ðSpying outö of the Pharisees

Luke coins a particular word to describe the blindness of Israel's leadership: *Parat re*. *Parat re* is a kind of non-seeing which occurs six times in the New Testament and has to do with the malevolent watching of enemies: Mark 3:1; Luke 6:7 (leaders watching Jesus to catch him healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath).<sup>23</sup>

Luke 14:1 shows the same kind of spying out by the Pharisees in the case of Jesus' healing of the man with dropsy; another type of spying out is portrayed at Luke 20:20 on the occasion of the scribes and the high priest watching for the right

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<sup>21</sup> D. HAMM, ðSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 466.

<sup>22</sup> D. HAMM, ðSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 467.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, ðSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 467.

time to hire men to trap Jesus in his words, and also in Acts 9:24 where it refers to the plot at the Damascus gate to kill Paul.<sup>24</sup>

The Septuagint use of *parat re* also confirms this subversive meaning in instances such as the spying of Daniel by his administrative peers due to his disobedience of the new law against prayer (Daniel 6:11); and in the case of the corrupt judges watching to rape Susanna (Daniel 12.1516).<sup>25</sup>

Luke 17:20 seems to provide a commentary on *parat re*, used here as a noun. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about the coming of the Reign of God, he answered: ὁThe Reign does not come *meta parat r se sō*. Various versions of the Bible rendered this last phrase in English as: ὁwith signs to be observedö (Revised Standard Version), ὁyou cannot tell by careful watchingö (New American Bible), ὁyou cannot tell by observationö (New English Bible).<sup>26</sup>

ὁA paraphrase of 17:20, then, might go like this: The kingdom of God is not perceivable to those who would try to Æcheck it outÆ in an uncommitted way.ö<sup>27</sup> The following words of Jesus in 17:21 (ὁNor will they say, ÆLook, here it isÆ or ÆthereÆ for the Reign of God is in your midstö) set up a contrast between ὁhow the kingdom is not to be perceived (*meta parat r se s*, or in a way that it can be localized by pointing here or there) and how it is truly present (*entos hym n*).ö<sup>28</sup>

The contrast between not seeing and seeing the Reign of God is solved by the story immediately preceding the healing of the lepers where only the Samaritan leper return to Jesus to praise God after seeing that he was healed. In conclusion,

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, ὁSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 467.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. D. HAMM, ὁSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 468.

<sup>26</sup> D. HAMM, ὁSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 468.

<sup>27</sup> D. HAMM, ὁSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 468.

<sup>28</sup> D. HAMM, ὁSight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Lukeö, 468.

the Reign of God is *entōs hymōn* in the person and action of Jesus.<sup>29</sup> Therefore Jesus is the object of true seeing.

### 3.2 True Seeing

True seeing is an essential religious experience that allows us to experience faith, hope and love within ourselves. This new way of seeing can be called contemplation, non-dualistic thinking or third-eye seeing.<sup>30</sup> Third-eye seeing is the way the mystics see. According to Hugh of St. Victor (1078-1141) and Richard of St. Victor (1123-1173), humanity was given three different sets of eyes, each building upon the previous one.<sup>31</sup>

The first one was the eye of the flesh, the senses, thought or sight; the second eye was the eye of reason through meditation or reflection; and, finally, the third was the eye of true understanding or the transformation of consciousness itself.<sup>32</sup> This is the mystical gaze that builds upon the first two eyes and yet goes further. True seeing or spiritual seeing happens whenever our heart space, our mind space, and our body awareness are all simultaneously open and non-resistant to what God already want to do or has already begun to do. Richard Rohr calls it *Presence*.<sup>33</sup>

The word "mystic" in this context simply means one who has moved from mere belief systems or belonging systems to actual inner experience.<sup>34</sup> Some refer to this movement as conversion, some as enlightenment and others as transformation or holiness. This shift to inner experience presupposes the ability to stand back and

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<sup>29</sup> D. HAMM, "Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke," 468.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 23.

<sup>31</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 28.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 29-30.

calmly observe our inner dramas and this involves the dying to the self as lived by Jesus personally.<sup>35</sup>

In all religions and cultures, there are people at the highest level of doing and loving who are led by such calm egoless seeing: Nicodemus, Gamaliel and Mahatma Gandhi. The growing consensus is that spiritual seeing or contemplation is at the core of three of the world's greatest religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Native and Eastern religions saw harmony as the goal of religion. Their concern was to overcome distinctions, conflicts and oppositional energy both within and without. They pursue this inner balance or peace through various conversions of the mind, the heart and the will.<sup>36</sup>

Jesus' teaching is not in contrast with the search for harmony in the religions of the East, for the parables, stories, and riddles of Jesus revealed the small self to the person and opened up to the person some form of the divine self.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the mystery that characterizes the small self and the divine self, the software of the third eye allows us to say yes to that infinite mystery that we are to ourselves and to the ultimate mystery that is God or Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup>

St. Paul called this assent to God a new mind (Ephesians 4:23) or the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Christianity is all about seeing rightly: the lamp of the body is the eye; if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness (Matthew 6:22-23).

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 32-33.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 70.

To sum up, true seeing is the inner eye of love, the eye of the heart, or the eye of wisdom. It is a faith-motivated experience in response to an eschatological disclosure.<sup>39</sup> The New Testament's writers expressed this faith in a Christological affirmation of Jesus as the risen one, [í ] an understanding of him as the Christ, in a personal experience that serves to orientate the whole life of the one who undergoes it.<sup>40</sup>

Theologically, true seeing is, of course, about grace and faith, the truth that God in Christ mediates his gift of grace to humans and thus engenders in them faith and spiritual perception. Faith as a total and unconditional surrender to God<sup>41</sup> is portrayed in scriptures through the life of people who have heard their inner voices and have had their inner eyes, formerly asleep, awakened with their encounter with the infinite mystery that is God or Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.2.1 Examples of True Seeing in the Old Testament

All the prophets share a common pattern in their individual call. Their vocation stories are spiritual in character and have a fundamental component of seeing as the kernel of their personal experience. Moses saw a burning bush wherein he heard his name called: Moses, Moses. He is overwhelmed by the presence of God and the sense of the holy. Do not come near, put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy (Exodus 3:5).

As for Jeremiah, he heard the inner voice before I formed you in the womb I knew you (Jeremiah 1:5) that liberated him from fear: Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord (Jeremiah 1:8). This inner

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<sup>39</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus*, 378.

<sup>40</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus*, 378.

<sup>41</sup> A. MAGNANTE, *The Message of Exodus*, 27.

<sup>42</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 128.

experience holds true to Isaiah and Ezekiel. What is characteristic to all of them is the sense of being loved, of being chosen, of being sent and also a profound sense of personal uniqueness and unworthiness.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2.2 Examples of True Seeing in the New Testament

Keeping in mind that true seeing is the wisdom that comes from love; can we not see Jesus as the true seer par excellence? Surely Jesus grew in the knowledge of his divine sonship and also in the realisation of who he was because that is the normal growth process of any human being. All his life was dominated by God's unconditional love, the experience of God as Abba. And one of these great experiences took place at the time of his baptism.<sup>44</sup>

And when he came up out of the waters, immediately he saw the heaven opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice from heaven: thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased. (Mark 1:10-11)

Mark's observation that *Jesus saw*, was the inner eye's vision; with his third eye, Jesus realized in the Spirit that he was the Son of the Father.<sup>45</sup>

St. Paul's inner eye was awakened on the road to Damascus when he fell in love with the risen Jesus. He heard a voice saying: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? (Acts 9:4). This was the watershed, the wake up call, when Saul became Paul. All his value systems changed and he saw as nothing his merits as a Pharisee, Hebrew of the Hebrews, an observer of the law, and a persecutor of the Church.<sup>46</sup> Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:8).

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<sup>43</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 54.

As a result of this enlightenment, the whole drama of the life of Christ is taking place in the life of Paul. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). For Paul, the eyes of Christ see through his eyes and look with compassion on the world. In fact, the phrase "in Christ" occurs one hundred and sixty four times in Paul's writing.<sup>47</sup>

As centuries pass, Christianity faced new challenges and great theologians appear to solve them. One wonders where these theologians got their knowledge, their inspirations and wisdom from in order to develop a new theological vocabulary such as *trinity, essence, nature, person*.<sup>48</sup> They studied, of course, but only their inner eyes perceived the wisdom that underlies their theological achievement. It is often said that St Thomas at the evening of his life, "protested that all his writing were as straw compared with the vision he perceived with the eye of love."<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2.3 *The Cost of True Seeing*

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note that true seeing is costly and demands a passage through some ring of fire which is the actual way of the cross. Jesus called it "the narrow path that few would walk upon" (Matthew 7:14). This narrow path is about conversion, a letting go of our false self, the ego that forces us to pretend, repress, deny, or become hypocrite.<sup>50</sup> We are so wounded, needy, unloving, self hating in our humanity such that enlightenment is our last resort.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 54.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 55.

<sup>49</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 69.

To see things as they are, conversion is the key. *Metanoia*, the Greek word for conversion, simply means to ðchange your mindö. <sup>52</sup> However, the ego, the false self is adamant more than anything else to change and to keep the status quo, defensive self will do anything to subjugate the mind, its primary control tower. Whether because of abuse and oppression or other causes that we described in the first chapter, our false selves are relentlessly against change ô even acting against their own best interest. <sup>53</sup>

By definition, ðthe ego self is the unobserved selfö. It must remain hidden and disguised in order to be effective; once you see it the ðgameø is over. The ego is not evil but can lure one to evil deeds. That is why Paul called it ðfleshø It is another form of blindness that leaves you blind to your own illusions and convinces you that you see perfectly. This is the heart of the problem of conversion and the very nature of spiritual transformation. <sup>54</sup>

The ego diverts and distracts our attention from anything that would ask us to change. This is the spiritual form of the law of inertia, a resistance to change and an attachment to our selvesø images and the world. <sup>55</sup> The good news is that God forever entices us into a state of communion, a letting go into love for a living relationship.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Religion as ðego transformationö helps us to arrive at an alternative consciousness. Pope John Paul II said that heaven and hell were primarily ðstates of

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 90.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 91.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 94.

consciousness that which is attainable only through conversion or enlightenment. Those who get around this deeper seeing and act upon it, Jesus simply called "saved" (Luke 8:48; 17:19; Mark 7:28). His metaphor for this new consciousness is "the kingdom of God" the kingdom of heaven is in your midst (Luke 17:21).<sup>56</sup>

This kingdom is not about moral perfection or will power to earn a place but a transformation of consciousness. For Christians, it is "God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us" (confer Romans 5:5).<sup>57</sup> Lonergan poetically called this inner consciousness which the outpouring of God's love brings about, "the switch to interiority."<sup>58</sup> We shall look at how this new consciousness comes about through the mystical journey of love.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 100.

<sup>57</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 57.

## Chapter III

### Mystical Journey Towards Oneness

#### 1. Introduction

We have observed in the previous chapter that true seeing is the third eye, the eye of the true self, the inner eye of love, and finally the eye of wisdom. We have also seen that this higher level of seeing is called contemplation, the naked now, centring prayer or presence, or mysticism. Buddhists call this spiritual perception *meditation, sitting or practising*, Hesychastic Orthodoxy calls it *prayer of the heart*, Sufi Islam names it *ecstasy* and Hasidic Judaism refers to it as *the divine spark within*.<sup>1</sup>

We talked also in the first chapter about the ego, the false self which emerges as a result of an unhealthy nurturing of the Child Within or due to abuse, repression, oppression and oppressive education. All of these can bring about a lifelong journey of pain, depression, anxiety, broken relationships and suicide attempts. One is unable to detach from a person or an event or feeling when it is needed or appropriate and thus becoming overidentified, overly attached or even enmeshed

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 53.

with definite or finite reality. This is surely the unawareness, the unawakened state or blindness.<sup>2</sup>

We shall look at the crumbling of all the securities of the ego, the falling away of all its props throughout the mystical journey of love, paving the way to the new consciousness wherein the ego is reintegrated as a servant instead of the master. The end results can gradually pave the way for salvation, the healing of broken relationships which allows other parts of us to see and other things to be seen fully, rightly, and truthfully.

## 2. The Ego

Jesus drew a caricature of someone trying to take the speck out of a neighbour's eye while forgetting the log of wood in his own eyes. We quote the text in full:

Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye. (Luke 6:41-42)

The log in our eyes is our ego, our selfish self, that which darkens our minds to see the truth about ourselves and others. A blind ego has a twofold blindness. It cannot see the truth about itself and therefore becomes its own blindness.<sup>3</sup> Charles Whitfield describes the false self as 'a cover up, inhibited, contracting and fearful. It is our egocentric ego and super ego, forever planning and plodding, continually selfish and withholding. It is envious, critical, idealized, blaming and perfectionistic.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 137.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 136.

<sup>4</sup> C. L. WHITFIELD, *Healing the Child Within*, 11.

Because our ego wants to be in control, it craves for an insatiable desire for money, possessions, power, and authority. By comparing itself with others and competing for praise, privilege, and love, it manifests itself as envious, jealous, hypocritical, and dishonest. The self-centred ego lacks trust and is so insecure that fear, anxieties, and worries are its daily bread. Our ego makes us lonely and fearful.<sup>5</sup>

The selfish self gives its love conditionally seeking only its own interest even at the expense of others. Pride and selfishness of the loveless egos drive people to torture, and to inflict inhuman treatments on their fellow men and women. Thus structures of domination and institutions are erected to perpetuate the ego's lust for power, control, and if necessary at the point of a gun. The male ego is embodied in the social structure of patriarchy.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast to the true self, the ego is just an illusion that alienates us from the social web of relationships. We are living in a network of relationships, an interconnectedness that compels us to think of ourselves as dependent, connected, and not autonomous individuals. A false consciousness sees human beings as separate and independent from the universe. The new science teaches interdependence of all things in unity.<sup>7</sup>

The process of individuation that each one of us develops in growing up should help to foster and accommodate all beings in oneness and love rather than creating divisions, conflicts, and rivalries between human beings, and between humans and the rest of nature.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the need to transcend the limitations of

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 48.

<sup>8</sup> A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 48.

the ego is of prime importance if we are to develop such universal and evolved sense of self that sees oneness, community, and love.<sup>9</sup>

Such oneness or divine union does not happen overnight and takes years of quiet reflection and solitude. In the end, it will be during our quiet time that we will take the log out of our eye and recover from our long night of blindness to begin to see the world as it is and as Jesus saw it – right side up.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Journey Towards Union

True spirituality is a search for divine union. But the good news is that what we are searching for has already been given. Our task is to awaken the given gift within ourselves.<sup>11</sup> Oneness with ourselves, with others, and with life is *Presence*, an encounter with the thing in itself, that which Teresa of Avila identified as a finding of God in ourselves and ourselves in God.<sup>12</sup>

There are people who claim to have *experienced* this union with God, a complete and total oneness with the divine. These are the mystics who have had their consciousness filled with the mysterious presence of God in ways that are ineffable to describe. Henceforth, their lives were transformed and they became happy, humble, loving, free, and secure. The hunger for healing is a hunger for precisely that.<sup>13</sup>

Mystics are not extraordinary people who perform miracles and superhuman feats; they are ordinary people who take God seriously and experience his loving

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 49.

<sup>10</sup> A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 142.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 33.

presence in their lives and in the world.<sup>14</sup> Mystics are people who have let love and suffering break down their usual ego defenses and open them up to the ultimate mystery. As part and parcel of human life, love and suffering are our primary spiritual teachers for love is what we long for; and suffering often seems to be our opening to that need. Suffering in this context is the giving up of control, the ability to let things happen.<sup>15</sup>

Mystics have loved so much that they gave up their ego's controls, let down their barriers, and opened themselves up to the Thou. Their mind space and their heart space were awakened through love and suffering.<sup>16</sup> That is why the greatest commandment states that you must "love with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole mind and your whole strength" (Mark 12:30). "No one comes to God just by loving and suffering, yet only those who have loved and suffered seem to come to God more deeply."<sup>17</sup>

The very act to forgive is in itself a suffering's struggle whereby one has to overcome the rational domination of the ego and reason to let go of a deep hurt or memory.<sup>18</sup> That is why Zechariah in his beautiful canticle saw forgiveness and salvation as two sides of the same coin: "You will know salvation through the mystery of forgiveness" (Luke 1:77). Therefore, to keep permanently the heart and mind space opened and to be in love without reserve, there is need for mysticism.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 122-123.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 123.

<sup>17</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 106

#### 4. Mysticism

Religious thinkers such as Henri Bergson, Martin Buber, and Teilhard de Chardin espoused the idea that mysticism is the very core of religious experience. William Johnston argues that Mysticism is the exquisitely beautiful queen before whom the other branches of theology bow down with awe and reverence like lowly handmaids.<sup>19</sup> *Contemplatio* is the word used for *mysticism* in the West; this Latin word translates the Greek *theoria* meaning 'looking at', 'gazing at', 'being aware of'. The Latin form, contemplation, was used by Augustine, Gregory, Bernard and was more widely used than the word 'mysticism'.<sup>20</sup>

Adolphe Tanquerey, following the trend of Thomas Aquinas, defines contemplation as 'a simple gaze on God and divine things proceeding from love and tending thereto' and he later quotes St Francis de Sales who sees contemplation as 'a loving, simple and permanent attentiveness of the mind to divine things'.<sup>21</sup> The main feature of both contemplation and mysticism is the eye of love gazing at, looking at, divine realities as well as human realities.<sup>22</sup>

Mysticism lays a great emphasis on the human consciousness, the inner world, the world of the mind but the power that moves and stirs tremendous forces in this inner universe is love. Only love – be it *agape*, philanthropic, or erotic – can shake the deep forces of the so-called unconscious.<sup>23</sup> The experience of being loved by God or Jesus is the key to Christian mysticism for 'we loved because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). Mysticism is a journey of love based scripturally on the

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<sup>19</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 32.

message of the First Epistle of St John that human love is a response to divine love (1 John 4:7-8).<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.1 Jesus, the Mystic Par Excellence**

The Gospel portrays Jesus as a man busy with preaching, teaching, healing, and challenging the religious and political leaders. Where did he get such tremendous wisdom, confidence, and radical freedom? Undoubtedly, his experience of God as his *Abba*, his loving Father, was the backbone of all his activities. And behind this experience of oneness or union with God lies a life of constant prayer and profound contemplation.<sup>25</sup>

The Evangelists often speak of him praying. They narrate that òin the morning, long before dawn, he [Jesus] got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place to prayö (Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23 and Mark 1:12-13). He prays privately before almost all major events: forty days in the desert and final prayer alone in the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed the whole night before the choice of the apostles (confer Luke 6:12). The apostles saw his face shining while he was praying (Matthew 7:2). All these clearly imply an explicit relationship between Jesus and the Father: Jesus was a mystic.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus' teaching on prayer points to a contemplative mind. He cautions his disciples about the dangers of public prayer. One instance of this warning is in Matthew 6:7: òin your prayers, do not babble on as the pagans do, thinking that by using many words they will make themselves be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.ö What is missing in this

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 89-90.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Today*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 152-153.

prayer is the basic attitude of confidence in God. True prayer seeks the Father's will and maintains trust in him. In Luke's account of the only verbal prayer that Jesus ever taught, the evangelist mentions that one of the disciples requested for it. This demand may imply that he had not yet given them a verbal prayer.<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, Jesus's mysticism is based on his intimacy with God as his *Abba* whereas the development of his consciousness resides on his contemplative years of prayer and meditation.

#### 4.2 *Mystical Theology*

As we have pointed out, mysticism is a journey of love, a human answer to the love of God described as *agape*. This is a love which St John of the Cross calls 'a living flame of love', the anonymous author of *the Cloud of Unknowing* calls it 'a blind stirring of love'. It is a living and burning reality, a quiet movement within one's being, a longing and compassionate love without reservation that arises in the human heart.<sup>28</sup> All in all, it is the light of the Holy Spirit which put in theological language is called 'faith'. Mysticism is a journey of faith.<sup>29</sup>

Let us look at some of the classical definitions of mystical theology in the Middle Ages and later in St John of the Cross:

- 1 Jean Gerson (1363-1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris: 'Mystical theology is experimental knowledge of God through the embrace of unitive love.'
- 2 Bonaventure (1217-1274): 'Mystical theology is the raising of the mind to God through the desire of love.'
- 3 St John of the Cross (1542-1601): 'Contemplation is the mystical theology which theologians call secret wisdom which St Thomas says is communicated and infused into the soul through love. (*Dark Night*, 2:17,2).
- 4 Again St John of the Cross. Commenting on his own poem where he has written of 'a sweet and living knowledge' he writes: the sweet and living knowledge is mystical theology, that secret knowledge of God which spiritual persons call

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 148, 157.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 92.

contemplation. This knowledge is very delightful because it is knowledge through love (Spiritual Canticle, 27:5).<sup>30</sup>

It comes to the fore from all these definitions that mysticism is wisdom or knowledge that is found through love; it is a loving knowledge.<sup>31</sup> It will be noticed that the definitions equate mystical theology with contemplation which shows a narrow understanding of the word theology. Therefore, we shall move to a more modern definition of mystical theology, namely "the science that reflects on, and teaches, the secret wisdom that comes through love."<sup>32</sup>

Mystical life is first and foremost about the infusion of God's love into the soul for St Paul says that the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us (cf. Romans 5:5). This living flame of love is the Holy Spirit, the inner principle of action which guides, directs, and transforms our subjectivity for the arising of the new consciousness. "Authentic Christian mysticism is nothing but a living of the Gospel at a deep level of consciousness."<sup>33</sup>

### **4.3 Towards a Mystical Soteriology**

Contemplation is prayer, "an interior practice to change the one who is praying, [í ] allowing the Divine Gaze to invade and heal our unconscious, the place where 95 percent of our motivations and reactions come from. All we can do is to return the gaze."<sup>34</sup> Contemplation is naked presence to the Presence, a

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<sup>30</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *Mystical Theology*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *Mystical Theology*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 74.

resonance, a setting out of a tuning fork and once you are tuned God bestows through the Spirit a capacity for mutuality.<sup>35</sup>

God is always -broadcasting and we the receivers need only a turning into that frequency. True prayer stops defending or promoting its ideas and feelings, lets go of any antagonistic attitudes or fears, and waits for, expects, and receives guidance from Another.<sup>36</sup> That is why conversion is primordial to the opening of the heart and mind space because prayer is all about changing the one praying so that the transformation of consciousness occurs.

In an authentic prayer you are being led, being guided, being loved, being used, being prayed through and you are no longer in the driver's seat.<sup>37</sup> It is a meeting or encounter as Martin Buber says.<sup>38</sup> This demands some degree of detachment from the self, a letting go, which is the very task of life and contemplation. Freedom from the self is very hard for the ego, for the emotions and for the body such that without conversion we will remain forever in our ego's cocoon of suppressed anger, buried resentment, lack of forgiveness, and all those neuroses which have existed in our unconscious since childhood.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Conversion

Conversion is a crucial idea for understanding true seeing or contemplation. Bernard Lonergan can help us understand this inner experience called conversion. For him, reflection on conversion is the foundation of theology. Lonergan taught that our subjectivity is wounded and broken for we are biased in favour of short

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 101.

<sup>36</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 118.

<sup>39</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 131.

sightedness, blind spots, and blockages. For example, we often sacrifice long term values in favour of immediate gratification. Therefore, the only real way to find objectivity is to clarify and heal our subjectivity. He boldly defines conversion as the experience by which one becomes an authentic human being.<sup>40</sup> He demonstrates that "the process of conversion was itself the great clarifier and was the healing of our woundedness, neediness, and egocentricity so that true seeing could be possible."<sup>41</sup>

He points out three levels of conversion, namely intellectual, moral, and religious. Intellectual conversion consists in "moving out of a world of mere sense perception and arriving, dazed and disoriented for a while, into a universe of being."<sup>42</sup> The second level, moral conversion, is centred on our real motives for doing things – even good ones. It is an honest perceptual shift of values outside of ourselves. The third level that is religious conversion happens whenever "we allow ourselves to live as a Being-in-love" and once we are transformed into love, we are "held, grasped, possessed, and owned through a total and so other-worldly love."<sup>43</sup>

By and large, Lonergan's new foundation for truth-seeking or knowledge can be summed up in his transcendental method. Transcendental method is nothing other than conversion, a way of being an authentic human being. The transcendental imperatives are: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, and be in love. Fidelity to the first three precepts (attentive, intelligent, and reasonable) leads to intellectual conversion wherein one sees into a world of being.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. B.J.F. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 130, 265, 299.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 85-86.

<sup>42</sup> B.J.F. LONERGAN, *A Second Collection*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. B.J.F. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 242.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. B.J.F. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 267-268.

Obedience to the third precept, be responsible, leads to moral conversion whereby one's values change. But, the highest principle above all the four previous ones is love. To be in love is the deepest thrust of the human spirit, the heart of religious conversion where one falls in love with God without restriction. This is the doctrine of the mystics where one's being becomes being-in-love. Theologically, being in love is of course about -grace and -faith. It is the process of divinisation or participation in the divine nature.<sup>45</sup>

It is important to observe that this love is not a will power, or self making acquisition, but rather a gift, sanctifying grace, that the Holy Spirit pours into our heart. Moreover, this love heads to the wisdom that all the mystics speak about. Mystical wisdom is the knowledge that comes from the gift of God's love.<sup>46</sup> Though Lonergan does not develop this point, it comes to the fore that his thinking is of the stream of traditional mystical theology which speaks of "a living flame of love, a blind stirring of love, an obscure sense of presence, a murmuring stream, a small fire, the voice of the Spirit and so on."<sup>47</sup>

St John of the Cross describes the very process of this love at its best in the following verses:

When you looked at me  
 your eyes imprinted your grace in me;  
 for this you loved me ardently;  
 and thus my eyes deserved  
 to adore what they beheld in you [í ]  
 since you have looked and left in me grace and beauty.  
 ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Spiritual Canticle*, 32, 33.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. T. DUNNE, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 108, 115-116.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *Mystical Theology*, 84.

<sup>47</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 159.

<sup>48</sup> *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 476.

Richard Rohr talks about John of the Cross' understanding of the meaning of spiritual love in the perspectives of how love works and how true love changes us at a deep level<sup>49</sup> such that it becomes *salvation*:

You give a piece of yourself *to* the other  
 You see a piece of yourself *in* the other.  
 This allows the other to do the same in return.  
 You do not need or demand anything back from them,  
 because you know that you are both participating  
 in a single, Bigger Gazing and Loving  $\hat{o}$   
 one that fully satisfies and creates an immense inner Aliveness.  
 You accept being accepted  $\hat{o}$  for no reason and by no criteria whatsoever!  
 This is the key that unlocks everything in me, for others, and towards God.  
 So much so that we call it *salvation*!<sup>50</sup>

In other words, salvation is what we let God see and accept in us, that which, in feedback becomes also what we can see and accept in ourselves. The more personalist and relational dimension of justification confirms this truth of God justifying and freeing us from the inhuman pressure to validate ourselves. This is transforming grace which put in the words of Paul Tillich is simply the openness to have the courage to *accept that we are accepted* by God's love.<sup>51</sup> This is what Mary did by letting God look upon her lowliness (cf. Luke 1:47).

This mutual love between God and the individual is a way of being human and authentic, a way to self-transcendence according to Lonergan. Therefore, Lonergan made a breakthrough with his brilliant theories of *knowledge* and *insight* by looking on mystical love as the goal and climax of human living.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 140.

<sup>50</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 140-141.

<sup>51</sup> P. TILLICH, *The Courage to Be*, 155-156.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *Mystical Theology*, 84.

### 4.3.2 *The Psychological Understanding of Conversion*

In the mystical life, there are neat breaks, watersheds or peak-points in the journey of conversion as the human psyche integrates the layers of the so-called unconscious. The well-known psychologist, G. Jung, describes four births during the process of individuation or psychic fulfilment. The first is the birth of the child into this world; the second happens during adolescence or puberty when the child frees herself from parental authority and from psychic merging with her parents and becomes a responsible adult; the third is when the true self emerges from the turmoil of middle age's conflicts as a spiritual person. The final level is the departure from this world to another one beyond death which Christians call heaven.<sup>53</sup>

These Jungian stages of death and rebirth hold true in the contemplative life, for the goal of mysticism is to become authentically human through faith and love. The third birth is the most relevant for it touches the core of our personality. There are two personalities within us that begin to clash from middle age. The former one is who we think we are in our youth and adolescence (the doctor, teacher); it is the personality we show to the world: the false self. The latter, the true self, is at the deepest level of our being and has been stifled since childhood by external affairs.<sup>54</sup>

From the middle period this number two personality emerges strongly in our consciousness to overthrow number one, the current captain: here comes the strife. Death of the false self, and birth of the true self becomes the way of the cross, the narrow path which most people will not journey on.<sup>55</sup> It is death with Jesus and resurrection with Jesus according to the words of the great mystic St Paul: "For if we

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 146.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 146-147.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 147.

have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Romans 6:5).

The challenge to face here is the ego, the false self, which hates change more than anything else. As we have observed earlier, the ego is adamant not to change and will do everything to keep the status quo and remain the sole master of the boat. Only love and suffering can break the false self's hold on the psyche for the birth of the spiritual person. When suffering takes people to the verge of their inner resources, either they give up, become bitter, and closed down or they gain wisdom, and compassion through it and "fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).<sup>55</sup>

In fact, our struggle with our own shadow self, "facing interior conflicts and moral failures, undergoing rejection and abandonment, daily humiliations, experiencing any kind of abuse, or any form of limitation" are gateways into a deeper consciousness and authentic faith.<sup>56</sup> Love opens the door of awareness and aliveness and the pruning for "that love keeps the door open and available for greater growth."<sup>57</sup>

Those who face up to the sacrifices involved in the death of the false self, allow their true personality to be born with overwhelming joy: "When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:21). Grace is always at work in the unconscious throughout the

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 125.

<sup>56</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 125.

<sup>57</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 128.

psychological turmoil of conversion inviting our number two personality, our true selves, to emerge from the womb into fullness of life.<sup>58</sup>

The third birth, that of the middle age, is the epitome of a mystical experience of death and resurrection and it demands the marshalling of all the forces of the unconscious mind.<sup>59</sup> We shall look now at the unitive states of consciousness through mystical healing.

#### **4.4 *Mystical Healing***

##### *4.4.1 Psychological Background*

In order to understand, the nature of mystical healing, it is primordial that one reflects on the modern understanding of the psyche. Modern psychologists depict the mind as:

A huge iceberg of which only the tip rises above the water, while underneath lies a whole world of wonder and terror, of light and of darkness, of good and of evil. Or we can see the psyche as composed of many layers of consciousness, one superimposed upon the other. Or we can reflect on the mind as a huge polyphony in which there are higher and lower voices. In our waking states ordinarily it is the higher voices that dominate and lead; but our conduct is all the time influenced by the lower voices too. In this way of thinking the word unconscious is, strictly speaking, a misnomer: nothing is unconscious in the psyche.<sup>60</sup>

Our inner division comes from the dichotomy between the higher and the lower voices which sing in a cacophony, between the conscious and the unconscious mind whose desires are opposite. For instance, my conscious mind may want forgiveness while my unconscious mind continues to brood over injuries and refuses to let go of past hurts.<sup>61</sup> However, there is a realm of the psyche that goes beyond the

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<sup>58</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 148.

<sup>59</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 148.

<sup>60</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 127-128

appraisal of psychology, namely the centre of the soul, the ground of our being that is called God.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.4.2 *Healing the Inner Division*

At the core of our being, we are confronted with divine love, infinite love, unrestricted love. This is the voice of the Spirit calling to oneness òthrough an obscure sense of presence or a deep interior silence or a longing for solitude or a simple desire for God.ö<sup>63</sup> The mystical healing of our inner split begins with the Spirit's call of love. Responding to this love we set out for a journey that is joyful because it is a journey of love and at the same time painful because of the suffering for that love. We pass from the familiar, the false self, to the unfamiliar, the true self.<sup>64</sup>

òIn the mystical life, one passes from one layer to the next in an inner or downward journey to the core of the personality where the great mystery called God dwells.ö<sup>65</sup> In this process, the hidden layers of the psyche that are ordinarily dormant and unconscious are awakening. Consequently, the inner eye recovers its sight and the power of speech of the inner voices returns.<sup>66</sup> Particularly, it is to the Holy Spirit's awakening and voices within that we must be attuned and attentive ò the case of Samuel is a prototype (1 Samuel 3).<sup>67</sup>

This is an ongoing journey heading to oneness òbecause the consciousness gradually expands and integrates data from the so-called unconscious while the

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 32.

<sup>63</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 128.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 128.

<sup>65</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 127.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 128.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 33

whole personality is absorbed into the great mystery of God.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, this journey towards union is never smooth and easy because conflicts necessarily arise. As we said earlier, the captain of the ship, the false self, the ego, is going to resist the unveiling of the hidden layers of the so-called unconscious.<sup>69</sup>

As the dormant and unconscious layers of the psyche are being actuated and brought to life, the inner demons – one's own psyche with its weaknesses and its capacity for evil – are released.<sup>70</sup> These shadows according to Jung are – the unacceptable part of our personality with which we are brought face to face.<sup>71</sup> Thus the secrets of our early childhood – abuse of all sorts, co-dependence, and so on – are unlocked and the view of oneself is revealed in almost its totality.<sup>72</sup>

Coming to see that everything is not aesthetic in our psyche can be a source of compassion or distress for some. The inner turmoil is described as follow:

One can be almost overwhelmed by gusts of anger or by nameless anxiety and fear, or by tumultuous sexuality, or by fierce rebellion against God and man. If a person has any neurotic tendencies (and most people have some) this is the time when they will appear, sometimes in a greatly intensified form. If parts of the psyche have been unfulfilled, this is the time when they will clamour for fulfilment. [ ] And this may continue for a long time.<sup>73</sup>

But this inner great storm will also end at the appropriate time, the *kairos* of deliverance. Our task is to pay no attention to the revealed inner monsters, to remain serene, and to continue the inner journey to the deepest realm of the psyche for it is a

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<sup>68</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 127

<sup>69</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 128.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 130.

<sup>71</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 130.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 129.

psychological truth that what we resist persists in a disguise form as Richard Rohr puts it poetically.<sup>74</sup> That is what Jesus meant by *ōresist not evilō* (Matthew 5:39).

Ignoring and not meddling with the ugly vision of self are ways to self-acceptance which in its turn becomes the integration of the personality. Thus we accept ourselves as we are and become authentic human beings. To paraphrase Rohr, what we let God see and accept in us also becomes what we can see and accept in ourselves. St John of the Cross calls it salvation.<sup>75</sup>

Let us remember that this self-acceptance is not the fruit of our own making or will power but a pure gift from God. The outpouring of his love into our hearts is at the centre of our growing realisation that we are loved by God unconditionally, not that we give love but that we accept love. One may ask the whereabouts of our neuroses and hang-up of all kinds?<sup>76</sup>

Quite often suppressed anger and resentment and fear and childish fixations linger on. And it is precisely here, in the deep, deep unconscious, that barriers fall down in the mystical journey. Love penetrates to the caverns of the unconscious, allowing the suppressed anger and fear and clinging to surface. Exposed to the light they melt away and a deep, adult ongoing love [í ] becomes the basis for universal love.<sup>77</sup>

They simply melt away and disappear like early morning mists that clear up after the rising of the sun: they are illusory. However, one should be aware that the problem may still be there but in a transformed manner such that its crippling holds or effects on us have vanished. We grow out of them and move *ōtowards* that integration of the personality which Jung calls individuation.<sup>78</sup> When all barriers

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 132.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 141.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 130.

<sup>77</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 131.

<sup>78</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 130.

that alienate us from ourselves and others collapse, then, the deepest union of all occurs: union with the Father through Christ.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, mystical healing is a return to the Father (confer the parable of prodigal son), a return to harmonious union, ãa process of reconciliation, of inner unification, and of magnificent justification.<sup>80</sup> It is a *one-ing* exercise as stated by the author of *The Cloud*. In a nutshell, mysticism is the experience of Oneness, one with God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), one with ourselves, one with the human race, and finally one with the cosmos.<sup>81</sup>

On the one hand, we lose our own centre but, on the other hand, we fall into the deepest centre of the living Word of God in us. Hence we can proclaim with St Paul: ãIt is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in meö (Galatians 2:20). Christian mysticism is a process of becoming another Christ.<sup>82</sup> The Greek Fathers speak of this process as *theosis*, ãa divinisation of the person who now becomes another Christ, a son by adoption. The indwelling Spirit joins himself to his spirit and cries out: ãAbba, Father!ö<sup>83</sup>

However, one may retort that if mysticism leads to oneness or unity, then there is a danger of losing one's personality, a phenomenon called ãundifferentiated consciousnessö. This is not true because in mysticism the self is not denied and human personality is not dissolved, instead contemplation is the experience in which we become the other, while remaining ourselves (true selves).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 133.

<sup>80</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 126.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 126.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 127.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 46.

Modern psychology can explain the unity and diversity of being because it speaks of states or layers of consciousness of the psyche. One layer can see unity of consciousness on one level, and on another level, diversity of consciousness. Or both states can exist at different times or simultaneously in the same person such that unity and diversity are seen at the same time.<sup>85</sup> Such a consciousness undoubtedly exists in the Trinity and the Trinity is the key contemplative experience for the Christian. It is described as follow:

It is the experience I have when, divested of self and clothed with Christ, I offer myself to the Father in the Spirit for the salvation of the world. [í ] God is my Father: I am his son: the Spirit dwells in me, and I cry out: -Abba, Father!ø In this experience I have a consciousness which is at once undifferentiated and differentiated. It is undifferentiated in that there is total unity, identification with Jesus and through Jesus with the Father; and, on the other hand, it is differentiated in that I am not Jesus and Jesus is not the Father.<sup>86</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, mysticism or contemplation is the core of the Christian life. In other words, Christian life and mystical life are one. Therefore, mysticism is a universal call for oneness with God, a union that Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper.<sup>87</sup> øThat they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent meö (John 17:21). Healing of relationships, of inner brokenness, of wounds, flow from this unity with the great mystery called God who is the centre and the ground of our being.

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 47.

<sup>86</sup> W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 56.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 126.

## Chapter IV

### Christ our Healer in the African Context

#### 1. Introduction

We have observed earlier that religious thinkers such as Henri Bergson, Martin Buber, and Teilhard de Chardin look on mysticism as the very core of authentic religious experience. They see it as the very centre of religion and theology and a profound human experience found in all cultures at all times.<sup>1</sup> Were this the case, then African Traditional Religions also have it.

In native religions like, African Traditional Religion, mysticism is in the search of harmony, the overcoming of distinctions, conflicts and oppositional energies and of communion with nature itself or the Great Spirit through dance, ritual, and sexuality.<sup>2</sup> Our endeavour in this chapter is to explore the mystical experience in African culture and elaborate on its holistic healing in the light of the healing power of Jesus Christ.

#### 2. The Traditional African Concept of 'Vital Union' as Parallel to 'Mystical Union'

Black Africa before Christianity is largely monotheistic; God is not only seen as the source of life but also as the one in whom the fullness of life dwells.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 9-10, 15.

<sup>2</sup> R. ROHR, *The Naked Now*, 39, 54.

Bujo asserts the view that, in African tradition, God is the creator and sustainer of all life, reaching a climax in human life.<sup>3</sup> He then points out the hierarchical ordering of life defined as ða participation in God, but it is always mediated by one standing above the recipient in the hierarchy of beings. This hierarchy belongs both to the invisible and to the visible world.<sup>4</sup>

Bujo agrees with Mulago's thesis that the hierarchy of invisible and visible powers is a downward scenario coming from God through the departed, passing through royalty, chiefs and elders, to heads of households and family members. This participation in a common life is spelled out by Mulago as a ðunity of lifeð or a ðvital unionð. He defines it further as ða relationship of being and life between each individual and his descendents, his family, his brothers and sisters in the clan, his antecedents, and also with God the ultimate source of life.<sup>5</sup>

Mulago concludes by asking the question: what is this life? In answering this question he states: ðit is a whole life, individual inasmuch as it is received by each being which exists, and communal or collective inasmuch as each being draws from a common source of life.<sup>6</sup> It is clear from Mulago's study of the Bantu people that life in traditional African thought originates from God and it is holistic and communal in nature. It goes beyond the biological to embrace the whole of the human existence. Therefore, any idea of dichotomy between private, social, political, and religious life in traditional African societies is to be ruled out.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> V. MULAGO, ðVital participation: The Cohesive Principle of the Bantu Communityð, 138.

<sup>6</sup> V. MULAGO, ðVital participation: The Cohesive Principle of the Bantu Communityð, 138.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 56.

John Pobee concurs with Mulago's perception of life's unity in the ontology and epistemology of many traditional African societies when he says: "Being and existence are seen very comprehensively" they are as physical as they are spiritual, as external as internal. They have a holistic view of life.<sup>8</sup> From the same context, Mulago explains the meaning of life being communal in Africa:

The Bantu believe firmly in a vital communion or life-bond which creates solidarity between members of the same family or clan. [í ] The family, clan or tribe is a whole, of which each member is only a part. The same blood, the same life which is shared by all, which all receive from the first ancestor, the founder of the clan, runs through the veins of all.<sup>9</sup>

It comes to the fore from the writings of these theologians that the traditional African concept of life has its origin and fullness in God; it is hierarchical, requires participation, and finally it encompasses all realms of existence and incorporates the individual as well as communal.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the African Christians' perception of mystical union is nothing other than Mulago's concept of "vital union" for mystical experience is described as "I and Thou" relationship which necessarily embraces the human race.<sup>11</sup>

Placide Tempels' idea of "life force" proposed in his work *Bantu Philosophy* corroborates Mulago's notion of "vital union" as the unifying principle of Bantu thought.<sup>12</sup> St Paul, quoting the poet Epimenides of Cnossos, expresses poetically this same vital force that originates from God, wherein "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In other words, the term "vital union" denotes a mutual

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<sup>8</sup> J.S. POBEE, "Life and Peace: An African Perspective", 17.

<sup>9</sup> V. MULAGO, "Vital participation: The Cohesive Principle of the Bantu Community", 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. SAHADAT, "Mystical Union and Reconciliation", 49.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 56.

indwelling between the creator and the creature, specifically between God and the individual, culminating in interpersonal relations.<sup>13</sup>

Here is the mysticism in the African context in terms of union, a union originating from God which then extends to the dead and the living – deceased family members, chiefs and elders, heads of households, brothers and sisters. Moreover, this union is expressed vividly by Tempels when he claims that for the African, to be was the same as to have life-force.<sup>14</sup> The symbolism of the Fourth Gospel which speaks of the vine in the branch and the branch in the vine (cf. John 15:4-5) illustrates very well the African notion of life-force which stands for the indwelling principle of mystical union.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever symbolism is used, the model of Christian mysticism is Jesus himself for his mystical experience is that of being in the Father and the Father in him.<sup>16</sup> The statement of Jesus to Thomas – I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me (John 14:6) – triggers in the African mind, echoes of persons who are the *source of life* and *obligatory route* to the Supreme Being: the Ancestors.<sup>17</sup> For it was to the ancestors that God first communicated the divine vital force. Hence they constitute the highest link, after God, in the chain of beings.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the African quest for life is embedded in Christ – considered as ancestor in African theology – who alone possesses the fullness of life.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 141.

<sup>14</sup> B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 142.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. W. JOHNSTON, *The Inner Eye of Love*, 141.

<sup>17</sup> F. KABASÉLÉ, 'Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother', 116.

<sup>18</sup> F. KABASÉLÉ, 'Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother', 117.

Bujo asserts that Jesus is 'the true vital force and energy *par excellence* which flows into all his descendents.'<sup>19</sup> Tanzanian theologian Charles Nyamiti outlines five characteristics of ancestral beliefs in black Africa:

1. *Natural relationship* between the ancestor and his or her earthly relatives, usually based on parenthood, but sometimes on brotherhood or membership in secret society.
2. *Supernatural or sacred status* acquired through death and understood in terms of super-human powers and nearness to God.
3. *Mediation* between God and humanity because of their supernatural status and proximity to God.
4. *Title to regular sacred communication* with earthly relatives, with whom the ancestors long to maintain contact.
5. *Exemplarity*, as models of good behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

Needless to say that Jesus Christ – being the risen Lord and mediator between God and humanity – met all these fivefold dimensions of ancestorship far beyond the 'authentic ideal of the God-fearing African ancestors.'<sup>21</sup> On the basis of this transcendence, Bujo called Jesus the ancestor *par excellence* or the proto-ancestor. He further clarified that the term proto-ancestor refers to Jesus not only as 'first' but also as 'model'. Therefore, Jesus is not merely one founding ancestor among many.<sup>22</sup>

Bujo's christological title of Jesus as proto-ancestor reflects the belief that he is the 'firstborn among all the ancestors', not on a biological level but rather on a soteriological level of re-birth to a mystical and supernatural life and mode of existence.'<sup>23</sup> He then summarized the rationale that leads him to use the African category of 'a great founding ancestor' to depict Jesus in this way:

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<sup>19</sup> B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> C. NYAMITI, *Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 120.

<sup>23</sup> B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, 83.

If the vital force emanating from God actually passes through our ancestors, and, in particular, through the proto-ancestor of a clan, the Christian believer is convinced that God is similarly communicating His own divine life to us by means of His Messiah and Son, whom He thereby constituted as our Proto-Ancestor.<sup>24</sup>

What emerges in the writing of Bujo is that Jesus Christ being the Proto-Ancestor invites all men and women to participate in his life-giving and creative activity. Therefore, he is the òlife-giving, proto-force of the whole black ethos.ö<sup>25</sup> In a nutshell, traditional African understanding of òvital unionö is the perfect example of mysticism. All the more, good health and prosperity are clear indications that the vital force is strong and that, there is harmony in the land and in creation. Conversely, illnesses, calamities, and brokenness point to a disorder in relationship.<sup>26</sup> We shall survey in this second part the African approach to sickness and brokenness.

### **3. African Approaches to Illness and Brokenness**

The yearning for wholeness of life in Africa is a great concern for some African theologians, Oduyoye, Bujo, and among many others. Lamenting on the òlitanies of brokennessö, Bujo queries, òIn Africa the importance of life has always been underlined for the family, the clan, and the community of the ancestors. But what has happened to this life today? Is there still the same respect for life in this post-colonial world?ö<sup>27</sup> By expressing such concerns, he confirms the human predicament Appiah-Kubi voices:

Jesus Christ is thus conceived by many African Christians as the great physician, healer and victor over worldly powers par excellence. To many, Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. But the perturbing question is, where

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<sup>24</sup> B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, 82.

<sup>25</sup> B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, 103.

<sup>26</sup> L. MAGESA, *African Religion*, 81.

<sup>27</sup> B. BUJO, *Christmas: God Becomes Man in Black Africa*, 8.

is this abundant life, when all around us we see suffering, poverty, oppression, strife, envy, war and destruction?<sup>28</sup>

Before setting out to answer this question, let us spell out the African traditional concept of health and illness. Jean-Marc Ela notes that in black Africa, sickness is generally ñot experienced as an objective fact,ö but rather as ña scandal that belongs in the anthropological realm of evil and misfortune.ö<sup>29</sup> Whenever illness strikes the particular individual, it disrupts the social relationships and thus becomes a family and communal concern. For the African person, illness alters not only the equilibrium of the human organism but it is also a rent in the social fabric.<sup>30</sup> At the same time health is viewed beyond organic causes and it encompasses physical, mental, spiritual, social, and environmental well-being.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, disruption of harmony in the aforementioned factors is believed to be spiritual or supernatural ñsuch as offending God or ancestral spirits, possession by evil spirits, witchcraft, breaking taboos, or curses from offended family or community members.ö<sup>32</sup> Fernando Domingues called this worldview the principle of personal causality, meaning, any event that affects human life has behind it a ñwhyö and a ñwhoö For instance, among the Azande of Sudan, an elephantö attack on someone is thought immediately to be the work of witchcraft and sorcery. Somebody within the circle of the attacked person caused it to happen that way. The ñwhyö may be envy, jealousy, or hatred.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> K. APPIAH-KUBI, ñChristologyö, 76.

<sup>29</sup> J-M. ELA, *My Faith as an African*, 44, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, ñJesus as Healer?ö, 132.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. F. DOMINGUES, *Christ our Healer*, 24-25.

Similarly, a physical cure may happen as a result of a particular medicine but if the personal cause which really set in motion the process of sickness is not detected and dealt with, other misfortunes will come along in the form of a road accident or lightning's strike on the granary and so on.<sup>34</sup>

Another example of personal causality in action is when people use language like: 'a sorcerer crushed the child's leg'. They know very well that the child was hurt by a stone but what is at the back of their mind is that: 'that stone crushed the leg of that child because someone directed it to happen precisely in that way. Witchcraft and sorcery provide the answer to evil and misfortune in terms of personal causality.'<sup>35</sup>

This theory of personal causality imputes guilt and blame at any individual and makes that person the scapegoat to be blamed for evil in the society. All the more, it gives rise to feelings of suspicion, fear and hatred among those living in the same community and will lead people to live in a past that distracts them or a future that they hope to have one day.<sup>36</sup>

From what has been said above, we can infer that brokenness is embedded in the African conception of life and sickness. Life is conceived as a force struggling against the forces of destruction which threaten us on all sides. Therefore, brokenness is a situation whereby a person is affected by personal and maleficent forces be it violation of taboos, curses from offended family or community members, sorcery, witchcraft, intervention of water genies, possession by evil spirits

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. F. DOMINGUES, *Christ our Healer*, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> F. DOMINGUES, *Christ our Healer*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. F. DOMINGUES, *Christ our Healer*, 31-32.

and so on. Belief in witchcraft, sorcerers, and wizards are things that affect African lives even today.<sup>37</sup>

Another way of seeing brokenness in Africa is to consider it as a manifestation of conflictive relationship or breaks in the relationship of the individual with others. In summary, brokenness and sickness are intrinsically intertwined according to this worldview. In fact, illness is a manifestation of brokenness. It is a lack of balance and harmony within the individual or the social group and ultimately with God.<sup>38</sup> Due to the interconnectedness of the African universe of sickness with that of the spirits, Ela underlines that "the techniques of healing cannot be separated from the symbolic universe from which they emerge."<sup>39</sup> But before dealing with the healing of Jesus in this inextricable link between brokenness and the human relationships with one another and the universe, we shall elaborate on what African Christians mean when they speak of Jesus as their healer.

#### **4. The Meaning of Jesus as Healer for African Christians**

The interpretations of African Christians concerning Jesus as healer can be summed up into four main points. First, the image refers to Jesus as life-giver because he restores life where it has been diminished and repairs it where it has been broken. For the Ghanaian Protestant clergyman Aboagye-Mensah, "Jesus heals not only our sicknesses but our deeply wounded souls."<sup>40</sup> A similar understanding of Jesus as healer is offered by a Kenyan Protestant lay woman Mercy Muhia in terms

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, "Jesus as Healer", 136.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, "Jesus as Healer", 138.

<sup>39</sup> J-M. ELA, *My Faith as an African*, 50-51.

<sup>40</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 71.

of 'one who is able to restore the inner man, to create wholeness in the inner man.'<sup>41</sup> She explained further that our brokenness is deeply rooted in our sinfulness, in our relationships because of that sinfulness, and in our emotions because of unhealthy pattern of life. Therefore, Christ is the only one capable of healing such brokenness completely.<sup>42</sup>

The second major affirmation is aired by African theologians, church leaders, and lay people; they stress Jesus' healing as 'the re-creation of wholeness in all aspects of life.'<sup>43</sup> Pobe concurs with this perception of integral healing and sees it as encompassing body, soul and mind, namely, the wholeness of being and person. This image of Jesus as healer was discussed in the oral interviews with sixty individuals and eleven focus groups. The outcome showed that one-quarter of the sixty individuals and one-third of the focus groups emphasize more the spiritual, emotional, moral, psychological, and relational dimensions of Jesus' healing than the physical one.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, the holistic understanding of healing is not confined to the individual but incorporates also the communal aspects of life. For example, Anne Nasimiyu Wasike espouses both dimensions when she says: 'Jesus inaugurated the restoration of individual and societies to wholeness and he invited the disciples to participate in this re-establishment.'<sup>45</sup> Bujo also underlined the same point by applying to Jesus an African Christological title: Ancestor. Since the ancestor is

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<sup>41</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> A. NASIMIYU WASIKE, 'Christology and an African Woman's Experience', 133.

believed to give life in all areas, Jesus as the new Proto-Ancestor does the same.<sup>46</sup> To sum up, Jesus as healer restores life in its various dimensions, both for individual and for communities.

The third affirmation that portrays Jesus as healer is connected with the overlapping nature of the African universe of sickness with the spirit world. This conflation of both universes implies that healing must relate the African person to the invisible universe in order to effect the healing power inherent in the Gospel.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, Ela explains the role of the Church as follow: "In Black Africa, the world of the Night or of the Invisible is perhaps the privileged place in which we must understand the good news of the descent of Jesus into hell (1 Pt 3:19-20) in order to announce liberation to the African menaced by occult power."<sup>48</sup>

Thus the significance of Jesus as healer ranks from the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social sphere of life to his total supremacy over every form of evil operating in the universe. The data regarding Jesus as supreme over evil was collected from sixty five individuals in the oral interviews. Twelve of the total sixty-five individual respondents commented that Jesus conquered all enemies including disease, evil spirits, and death itself.<sup>49</sup> That Jesus is indeed the one who defeats all that is life defeating come out strongly in many African Christians perception of Jesus as healer.<sup>50</sup>

The fourth and final affirmation regarding the meaning of Jesus as healer pertains to other significant roles such as saviour, liberator, and redeemer. For

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 72.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 73.

<sup>48</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 73.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 74.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 74.

instance, Oduyoye asserts that the cry for salvation/liberation in Africa is primarily a cry for health and wholeness<sup>51</sup> which Nasimiyyu Wasike sees as part and parcel of liberation and inculturation. Some discussions of vernacular terms employed for Jesus have revealed a network of interconnection of concepts like saving, healing, conquering, and protecting. For example, Protestant lay woman Irene Odotei, in speaking on behalf of Ghanaian Christians, explained some vernacular terms such as *Agyenkwa* and *Osa* or *Osa-berima Yehowa* which respectively refer to Jesus as the saviour or giver of life and warrior, protector, big fortress and rock.<sup>52</sup>

Strong evidence for this perception emerges particularly in the statement of Ghanaian Catholic lay man George Hagan who spelled out the understanding of Jesus as healer in accordance with cultural expectation. He explained:

Now in the African cultures too, healing is a holistic thing. It is always seen as having a spiritual dimension, so you would expect a charismatic figure, a spiritual figure in fact our healer were all spiritual. Our herbalists were supposed to know things physical and things spiritual. Our fetish priests and priestesses were operating in the realm of the spiritual; they were supposed to have powers of healing. So the association between spirituality and healing is already there in the mind of our people. And if you have come to say that Christ is a redeemer, and yet a redeemer who did not have the power to heal, it would have sounded very odd in the ears of an African. So the healing image of Christ is a very vivid one, something that is very, very important, that strikes a cord in the mind of an African.<sup>53</sup>

This survey of the meaning of Jesus as healer for many African Christians shows that ailments were not just matters of cause and effect but also have spiritual ramifications or origins.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, African Christians view Jesus as the one triumphing over the powers of darkness, disease, and death. He restores life in all its dimensions whether individual and communal. The image further signifies that Jesus

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<sup>51</sup> M. ODUYOYE, *Hearing and Knowing*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 75.

<sup>53</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 74.

is life-affirming force that saves, liberates, and redeems. Finally, Jesus is perceived as the restorer of the inner man, the healer of our inner brokenness.<sup>55</sup>

#### **4.1 Jesus as Traditional Healer**

The image of Jesus as traditional healer finds early attestation within African theology. The parallels between Jesus' ministry and that of the traditional healer provide the backgrounds for interpreting Jesus in this light and to allow African Christians to appropriate Jesus in a more meaningful way.<sup>56</sup> One clear similarity is the power over sickness and evil forces. Catholic priest David Kamau spoke of Jesus as 'the greatest medicine man' because he heals the people and fights sorcerers while Protestant lay woman Sarah Nabwire talked of him as 'the big *mganga* (healer)'.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the human *mganga* is merely a 'photocopy' of the biggest or greatest *mganga*.<sup>58</sup> In other words Jesus is a *mganga waganga* according to the Luo's terminology.<sup>59</sup>

A second parallel between traditional healers and Jesus is about special powers of knowledge which is attributed to both. For example, Peter Kiarie, one of the interviewees and former director of education at the Catholic Secretariat in Nairobi, who has done extensive research among his own Kikuyu people, drew the following comparison:

You can see Jesus comes out very powerfully as the healer, because he demonstrates he knows people. He doesn't have to have a gourd, and do things to diagnose what is wrong. He looks at Nathaniel, and say, 'here is an Israelite without guile.' And he says, 'I saw you while you were under the tree.' This kind of

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 79-80.

<sup>56</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 84-85.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 85.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 100.

approach, that Jesus had that knowledge of personsô he *knew*, you don't have to tell him. So this is something that Africans admireô they liked the medicine men.<sup>60</sup>

A third parallel resides in the manifold ways that Jesus uses to heal, that which is similar to that of the traditional healer. Here again, Kiarie gives us a lucid explanation by comparing Jesus's deeds of mixing mud and saliva and placing it on the eyes of the blind man as ôactions considered akin to certain practices of traditional healer.ö<sup>61</sup> It is again striking that Ghanaian Christians also draw attention to the story of Jesus mixing saliva with mud as biblical rationale for viewing Jesus as *Odunsini*ô healer.<sup>62</sup> Catholic Bishops Peter Sarpong and Palmer-Buckle suggested another term, *Oduyefo*, which concurs with David Kamau's image of Jesus as medicine man. Bishop Sarpong explains the significance of this name in relation to Jesus:

Jesus as *Oduyefo*, the doctor or the medicine man. Jesus is the answer to all ailmentsô ailments of the body, ailments of the soul, ailments of the mind. He is the only one who has the power to unite human beings so that there is no friction between one individual and another, one group and another.<sup>63</sup>

In the light of these parallels, some African Christians assert that Jesus can be understood ôthrough the image of the traditional healer for he, and the healing ministry extended through his followers, provides the healing which was formerly sought through the human *mganga*.ö<sup>64</sup>

In conclusion, Jesus's role in terms of healing is understood to fulfil that of the traditional healer, namely, ôprotecting from evil powers, and restoring

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<sup>60</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 85-86.

<sup>61</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 86.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 93.

<sup>63</sup> P.T. SARPONG, ôAsante Christologyö, 203.

<sup>64</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 86.

community relations where disruption has occurred in the social fabric.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the holistic approach to healing in African tradition fosters insight into biblical affirmations regarding Jesus' healing ministry as signifying the inauguration of the kingdom of God in all its individual, corporate, and cosmic dimensions.<sup>66</sup> Aylward Shorter elaborates on this aspect in his analysis of Jesus in relation to the witchdoctor in these words:

Jesus, therefore, used the techniques of popular healers and exorcists of his time, and to that extent, at least, he was like a traditional divine-healer or witchdoctor. Scientific medicine was not a possible option in his lifetime, or for many centuries afterwards. Nevertheless, in antedating medical science, Jesus also escaped its limitations, notably its comparative lack of interest in the environmental, social and moral aspects of healing. Jesus shared the integrated approach to healing which characterizes the so-called witchdoctor, but he carried it infinitely further in every dimension. In his own life he offered a comprehensive redemption from the world's sickness, and in his own person he offered a release for the sick, the sinful, the sad, the aliens, the outcasts, the poor and the ritually unclean. In Jesus' message there was no condition of diminished humankind, no sickness, disability or guilt which was impervious to the liberating and restorative power of God's love encountered in his own life and person.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, in Jesus we see the pattern of life that is capable of resuscitating African concepts of life and healing and empowering us to gain the wholeness of life that comes out of being taken into his sphere of influence in which we shall live under the rule of God.<sup>68</sup> In Jesus' life, the spirit world is a reality and the reign of God over all, the operative dynamic of life. Jesus becomes for the African, the Finisher of our Wholeness.<sup>69</sup> Hence, Bujo appeals to the church of Africa to

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<sup>65</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 101.

<sup>66</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 101.

<sup>67</sup> A. SHORTER, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*, 12-13.

<sup>68</sup> M. ODUYOYE, 'Wholeness of Life in Africa', 121.

<sup>69</sup> M. ODUYOYE, 'Wholeness of Life in Africa', 121.

become a community of healing for 'Jesus Christ has healed us. He heals all the members of the community, giving life to everybody.'<sup>70</sup>

However, there are some objections concerning naming Jesus or ascribing African titles to him. Kolié makes a vital point by asking whether by declaring Jesus to be the traditional healer *par excellence* does in fact bring about the expected healing.<sup>71</sup> For him, it is a matter of bringing the healing about in our liturgies by examining the healing charisms of our ancestors in connection with the Spirit of Pentecost. Therefore, healing must take place in someone's name: Christ.<sup>72</sup>

#### ***4.2 Christ's Death and Resurrection, Laceration of History***

In black Africa, whenever sickness strikes someone, a scapegoat must be found as the author. It can be the patient himself, victim of offence against God, ancestral spirits, or breaking of taboos, or it could be that someone else wishes him evil. So illness reveals a syndrome of a social nature.<sup>73</sup> In Jesus's death, the Africans can blame his sentence and execution on the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, the various priestly leaders, the rabble, and Judas. But the overriding belief attributes death to metaphysical or supernatural causes. Therefore, the specific persons mentioned are only instruments of higher invisible forces.<sup>74</sup>

Theologically, we can ascribe the death of Jesus to the total accumulation of evil, the reign of Satan.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Jesus is neither victim of a counterattack on the part of the ancestors in consequence of a transgression nor on the part of a sorcerer.

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<sup>70</sup> D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 107.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 141-142.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 144-145.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 145.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 145.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, 'How Has Jesus Saved Us?', Class Notes, Tangaza College, 1.

Kolié, argues that the only recourse is to begin to accept the event ðin order to receive its light and benefit after the fact.ö<sup>76</sup> Our rejection or acceptance of the event will determine whether the death and resurrection of Christ is to be disease or healing. So what is at stake here is either appropriation or resignation. For Kolié, the reality of death and resurrection is not foreign to black African tradition but it is strongly embedded in its rites of initiation.<sup>77</sup> He explains:

Through the symbolism of death and new birth in these rites, life is played out in a psychodrama staged for the assembled village. There the individual confronts the unknown, and by way of the struggle, the mask is vanquished by its own apparent victory over the candidate; the candidate overcomes an inner fear; and the social group ðreceives itself,ö becomes its own, through this collective psychodrama, this general life-crisis.<sup>78</sup>

The point Kolié is making here about the rite of initiation is that, just as the candidate by accepting what is mysterious in the initiation dies to the apparent victory of it, and rises as a newborn in the social group, likewise, Jesus also by accepting the cross, dies to the apparent victory of evil, be it brokenness, physical and mental wounds, and rises in triumphant glory in the trinity. Consequently, the spoils of Christ's victory accrue to our account if we assume the drama of the cross. Thus the crucified Messiah becomes to the Africans, not sickness but rather healing. In other words, the event of the cross is salvific in nature and healing flows like a river from it.<sup>79</sup>

This historical life-crisis of Jesus is nothing but kenosis, the self emptying which reaches its climax when God ðbestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth

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<sup>76</sup> C. KOLIÉ, ðJesus as Healer?ö, 145.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, ðJesus as Healer?ö, 146.

<sup>78</sup> C. KOLIÉ, ðJesus as Healer?ö, 146.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, ðJesus as Healer?ö, 146.

and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-11). Kolié argues that the name is the one which saves in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles because it is 'the comprehensive being of a person, embracing the horizontal dimension of relationships in time and the vertical dimension of one's genealogy.'<sup>80</sup>

The one who invokes the name of Jesus obtains the fullness of the 'Christic' presence according to Kolié. The symbolism of the name of Jesus is efficacious because in him dwells the unity of humanity and divinity. It is only by participating in Jesus' humanity-and-divinity that he becomes a sign of salvation to past, present and future.<sup>81</sup> Taking seriously the cross is the source of healing and wholeness for it 'frees up the energies that found the real order of society and life.'<sup>82</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Mysticism as the core of religious experience is present in African Traditional Religion, in the quest of harmony that characterizes it. In this religion the concept of 'vital force' as the inner principle that originates from God is communicated to the ancestors and then extended to the living dead and finally to the inanimate world. To have this life-force is a guarantee that there is harmony in the socio-cultural and economic relationships. At the same time, illness signifies a disruption of harmony and consequently alienation from God, the ancestors or the spirits world and among human beings<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 147.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 147.

<sup>82</sup> C. KOLIÉ, 'Jesus as Healer', 148.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 63.

To restore the inextricable link between human relationships with one another and with the universe, Africa practices a medicine based on the relational and symbolical functioning of the patient's environment. This leads some theologians to transfer to Jesus the prestigious ancestor title of healer. But Kolié sees in that enterprise only a shattering of Christians' sensibilities, but not their faith in the therapy of the ancestors when the problems of their lives are to be confronted.<sup>84</sup> For him, Africans celebrate salvation without knowing it through the symbolism of death and new rebirth in their rites of initiation.

Therefore, the solution is in the discovering of their roots in the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth who through his death and resurrection stores up salvation and healing for those who will appropriate the event of his cross. In this sense, the name of Jesus becomes the locus where Africans can experience the healing of their broken relationships with all the partners of their socio-cultural cosmology<sup>85</sup>. We shall explore in the following last chapter a theological reflection that underlies Jesus' healing.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, "Jesus as Healer", 148-149.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. C. KOLIÉ, "Jesus as Healer", 148.

## Chapter V

### Theological Reflection on Healing

#### 1. Introduction

In our previous chapter, we have seen that rituals provide a conceptual framework for healing through its elements of death and rebirth that enable one to transcend and transform the unknown phenomenon with which they are being confronted. This is essentially the theology of the cross which reminds us that the power of our alienation and estrangement have been broken through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We shall explore in this chapter Bernard Lonergan's law of the cross, the redemptive power of love with Peter Abelard and Karl Rahner's understanding of grace as hierophanies of healing. Finally, we shall look at both the vertical (communion with God) and the horizontal (communion among men and women) dimensions of reconciliation as the peak experience of healing and wholeness.

#### 2. Lonergan's Law of the Cross

For Lonergan, sin is 'the reality of alienation and dehumanisation as a dynamic expanding reality.'<sup>1</sup> It is the failure of not becoming one's true self and thus remaining an inauthentic person. When men and women do not respect God's

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<sup>1</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 416.

intentionality in their regard, by refusing to meet the demands of self-transcendence, öthey remain imprisoned in their undeveloped and distorted selves, victims of individual or group or general bias.ö However, Lonergan's thesis affirms that, the evils of the human race can be transformed into a supreme good through the just and mysterious law of the cross.<sup>2</sup> This law consists of three stages:

- (a) sin incurs the penalty of death
- (b) this dying, if accepted out of love, is transformed
- (c) this transformed dying receives the blessing of new life<sup>3</sup>

The healing messages in this law of the cross are threefold. The first step of the law of the cross stipulates that sin incurs the penalty of death. Paul's claim in Romans 6:23 that öthe wages of sin is deathö cannot be applied to Jesus since his solidarity with humanity does not involve sin. Therefore, Jesus never experienced the pain that flows from one's own personal sinfulness. The healing message in this for us is that righteous living spares us from many pains that we can and should avoid in life. There is no need to undergoing the suffering that results from personal sin if we live righteously<sup>4</sup>.

One particular aspect of Yahweh's love manifested to Israel is his covenanted love for his people. Yahweh is the faithful spouse, the loving parent, the God who continually reaches out to his people to bind them to himself. In Exodus 15:26, Yahweh speaks to the Israelites through Moses in these terms<sup>5</sup>:

If you really listen to the voice of the Lord, your God, and do what is right in his eyes: if you heed his commandments and keep all his precepts, I will not afflict you with any of the diseases with which I afflicted the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer (Exodus 15:26).

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 417.

<sup>3</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 417.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. B.J. TYRRELL, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A.M. SWEET, öA Theology of Healingö, 145.

This means that there is a significant relationship between healing and the people's fidelity to the covenant. In other words, wholeness occurs when Israel is turned to Yahweh, and Yahweh to Israel. Thus, the consequence of a refusal to live under God's rule would be a falling back to alienation and brokenness. This same idea is expressed by the prophet Isaiah through the emphatic use of the sense organs:

Go and say to this people:  
 Listen and listen and never understand!  
 Look and look but never perceive!  
 This people's heart is torpid,  
 their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight,  
 to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear,  
 using their heart to understand,  
 changing their ways and being healed by me (Isaiah 6:9-10).

When the organs of perception, ears, eyes, and heart which are meant for hearing, seeing, and understanding, do not perceive or understand, they contradict their own purpose and become by this very fact a blockage for God's desire to heal.<sup>6</sup> The cross shows us a Jesus who will not turn away from God, who remains focused on the one he calls Abba, in total vulnerability, even at the cost of his life. It is the Jesus who will not sin, who clings to his Abba, refusing to break his relationship with God.<sup>7</sup>

The second step of the law of the cross stipulates that if this "dying" is accepted out of love, it can be transformed. Jesus' own life corroborates this principle since he short circuits in his own person the ever-growing cycle of sin by accepting "his death out of love for Abba and out of a responsible love for his fellow human beings."<sup>8</sup> He accepted the cross in perfect obedience to the Father, meaning

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. R.C. TANNEHILL, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story", 83.

<sup>7</sup> T.P. RAUSCH, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 192.

<sup>8</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 420.

that in faithfulness to his ministry, he refuses absolutely to respond with hostility or violence to the hostility and violence that his ministry occasioned.<sup>9</sup>

By his deliberate refusal to join in the game of retaliation, Jesus' dying was transformed. Instead of being just another violent example of a desperate attempt to survive, Jesus' death becomes a revelation that some values in life are worth dying for. His death makes a powerful statement that fidelity to God and authentic humanity is more significant than mere physical survival.<sup>10</sup>

The healing message here is that for those who love and trust God, the spiral of alienation and dehumanisation cease to be a complete meaningless horrors and become instead opportunities for self-transcendence and victory.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the cycle of estrangement and alienation is broken through a fidelity to the exigencies of self-transcendence which crucifies what is biased, distorted and closed within oneself.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the only way to healing of the inner brokenness is through a death to all that makes us slaves, all that alienates and dehumanises us.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, this painful process of dying to that which in oneself represents a paralysing hold over the person is experienced by people who participate in various recovery programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Just as Jesus experiences intense revulsion and agony in the face of imminent physical torture and destruction, so do they experience fear, depression, the desire to escape, and other anguishes of the spirit at the onslaught of intense suffering and certain death.<sup>14</sup>

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, in her excellent book *On Death and Dying*, speaks of five stages which many cancer victims go through on their way towards death. They

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<sup>9</sup> T.P. RAUSCH, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 192.

<sup>10</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 420.

<sup>11</sup> B.J. TYRRELL, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, 121.

<sup>12</sup> E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 420.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 420.

<sup>14</sup> B.J. TYRRELL, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, 121.

are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.<sup>15</sup> As his passion grew imminent, Jesus went through what is often called "the agony in the garden". The healing meaning in the agony of Jesus is that "fear, anxiety, and apprehension in the face of suffering and dying are natural feeling, not to be ashamed of, because inner disintegration is an enemy of man's unity as inspired flesh and is naturally repugnant."<sup>16</sup> But if this inner disintegration is properly understood and participated in, it can be the pathway to a higher mode of integration, that of the resurrection. Herein lies the third step of the law of the cross, namely that this transformed dying receives the blessing of new life. In Jesus' case the blessing is expressed in terms of God raising the crucified one from the dead.<sup>17</sup>

From this perspective, dying could be seen as "a supreme form of positive disintegration, in which a person yields up his present state of integration in order to receive the gift of higher existence and self transcendence."<sup>18</sup> In this sense, healing can be said to begin because of the law of the cross which provides a tremendous antidote to inner brokenness through the beautiful self-transcendence and victory that Jesus displayed in his passion and death. However, we must keep in mind that Jesus' passion and death flow from an intense love, and so only self-sacrificing love can short-circuit the cycle of brokenness, hatred and violence.<sup>19</sup> Thus the healing process is occurring whenever human beings act with authentic self-sacrificing love. The sheer love of God revealed in the cross is the only motive in Peter Abelard's view for the Son of God to redeem us.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. E. KUBLER-ROSS, *On Death and Dying*, 38,50,82,85,112.

<sup>16</sup> B.J. TYRRELL, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, 129.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 420.

<sup>18</sup> B.J. TYRRELL, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 421.

### 3. The Redemptive Power of Love: Source of our Healing

The very nature of God is love, and so redemption is a logical working out or intrinsic necessity of that love whose essence is ecstatic, namely, moving beyond and diffusing itself. For Abelard, the love of God revealed and present in Christ is the means as well as the motive of redemption<sup>20</sup>. To appreciate Abelard's contribution, it is perhaps best to begin by quoting in full the well known summary of Abelard's position that is found in his commentary on the Letter to the Romans:

Now it seems to us that we have been justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God in this way: through this unique act of grace manifested to us ó in that his Son has taken upon himself our nature and persevered therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death ó he has more fully bound us to himself by love; with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly Abelard is teaching that the divine love revealed in the cross has the power to create or generate love in human hearts. Paul S. Fiddes argues that Abelard is trying to express something more objective by his theory of redeeming love which consists in the inciting or infusion of love within us when it is received by the human mind. This kindling of love in the human heart is not simply an urge to copy the love of Christ by our own efforts but rather an empowerment of the Holy Spirit which Abelard identifies as God's love that has been poured into our hearts (cf. Romans 5:5). Fiddes took further Abelard's insight of infusing love as the exhibition of a restoration and the manifestation of a transformation.<sup>22</sup>

To say that the Spirit of love recreates, restores and transforms human beings is to encapsulate the healing dimension of love. For Abelard, sin is a matter of the rebellion of our hearts against God which results in a broken relationship to be

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 143.

<sup>21</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 140.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 154.

healed within us. In this sense, salvation must be a healing of our wills which are resisting God and this is operative in the transforming power of God's love revealed on the cross.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Abelard is far from saying that merely imitating the love of God displayed by Christ on the cross will result on our redemption. He is not teaching a merely exemplary view of atonement as some of his interpreters suggest. E. Mulcahy, in developing a relational soteriology of *communio* contends that redemption flows from the absolute gratuity of God's disinterested love. In other words, because God loves us, he heals us from the alienation and brokenness of sin so as to relate in freedom and love both with him and with our brothers and sisters. Ultimately, we are healed by love.<sup>24</sup> The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) also emphasizes love as the true principle of redemption: "it is the love to the end that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction" (CCC 616).

However, this saving love given through Jesus Christ, in his life, death, and resurrection is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is always and everywhere graciously present in Jesus' self-offering love to human beings.<sup>25</sup> That this salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit is taught explicitly in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). The text describes how Christians participate in Christ's death and resurrection through the indwelling of the life-giving Spirit:

Conformed to the image of the Son who is the firstborn of many brothers, the Christian man receives the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23) by which he is able to fulfil the new law of love. By this Spirit, who is the "pledge of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14), the whole man is inwardly renewed, right up to the

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 152.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. E. MULCAHY, *The Cause of our Salvation*, 428-429.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, 50.

redemption of the body (Romans 8:23). If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:11). The Christian is certainly bound both by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but as one who has been made partner in the paschal mystery, and as one who has been configured to the death of Christ, he will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

The Spirit of God is thought of as offering saving grace understood as sharing in Christ's death and resurrection. So according to this teaching, salvation is available in the self-giving of God to us in the Spirit. Karl Rahner explained that the Spirit who is at work in grace throughout human history is always directed towards Christ. For him, the meaning and purpose of the Spirit's work are expressed in God's saving love to the world in Jesus Christ. There is an inner link between Christ and the Spirit<sup>26</sup>.

The Spirit is oriented toward God's explicit self-giving in Christ. The Spirit always bears this goal of the Christ event within. Rahner speaks of this as an *entelechy* of the Spirit. This expression from Aristotelian philosophy refers to the inner ordering that directs an entity to its natural goal or completion. The Spirit has an inner ordering and direction toward the goal of God's self-giving in the Word made flesh.<sup>27</sup>

If the Spirit has an inner ordering that directs towards the goal of God's self-giving love to human beings and if this Spirit has been poured into our hearts (cf. Romans 5:5), then the boundless love of God revealed in the Christ event can break through the selfishness of our whole life. In other words, the Christ-directed Spirit is able to heal the web of broken lives in which human beings are enmeshed. Since healing is one of the gifts of the Spirit, the saving grace that is present and active in the Spirit can receive its explicit expression and embodiment in the history of our estrangement and alienation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, 57.

<sup>27</sup> D. EDWARDS, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, 58-59.

Rahner argues that there is an unlimited openness of the human spirit which can be understood as openness towards the Spirit of God present in self-offering love. To be human is to have an orientation toward the infinite, toward what is incomprehensibly mystery.<sup>29</sup> The human person according to Karl Rahner, is the event of a free, unmerited and forgiving, and absolute self-communication of God.<sup>30</sup> This self-offering to the whole of humankind is by definition salvation and when it is accepted in freedom then, salvation takes hold in the person through justifying grace. On the other hand, a person also may choose to reject God's self-communication and embraces sin. But, Rahner insists that the constant offer of God's self-communication is always there independently of the human response because of God's free choice that we should live in a world of grace.<sup>31</sup> This reality is part of a person's existential constitution as a human being. Therefore for Rahner,

salvation is always both transcendental and historical at the same time. It is transcendental because it is always concerned with God's self-communication and human acceptance or rejection of this, and this exchange can never be recaptured completely in reflection. It is always historical because transcendence occurs in and through historical events, and our response to God's self-communication finds expression in our concrete encounters with day to day life.<sup>32</sup>

Theologically, on the basis of Christian revelation, God's self-communication in the Spirit that surrounds and sustains the human person is grace and Rahner asserts that such experiences exist. Thus,

grace is simply the last depth and the radical meaning of all that the created person experiences, enacts and suffers in the process of developing and realising himself as a person. Where someone experiences laughter or tears, bears responsibility, stands by the truth, breaks through the egoism in his life with other people; where someone hopes against hope, faces the shallowness and stupidity of the daily rush and bustle with humour and patience, refusing to become embittered; where someone learns to be silent and in this inner silence lets the evil in his heart die rather than spread

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<sup>29</sup> D. EDWARDS, *What Are they Saying about Salvation*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 116.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> D. EDWARDS, *What Are they Saying about Salvation?*, 22.

outwards; in a word, wherever someone lives as he would like to live, combating his own selfishness and the continual temptation to inner despair ð there is the event of grace!<sup>33</sup>

When someone keeps quiet, even though he wants to defend her/himself from being unfairly treated, when someone forgives and obeys on account of God's forgiving and obedience love, when someone lets go of her/himself and no longer belongs to her/himself, when a person denies oneself and no longer has the disposing of oneself, when everything moves away from someone as if into an infinite distance, then she/he begin to live in the world of God himself, the world of grace, then healing is taking place, wholeness is taking flesh in the day to day life.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, this transcendental experience of God in the Holy Spirit is an experience of healing because in those ðlimit-situationsö we are able to accept the limitations as limits and in that way accept the fact that we are not completely determined by them. To know that we are broken but to perceive that there is something beyond this brokenness is to experience healing. Rahner called such experience of transcendence ðthe mysticism of everyday thingsö in which ðman in the midst of ordinary life is always beyond himself and beyond the particular object with which he is concerned.ö<sup>35</sup>

Everyday reality then becomes a pointer to this transcendental experience of healing when someone who is unable to balance his life's accounts, surrenders himself to God totally and hopes against all odds a reconciliation of his existence with the ultimate mystery that we call God. Healing is the experience of someone who is utterly lonely, from whom life is drained of its colour and for whom

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<sup>33</sup> E. MULCAHY, ðKarl Rahner on the Experience of Grace and its Hiddennessö, Class Notes, Tangaza College, 154.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, 87-89.

<sup>35</sup> K. RAHNER, *God and Revelation*, 197.

everything tangible on which he could rely fades into an infinite distance, but who does not run away from this loneliness which is felt as the last moment before drowning, but endures it with resignation in an ultimate hope.<sup>36</sup>

Wholeness is the experience of a person who manages to forgive, though he/she gains no reward for it and his/her silent pardon is taken for granted by the other party. It is the experience of someone who,

suddenly notices how the small rivulet (a very small river) of his life winds through the desert of banal existence, apparently aimlessly and with the terrifying possibility of completely drying up. And yet he hopes, without knowing how, that this rivulet will find its way to the infinite expanse of the ocean, even though this is concealed from him by the dark sand dunes apparently stretched out endlessly before him.<sup>37</sup>

Concrete experiences of the Spirit that are healing oriented in the midst of the ordinary routine of life which enables humankind to share in God's love, truth, and freedom and to be united with one another exist and should not be overlooked or suppressed according to Rahner, for in them, God is present with his liberating and healing grace. In the very words of Rahner,

When the fall into the darkness of death is accepted with resignation as the dawn of incomprehensible promise, when the fragmentary experience of love, beauty and joy is felt and accepted as promise of love, beauty, and joy purely and simply, and not regarded with deep cynicism and scepticism as facile consolation in the face of ultimate darkness, when the bitter, disappointing, and fleeting monotony of ordinary life is borne with serene resignation up to its accepted end out of a strength whose ultimate source cannot be grasped and so cannot be brought under our control when we get away from ourselves unconditionally and experience this capitulation as the true victory, when falling becomes standing firm, when despair is accepted and mysteriously experienced as assurance without any easy consolation, when man entrusts all his knowledge and all his questions to the silent and all-shattering mystery which is loved more than all our individual perceptions that turn us into petty lords, when we practise our death in the course of ordinary life and then attempt to live in the way that we wish to approach death, calmly and with resignation, then God is present with his liberating grace.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> K. RAHNER, *God and Revelation*, 201.

<sup>37</sup> K. RAHNER, *God and Revelation*, 202.

<sup>38</sup> K. RAHNER, *God and Revelation*, 202-203.

To sum up, we can say that, the mysticism of everyday life is in fact always the experience of the Holy Spirit, called in theological language grace, or God's self communication in love. It is an experience that liberates, transforms, and provides quite new horizons of life, which mark the innermost attitude of reconciliation with God and with our fellow human beings. Therefore, we can say that Rahner's understanding of grace resonates well with the healing of inner brokenness. In the following section, we shall look at the healing of relationships or reconciliation.

#### **4. Reconciliation**

##### ***4.1 The Journey of Forgiveness***

The darkest chaos that loves faces is the human personalities. No one could force love and forgiveness upon another because the blockage to relationship lies in the attitude of the parties involved. If there is to be reconciliation, the forgiver must enable the offender to accept his offer and win him or her back into fellowship. True forgiveness aims at the healing of relationship.<sup>39</sup> Forgiveness is a creative act that has the power to change human attitudes towards one another. The dynamic of reconciliation is two-way traffic:

For true reconciliation there must be a movement from both sides. Naturally the offender has to move in sorrow and repentance towards the person he has hurt, but the forgiver also needs to move and experience change within himself, even when he is totally willing to forgive. In human acts of forgiveness this movement is often partly a matter of recognizing that he himself has contributed something to the breach. In situations where an established relationship has been broken the forgiver may have been the one mainly injured, but in human relationships, no one is entirely 'innocent party'<sup>40</sup>

Thus the journey of forgiveness unfolds in two stages: discovery and forgiveness. In the journey of forgiveness, the forgiver has to face up to the broken

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 172.

<sup>40</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 173.

relationship by calling to mind the injury done to him. This memorial of the offence is an act of imaginative empathy with his offender.<sup>41</sup> It is only then that he or she can go and say 'I forgive you'. Now the offender, after being shaken into the awareness of what he or she has done, must in turn embark upon his own journey of discovery and sorrow over his offence.<sup>42</sup>

After this stage of discovery comes the voyage of endurance. Here the forgiver 'must absorb the hostility of the other, to bear it and receive it into himself.'<sup>43</sup> By awakening the sleeping wrong through the offering of forgiveness, he has exposed himself to attack, to aggressive reactions on the part of the offender who might be resentful at having the offence recalled. A scenario likely to happen is the offender's rejection of the offence either by justifying himself or blaming the other. At this level, the forgiver is to resist the temptation of reacting to the hostility of the other or arguing the case or else accuse the other. In so doing, he/she neutralizes the venom of his/her anger.<sup>44</sup>

Through the twofold journey of action and submission, provoking and absorbing, the forgiver is actually discovering how to win the offender back into relationship. Through identification with the feelings of the other, he is learning how to enable the other to accept his forgiveness.<sup>45</sup>

Forgiveness is a shattering experience for both parties. It is gift that can be accepted or declined depending on how the offender experiences the forgiver's attitude to be: either judgemental or accepting. All in all, this twofold journey of discovery and endurance or of action and submission can be traced back to the life and death of Jesus. The voyage of discovery corresponds to the incarnation which is

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 173-174.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 174.

<sup>43</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 174.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 174.

<sup>45</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 174.

Jesus' participation in the alienation of humanity caused by sin. Though sinless, his solidarity with human beings took him to the lowest point of utter forsakenness. He enters the realm of death where all relationships are broken.<sup>46</sup> Thus, at the cross he utters God's great offer of forgiveness to human beings: "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34). "Forgiveness is nothing less than a voyage into the dark void of the guilty life."<sup>47</sup> In this sense, the cross is revelatory; it unveils the vicious nature of human sin, which is the crucifixion of love.

Further, this is what death looks like when humankind is estranged from the source of its life in God. As the forgiver plumbs the depths of the offenders' lives, he provokes the guilty into awareness of the wrongs they would prefer to hide. The initiative he takes in identifying with them calls for a response.<sup>48</sup>

This pattern of offering God's forgiveness of sins and acceptance into the coming kingdom of God is characteristic of Jesus' entire ministry. He sees this ministry as accomplishing the work of reconciliation of his Father (2 Corinthians 5:18). To those who showed sorrow for their sinfulness he announced that they were forgiven by the power of God (Luke 5:18-26; 7:36-50). Jesus reconciles the adulterous woman (John 8). He told stories about the merciful Father in his account of the prodigal son and left as his dying legacy that blood "which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Jesus identified with sinners; he went out of his way to mix socially with beggars, tax collectors and prostitutes. By accepting them as friends and equals Jesus has taken away their shame, humiliation and guilt. By showing them that they mattered to him as people he gave them a sense of dignity and released them from their captivity (John 13:25; Luke 7:38-39). In reality, Jesus' table sharing with

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 175.

<sup>47</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 175.

<sup>48</sup> P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 176.

sinner was a form of forgiveness of their sins. In this broad sense, Jesus was a sacrament of divine forgiveness to many of those who met him. His table fellowship and friendship with sinners bears witness to the centrality of forgiveness in his ministry.<sup>49</sup>

Since forgiveness is a process of healing in a person's life, it requires from the parties involved to come back into the relationship and to accept one another for atonement to take place. Quite often, we attempt to avoid the pain in the journey of reconciliation because forgiveness makes us weak and vulnerable to the attacks of others. We tend to think that we are losing ourselves and that people will see us as an easy target and trample on us if we give ourselves away in forgiveness. Here lies the problem of accepting forgiveness for oneself because of the real blockages we find on our way.<sup>50</sup>

#### ***4.2 Difficulties in Forgiving Others***

Human forgiveness means that the person forgiving overcomes his grudge and resentment.<sup>51</sup> In this way, his own heart is freed and relieved from the chain of causality. Through forgiveness, the vicious cycle of hatred and violence is broken. Without forgiveness, we remain in the power and control of whoever injured us for they will limit us emotionally, physically, developmentally, and spiritually. A Chinese proverb says that the person who seeks revenge should dig two graves. It required a great strength to forgive someone for it means giving up the disappointment and the resentment to which we are clung.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 176.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. P.S. FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 187.

<sup>51</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 121.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 124-125.

Though we really have a reason to be angry and aggrieved for a profound injustice done to us, that which remains engraved in our memory, sometimes in our body, and certainly in our psyche, yet, we can choose not to cling to these feelings. Brooding over feelings of resentment is not healthy. Therefore, there is the need to relinquish and surrender the hard and bitter feelings that rob us of our freedom. Forgiveness is often difficult because something in us wants to hold on to our pain and our justified bitterness. It is like a dark treasure that we wrongly consider to be precious. We cherish it.<sup>53</sup>

The other person has been unfair and unjust to us. We dwell on it. We retreat into a corner, ensconce ourselves in it, and nurture our wounds, making ourselves impenetrable to any thought of forgiveness and love. We nurture the gloomy mystery of our pain and bitterness with a kind of addiction that wreaks havoc. Indeed, in this way we destroy our own life and ruin our happiness. This is also the point where quite a few people get stuck in their spiritual life that they cannot forgive. They turn around in an unhealthy circle of endless repetitions to the point of becoming neurotic. Something that happened twenty years ago is dished up with a fervour and satisfaction as if it happened yesterday. Resentments have been kept alive and nurtured for decades a vicious cycle, a deadly prison. We have turned around in that cycle so often, but we cannot get out of it; the leap into freedom keeps eluding us.<sup>54</sup>

The lack of forgiveness can also be due to a personal failure for which we blame someone else. If the other person had treated us differently, it would have turned out for us successfully. We blame so much those who thwarted our promising plans such that we are locked up in our disappointment. Being hurt in our honour and sensitivity we lose face and feel humiliated and this keeps our wound growing larger and larger. Nobody can expect forgiveness from us. But the truth is without forgiveness we remained prisoners in our cocooned world of hatred and violence,

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<sup>53</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 125.

<sup>54</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 125-126.

“caught in the demonic circle of endless repetitions, in a sterile and one-dimensional world far from God.”<sup>55</sup>

Not to forgive means to live in a hellish world without happiness and blessing. The renewal of a person or a nation or a community lies in forgiveness which is a breakthrough in “the deceptive enchantment of evil” and at the same time a liberation of enemies from sterile isolation. It opens up a new possibility of being truly human and peters out estranged relationships and severed communication. It breaks isolation and restores lost contact with our fellow men and women and with reality. Forgiveness opens up real futures and creates new connections. The darkness of concentration camps, ethnic cleansing, inquisition, capital punishment, humiliation, failure, defeat, misfortune and unhappiness would have vanished before the light of forgiveness if the heart of reconciliation lives in the heart of all people.<sup>56</sup>

An unforgiving heart is poisoned by bitterness and resentment. Needless to say such a heart is incapable to love as Jesus understands it, love that “does not brood over injury” (1 Corinthians 13:5). The act of forgiveness required humility, coming down from the throne in an attitude of inner truthfulness. Sometimes reconciliation is impossible because of the pride and haughtiness of the wronged person.<sup>57</sup> “Forgiveness is not a lack of backbone, a tendency to avoid any confrontation, without conviction and without true connectedness, an indulgence stemming from a lack of courage. Nor is forgiveness a harmless *na vité* which

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<sup>55</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 126.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 126-127.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 127.

waters things down, pretends there has been no harm and tries to smooth things over.<sup>58</sup>

Forgiveness appeals to our generosity and it is a hard work in our heart and mind. We must be willing and courageous and tenacious enough to forgive time and again: it is a process. We have to forgive many times before our heart becomes truly free. Peter Van Breemen suggested three phases in this process:

First, there must grow in us a fundamental willingness to forgive. In the second phase the desire to forgive grows, but it all takes place in our intellect and will power; the heart is not yet tuned in. That means that we are on the way, that we have reached a higher level, but not yet the goal itself. Then gradually we move into the third phase in which the forgiveness really comes from the heart, in which the bitterness disappears and we welcome much more transparent.<sup>59</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

We all need forgiveness for forgiveness is the completion of love. In forgiveness love reaches its utmost purity, depth, and strength; and in this way forgiveness generates life.<sup>60</sup> This new life is a freedom from worry about our own image and prestige, from the fear of losing face. Forgiveness liberates and enriches our life. This is all the more true for God's love: "For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

In genuine forgiveness, we really give up our pretensions, relying on a new conviction: "With you is forgiveness and on this we live" (Psalm 130:4). "Love proves its authenticity in fidelity, but reaches its completion in forgiveness."<sup>61</sup> This

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<sup>58</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 124.

<sup>59</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 128.

<sup>60</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 60.

<sup>61</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 65.

profound truth which is revealed through the life and death of Jesus applies also to human love.

In our personal reconciliations, peace takes hold in our small world, a peace which then expands to reconcile and heal well beyond the confines of our own hearts. At the same time, some reconciliation and reparation of the larger world occurs. It begins when, in our hearts, a little bit of the kingdom of God comes through to our troubled world. It ripples out in ever-widening circles of forgiveness, reconciliation, and love.<sup>62</sup>

All these are grace. It is not our own strength that heals the broken pieces of our lives. Forgiving is the most divine thing that happens with our cooperation. The acceptance of forgiveness is a gradual process until the heart of the person *forgiven* thaws, loses its protective crust, and is fully revived.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 66.

<sup>63</sup> P. VAN BREEMEN, *The God Who Won't Let Go*, 121.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Today much is written on the experience of woundedness, on the need for healing, and on prayer for healing. Many people recognize that the Lord is a healer, even though they turn to idols of power, wealth, or egoism. As Israel's disease resulted from infidelity, so do many diseases today – regardless of whether they are diseases within one's self, or in relationship with others, or with God.<sup>1</sup>

Hosea advises us that healing from diseases of whatever kind cannot be sought in and for itself (confer Hosea 6:1). Rather, healing is offered in the context of a relationship, in the fidelity of covenant, and in the acceptance of Yahweh's love.<sup>2</sup> Christian mystical spirituality elevates love to the highest levels of experience because it is the basis of union, wholeness, liberation and ultimate meaning. It is the antidote to the problem of alienation between humankind and God, between humans and humans, and between humans and nature. "The unitive and healing nature of love addresses this tridimensional crisis of alienation at the religious, social, and ecological level."<sup>3</sup>

Estrangement from our true being is one of humankind's most ancient experiences. The Judeo-Christian tradition traces it back to the beginning of the human race in the Genesis account of the Fall of Humanity. In the story of Adam

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<sup>1</sup> A.M. SWEET, "A Theology of Healing", 149.

<sup>2</sup> A.M. SWEET, "A Theology of Healing", 149.

<sup>3</sup> J. SAHADAT, "Mystical Union and Reconciliation", 55.

and Eve, we are told of the experience of estrangement from God which is so characteristic of the human condition today. This experience of alienation from God stemmed from the egocentric will of an individual who wittingly opposed the will of God. Such opposition is commonly known as sin, and it is reflected at the social level. It involved the alienation of human beings from God, the alienation of human beings from their own psychological integrity, as they now feel the shame of their own nakedness. As Cain killed Abel, it involved an alienation of one human from another.<sup>4</sup>

The problem of brokenness cannot be properly dealt with unless there is a breakthrough to the spiritual dimension of our being to awaken a sense of wholeness and reconciliation. As long as one is alienated from one's true being, one cannot tackle the crisis of brokenness with the hope of an ultimate victory. Since the underlying factor in brokenness is egocentricity, a return to one's true being must first begin with the death of the selfish ego. In order to fully realize this ego's dying, we must undergo a *metanoia*.<sup>5</sup> There is a being who has overcome the alienation of human beings from God by sharing his Abba's experience with his brothers and sisters and by giving his life on the cross. Such being is Jesus of Nazareth who has joined his fellow human beings to himself in love so that he can bring them with him to God who is their destiny. The whole of creation is meant to share in Jesus's task of unifying all reality by the power of his Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

It is precisely the divine self-gift that provides the most basic source of healing for the experience of being genuinely loved by another enables the required

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<sup>4</sup> B. COOKE, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 175.

<sup>5</sup> J. SAHADAT, *ōMystical Union and Reconciliationö*, 57-58.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. B. COOKE, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 175.

shift of conversion from I-centredness to Christ-centredness. This experience helps create our identity and heal our insecurities. It is a state of consciousness completely open to hearing and responding to the divine self-revelation. Mystics through the centuries remind us of the possibility of this existential breakthrough from an I-centred life to a Christ-centred life, that is from inner brokenness to reconciliation with the Father and a recognition of our brotherly and sisterly relationship with all God's children.<sup>7</sup> The cure to the malady of brokenness is to be found in reconciliation which is initiated by the love of God in Jesus Christ that transforms the lives of people who experience it and make them into his instruments for the wholeness of humanity.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus' ministry brought about reconciliation with God, the source of all life, of which healing was a sign. It is only in Christ that we know of God's determined love to humankind. Thus salvation is present whenever healing is experienced. Theologically, healing and salvation are linked in the paradigm of creation and salvation. In the final analysis, it is all due to God's grace.

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<sup>7</sup> J. SAHADAT, *“Mystical Union and Reconciliation”*, 58.

<sup>8</sup> J. SAHADAT, *“Mystical Union and Reconciliation”*, 59.

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