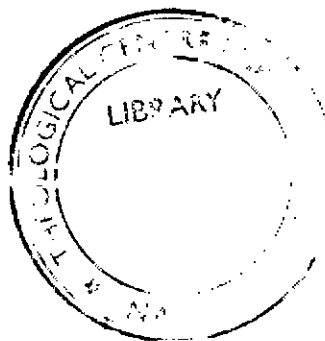


TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

YAGO ABELEDO MADUEÑO, M.Afr.

THE SIGN OF JONAH
Mission as Travelling in the Belly of a Paradox



Moderator

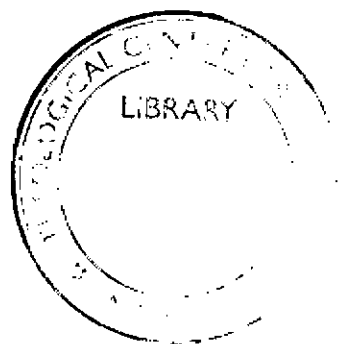
Fr. Luc Lefief, M.Afr.

A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Bachelor Of Arts in Religious Studies

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DEDICATION

To the One who sustains me from all eternity; the One who from Her/him womb calls me to carry the sins of the world; the very One who calls me to take them away; the One who says "you are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased"



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Thanks to Alex Zanotelli, a "living prophet", always ready to welcome me in his "being one" with the crucified masses of Korogocho. Thanks to Daniele Moschetti, his faithful disciple. Thanks to all people of the slums of Korogocho, Mukuru-Kayaba, Twatasha and Kawama; they showed me Christ "in the least of my sisters and brothers".

Thanks to Tangaza College for giving me the chance to write this paper. Thanks to the J&P commission with whom I walked for four years with the goal of bringing our academics closer to the most marginalised. Special thanks to Sr. Loretta Brennan for her total support and for her eagerness to enter into my journey. Thanks to Tim Redmond, for his understanding and generosity in allowing me to extend the wording of my essay.

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I am indebted to the whole society of the Missionaries of Africa, especially to my community in the formation house: I thank them for their concern and support. Special thanks to Jean Paul Cirhakarhula, for his compassion and determination to walk with me in the crucial last days of the story of my essay; thanks to Evariste Some, for his "being servant of all" and to Luc Kola for his yearning to "bring people together" Thanks to my formators Remi Vande Walle for incarnating the God of "and it was good". Thanks to Tony Baaladong and François Bigeziki for having the courage to form us while not hiding their vulnerability. Finally, thanks to my moderator Luc Lefief; in him the God who allows and respects, the God of self-limited love, took flesh. All these people have been "annunciations" in my life, signs of God's presence and concern to fashion me in His/her image and likeness. I am grateful to all.

INTRODUCTION

This essay is a story in itself. It is the story of a search for meaning, an adventure into life, into the apparent “meaningless” of life. This essay emerges from the suffering of the masses and my personal suffering. It is the story that emerges from emptiness, from disfiguration, from nothingness, from being a scapegoat, from being the one who carries the sins of the world. At the same time, this essay is rooted into ‘my being Church’, into making sense of our difficulties to accept the very final wisdom of God, the wisdom of the Cross. It is the story of trying to fill a gap, the one between the African Church and the Crucified Africa, It is the story of a rebellion, the story of a fight in faith with the Creator; it is a search in honesty. It is the story of surrender and of being surrendered; it is the story of Job. And it is with this disposition that the reader must understand the essay.

The reader is encouraged to enter into his/her powerlessness and from there to journey with me; because in fact this essay is about exploration. It is the adventure of theology, the adventure of entering into the realm of mystery. It is for this reason that I invite you to embark on this journey. It is the journey of a complaint, a cry, the cry of the crucified people, but a people that is alive.

In this journey we shall start analysing the situation of today’s Africa, recognizing it to be a Paschal Continent, but first and foremost a crucified continent. Next we shall analyse the reality of the Church and her stand in front of the crucifixion of Yahweh’s suffering Servant today.

Here the reader is invited to enter into his own reality, to discern his “Paschality” but mainly his/her crucifixion; to face what is wounded and unhealed within

himself/herself, to have the courage to face his/her dark night, and to ask for God. This will put us into the right perspective, with a thirst for meaning. We begin the journey of Job.

In the second chapter we commence our exploration, our dialogue with God. We start our search for meaning. We shall move from the microcosm to the macrocosm, in a radical attempt to see the print of God in reality, especially in the one marked by violence and destruction. Here the reader is invited to look around, to re-discover the grandeur of nature, the grandeur of the divine imprinted in the very logic of all that exists. The second half of this chapter makes us enter into the mystery of suffering as present in humanity. Again the reader is invited to face this reality, and through the tools of cosmology, sociology and psychology to make sense of it.

Once we have faced not only our suffering but also the one of humanity we shall be invited to move unto the realm of faith. Here we reach the third Chapter. Firstly, we shall unveil the presence of God in nature and in the evolutionary process; we shall attempt to make sense of His/her presence in the middle of the chaotic stages of evolution. Then we shall expose these findings to our Christian faith. We shall walk with Jesus Christ and see how the God of mercy and compassion, through his incarnated life, entered into and lived to the full the destructive dimension of life, in order to transform it. With Jesus as our reference and brother we shall attempt to “cross the threshold of mystery” into the inner life of the Trinity. We shall consider the eternal drama between the three divine persons. Finally we shall conclude this chapter dealing with the reality of Evil. The reader is invited to enter into his/her experience of faith and to evaluate what suffering means

for him/her, and his/her faith in a paschal God? Other questions are about evil, sin and about the transcendent/ immanent God.

The last section is the one on empowerment. Here we are invited to enter into our dynamic and relational God, because S/he is the source of our mission. This section is entitled “pangs of birth” because, in fact, you are invited to enter into this attitude. This section is an invitation to prayer. You are invited to enter in Prayer. It is the time for communion, for mixing two stories, yours and God’s, because in fact they are one. It is an invitation to reconcile the whole of yourself to God; it is an invitation to transformation, to incarnate in your life the Sign of Jonah, the very pattern Jesus gave us. So let us start our journey moving hand in hand with God. Do not be afraid!!! A “cloud of witnesses” all through the essay will support you. Remember that He is with you always, to the end of time!!! Good journey and courage!!! We shall meet at the end of the essay.

Chapter 1

The Church and Today's African Matrix

"In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message 'good news' for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where lie the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings? [...] In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected."

Ecclesia in Africa, 40²

1. Introduction

This chapter wants to put us in front of African reality as it presents itself to us. We are living in an oppressed continent that passes through a crucified situation. Simultaneously, Africa is in a process of pangs of birth, resisting out of the wealth of its cultural values and priceless human qualities. We intend to analyse today's African situation as a continent where life and death are closely intermingled. Then we shall reflect upon the challenge that the crucified dimension of today's Africa presents to the Church. From there we shall evaluate the stand of the Church in front

² JOHN PAUL II, *"Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa"*, 1995.

of various statements put forward in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in Africa”. We shall conclude this first chapter acknowledging our need for nurturing a critical consciousness.

2. Africa, A Paschal Continent

This essay is the outcome of a reflection in faith on Africa’s life story. From a Christian viewpoint, Africa is a paschal continent. Africa is holy ground where one must take off his/her sandals. Africa is a mystery where darkness and light, sadness and joy, chaos and new order, death and life, passion and resurrection survive together; a continent that invites us to enter into the paschal mystery. It is a continent of clay, exploited, vulnerable, weak, broken in many ways ... All the same, it is a continent where the eternal light comes through in a mysterious and exceptional way. It is a continent of Grace where God reveals him/herself in his/her foolishness, wisdom, splendour and beauty. It is a place of God’s visitation, an invitation to enter into his/her logic³, a privileged encounter of growth towards a full humanity.

Let us start by exposing some “key facts” that will help us to understand the real issue under reflection.

2.1. A Place of Joy

There is a good consensus among palaeontologists and anthropologists that Africa is the cradle where human evolution began and that it is also the scene where

³ Whenever we mention “logic”, whether of God or of reality, we allude to a particular way of interpreting the course of events in the universe. Logic has to be understood in the post-Hegelian sense and not in the rectilinear and causal way where contradictions rule out one another. Ever since Hegel who introduced a dialectical way of understanding reality, contradictory realities are seen as having in them the energy to ascend to a higher reality, where opposed polarities get resolved. Jung will speak of the harmonisation of opposites, with integration as the outcome of it. (Note from the moderator)

humans survived and thrived for most of their time on earth.⁴ Africa plays a central role in our evolutionary story. Africa, and all it stands for, is imprinted in the inner soul of every human being.⁵ It is for this reason that Africa unveils to humanity its inner goodness, being our living reminder of who we are. Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the existence of God the Creator and of the spiritual world. The primary and most fundamental fact you note in Africa is the thirst for God felt by her peoples.⁶ Africans manifest love and respect for life; they love children, and joyfully welcome them as gifts of God. They have a profound sense of togetherness and community, not only with the living but also with the ancestors.⁷ The African sense of solidarity and community life is held to be fundamental.⁸ In words of the African Synod Fathers, "the sons and daughters of Africa love life."⁹ It is Africa that offers to us the core of Christian values: hope, joy, peace, harmony, love and unity. In sum, Africa is a real humanizing potential.

Unfortunately, during the last centuries Africa has become the major victim of humanity's struggle for self-identification. As humanity moves into self-refusal it

⁴ D. O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith. Rediscovering God in Our Great Story*, 151.

⁵ "Africa is where the human story begins, and when Africans tell stories about the ancestors, they touch very deep chords, a type of primal resonance that is very ancient indeed [...] Africa is where we first walked upright. Africa is where we first used our hands and minds to fashion tools and create ancient art. It is in Africa that we first lifted our hearts and minds to the embracing sense of divine Spirit. It is in Africa that we discovered fire, speech, and spirituality. Africa is a museum of the human spirit, a treasury of all that is sacred and dear to the human heart." O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 152

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 47

"The religion of Africa is cosmic. It is based on imagination, participation, music, prophetic outrage, and exodus symbols". M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 160.

⁷ "They believe intuitively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them." JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43

⁸ "In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family." JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43

⁹ "It is my ardent hope and prayer that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation to individualism, which is so alien to its best traditions." JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 42

cannot do other but to reject its very African evolutionary origins. That has had disfiguring consequences for Africa.

2.2. A Place of "Man's Inhumanity to Man"

O'Murchú points out that more than any other part of the planet, Africa represents the woundedness of creation.¹⁰ The Africa we know today is, in a great measure, a tortured continent, brutally exploited by outsiders, and internally paralyzed by ethnic and tribal tensions. Few studies of the continent leave much room for hope.

According to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2003¹¹, most of the countries that were poorer in 2000 than in 1990, are in sub-Saharan Africa. In the 2003 Human Development Index¹², ranking 175 countries, almost all of the "low human development" countries are found there: 30 out of a total of 34. Life expectancy at birth in Sub-Saharan Africa is 46.5 years¹³; in the countries of the so-called first World it is 77.1 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, the devastation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is responsible for the declines in the 2003 Human Development Index. UNAIDS indicates that the 70% of the world's AIDS cases are in Africa. According to recent statistics of the World Bank¹⁴ more than 200 million Africans have no access to health services; every single day 3,000

¹⁰ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 159

¹¹ *Human Development Report 2003. Millennium Development Goals: A pact among nations to end human poverty*. Oxford University Press: NY, 2003.

¹² The Index, developed in 1990, takes stock of fundamental aspects of human development in countries both rich and poor. The Index is a composite measure of life expectancy, education and income per-person.

¹³ Life expectancy has fallen dramatically with HIV/AIDS incidence rates as high as one in five in some countries.

¹⁴ *Can Africa claim the 21st century?* (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2000).

African Poverty at the Millennium. Causes, complexities and challenges. (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, March 2001).

people die from malaria in Africa; three out of four of them are children. More than 2 million infants die annually before reaching their first birthday. Every year 1.5 million Africans die from tuberculosis and another 8 million are newly infected. 124 million of those up to age 39 years are at risk of dying before 40. More than 250 million Africans lack access to safe water. More than 140 million youth are illiterate, and less than one-quarter of poor, rural females attend primary school. More than 40 percent of its 600 million people live below the internationally recognized poverty line of \$1 a day, with incomes averaging of just \$0.65 a day... And this list is endless.

All these statistics express the reality of an unbearable situation. Let us remember that statistics are not just numbers. Behind them we find more than faceless people. Statistics deal with human beings, with masses that are innocently and anonymously murdered. They are the African peasants and slum-dwellers, children, women, and old people who die slowly day after day.

In front of these facts we can firmly say with Jean-Marc Éla: "nothing can blind us to this brutal fact: Africa today is crucified."¹⁵ In other words, Africa is collapsing and turning into "a school for the ills of humanity."¹⁶ Engelbert Mveng speaks of the African as suffering anthropological poverty, an indigence of being, the legacy of centuries of slavery and colonization.¹⁷ O'Murchú comments that

¹⁵ J.M. ÉLA, *Christianity and Liberation in Africa in Paths of African Theology*, 146.

¹⁶ *Le Monde*, 28 February 1990. This extract has been taken from the article of J.M. ÉLA *Looking to a new Africa* in (www.monde-diplomatique.fr)

¹⁷ "When persons are deprived not only of goods and possessions of a material, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural, or sociological order, but of everything that makes up the foundation of their being-in-the-world... When persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions (that is, when they are robbed of their own ways of living and existing)... then we can say that they are undergoing an "anthropological poverty." E. MVENG, *Impoverishment and Liberation*" in *Paths of African Theology*, 156.

Africa, more than anywhere else on earth, bears the scars of "man's inhumanity to man." Africa exemplifies the broken, battered body of Christ and of humanity.¹⁸ This painful reality, of the God of life being crucified, becomes, for us Christians, the sign of the times. As the assassinated Ignacio Ellacuría once said: "the great sign of the times, the current presence of God among us, is always the crucified people, the historical continuation of the Servant of Yahweh, of Christ crucified."¹⁹

Consequently, taking this situation into account we are invited to ask ourselves what our stand is as African missionary Church.²⁰

3. Africa, a Challenge to the Church

3.1. A Prophetic Church?

"The Church must continue to exercise her prophetic role and be the voice of the voiceless."²¹ This was one of the key propositions of the African Synod Fathers. My personal missionary experience tells me that we are very far from fulfilling this goal.²² Nairobi city is a clear example of this.²³ A. Shorter, being aware of this reality, makes the following point:

¹⁸ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 155

¹⁹ I. ELLACURÍA quoted in: J. SOBRINO, *Systematic Christology: Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God*, in *Systematic Theology. Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 143.

²⁰ The African Church is a missionary Church. This was highlighted by the Pope in 'Ecclesia in Africa': "God's salvific plan for Africa is at the origin of the growth of the Church on the African continent. But since by Christ's will the Church is by her nature missionary, it follows that the Church in Africa is itself called to play an active role in God's plan of salvation. For this reason I have often said "the Church in Africa is a missionary Church and a mission Church." General Audience Address (Aug. 21, 1985), 3; Insegnamenti VIII/2 (1985), 512. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 29.

²¹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 70

²² Laurenti Magosa makes the following statement five years after the Synod: "Africa's social, economic and political problems appear daunting. The continent remains a field where huge tragedies are played out, where violations of human rights and blatant disregard for life and the environment increasingly seem to be the order of the day. In this situation, the Synod wanted the African Church to be an agent of radical change, beginning, of course, with its own house. Yet, apart from the occasional Episcopal pastoral letter or statement condemning a specific atrocity or evil, it is difficult to assert that the African Church has determined justice and peace to be unambiguously and

"It is a source of sadness and incomprehension to poor African Christians that their Church seems to have no relevance towards their struggle for survival."²⁴

I believe the Church is not blind to this situation when John Paul II, considering the new challenges society presents, was able to affirm: "A serious deepening of the faith is thus urgently needed"²⁵

If this is true, we are invited to ask ourselves: why is it so difficult for the Church to face this reality? Why does the Church avoid or is slow to encountering today's crucified masses? Jon Sobrino expresses very plainly the reason why, where he says: "the crucified peoples show us what we are; we tend to ignore it, cover it up, or distort it, because it simply terrifies us."²⁶ This situation puts the credibility of our faith into question.

systemically among its primary pastoral priorities." *Africanews - Koinonia Media Centre*, Nairobi, Kenya. 1999.

²³ This view is developed in the different articles of: *The Slums: A Challenge to Evangelisation*. Tangaza Occasional Papers, N°14. Francesco Pierli and Yago Abeledo, editors (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002) Fr. Alex Zanotelli, Comboni missionary, inserted in Korogocho slum for 12 years, reflects as follows about the Church's stand: "I am profoundly convinced that we are radically betraying our faith. It is clear that our faith doesn't touch reality." Alex Zanotelli, "Living among them: The challenges of Insertion," in Tangaza Symposium: "The Slums: A Pastoral Challenge," November, 2001. His last words to the Exodus group (Pastoral Agents Nairobi Slums Network) were: "The Church in Nairobi is living in Capital Sin."

²⁴A. SHORTER, *Religious Poverty in Africa*, 8.

"At this particular time in history, the Church is showing itself to be illiterate as far as reading God's presence in today's crucified people is concerned. We can see how the Church is simply abandoning the crucified Christ in history as the disciples did with the historical Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were in front of the same challenge amidst the reality of Jesus' passion and crucifixion. Their response was clear: they abandoned Jesus. The disciples neither understood the suffering of Jesus nor were they prepared to share it in any way. (Mark 14:27) They slept when Jesus expects them to watch with him in his loneliest moment (Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:37; Luke 22:46); Peter even denied him three times (Matt. 26: 69-75), and all the disciples fled in the face of the imminent danger that Jesus was facing from the authorities (Mark 14:50), eventually he was abandoned at the time of his passion and crucifixion."

²⁵ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 76

²⁶ J. SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 49.

3.2. Question of Credibility

Jean Paul II is concerned about the relevance and credibility of the Church's message in Africa. According to the Synod Fathers this is the main question facing the Church in Africa.²⁷

The Church never lives in a vacuum. We live always in the midst of a cultural reality, which is thick and dense and powerful.²⁸ Richard Niebuhr points out that the relationship between cultural reality and the Church is endlessly unsettled, problematic, and under negotiation.²⁹ Today's world has created a set of cultural values that are aggressively antihuman. Brueggemann argues that our consumerist society has entered into our way of being. He states: "our consciousness has been claimed by false fields of perception and idolatrous systems of language and rhetoric."³⁰ We are in fact losing our sense of identity as Christians. Our consumer culture is organized against history. There is a depreciation of memory and a ridicule of hope. The main goal of today's impersonal empire is to create numbness, especially numbness about death.³¹ The African Church, influenced by this trend, is showing to be numb, and with this attitude is becoming unconsciously "rejecter" of the people it is meant to serve.³² Chaos, crucifixion, disorientation, seem to be taboos and are not permitted a hearing. The Church may celebrate the

²⁷ "Either tacitly or aloud - but always forcefully - we are being asked, Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live?" PAUL VI, *Evangeliu Nuntiandi*, 67. Quoted in: *Ecclesia in Africa*, 21.

²⁸ W. BRUEGGEMANN, *Texts that linger words that explode. Listening to prophetic voices*, 73.

²⁹ H.-R. NIEBUHR, *Christ and Culture* (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1951)

³⁰ BRUEGGEMANN, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 11.

³¹ BRUEGGEMANN, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 12.

³² "Africa is rejected not only by outsiders, but also by their own political, economic, and social rulers. What is more, to many ordinary African Christians the African theologians are included among the "rejecters" of their own people." J.-M. WALIGGO, *African Christology in a situation of suffering in Jesus in African Christianity. Experimentation and diversity in African Christology*, 103.

status quo, i.e., the unfair way the powerful arrange life.³³ Brueggemann takes up the same thread: "there are times when Church and cultural context can live in some kind of mutuality; but this is not one of those times, for gospel rootage requires resistance to such aggressive anti-humanism."³⁴ Today's empiric consciousness poses acute questions and challenges for a distinctive community of faith.³⁵

3.3. A Time for Critical Consciousness

Let us remember the words of our Pope: "The Church in Africa, in order to evangelise, must begin by being evangelised herself... She needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe..."³⁶ At this point of history the Church is called to go through a period of critical consciousness.³⁷ The basic challenge the Church is facing is one of faith. Can she read the signs of the times? Is she enabled to see behind the visible the invisible reality of Jesus' cross? Do we really believe that Jesus is crucified in today's Africa? As Jean-Marc Éla says "it is Jesus himself who walks unrecognised today in the African people."³⁸

The Church is actually facing a real test: Is she wanting to comply with the values, tastes and priorities of the world, or is she ready to become the Church of the poor – making her own the struggles and concerns of the victims. The Church is called to a profound discernment.

³³ BRUEGGEMANN, *The Message of the Psalms*, 25-8.

³⁴ BRUEGGEMANN, *Texts that linger. Words that explode*, 73.

³⁵ "The church is vis-à-vis with a different empire: the "money-economy" of western post-industrial technology that sweeps all before it, and that seemingly cannot be resisted. The reality of this enterprise, rooted in commodity, aimed at satiation, and unhesitant about brutality, poses acute questions and challenges for a distinctive community of faith." BRUEGGEMANN, *Texts that linger. Words that explode*, 86.

³⁶ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 76

³⁷ J.-M. ÉLA, *African Cry*, 134.

³⁸ ÉLA, *Christianity and Liberation in Africa*, 143.

At the level of commitment and self-understanding the Church must ask herself how faithful she is to her vocation of service. Which stand is she adopting towards the powers of this world, the ones most responsible for the situation of today's crucified people? What influence do the poor exert in her?

At the level of our Theological reflection the crucified peoples challenge us with the following questions: How are we to talk about a God who is revealed as love in a situation characterized by poverty and oppression? What words are we to use in telling those who are not even regarded as persons, that they are daughters and sons of God? How to preach the cross in front of crucified people? How can we preach the resurrection in a world marked by death?³⁹ How to present a powerless God in a society where only the powerful are listened to? How do we experience a Motherly God in the context of a patriarchal society? In the words of John Paul II: "In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message 'good news' for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?"⁴⁰

This essay attempts to bring some light to this crucial dilemma of our faith. It is an attempt to approach the situation with compassion and understanding; an attempt to open our eyes and hearts to what God really is. We are called to take away all our fears and resistances so as to allow ourselves to be embraced by the eternal love of God.

³⁹ These questions are dealt with in: L. BOFF, *When Theology listens to the Poor*.

In words of Éla: "How can we celebrate the resurrection where millions of men and women live in suffering and oppression? [...] As Africans, how can we live and proclaim the Easter message today when we are already living out of the passion of Jesus in history?" ÉLA, *My Faith as an African*, 110.

⁴⁰ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 40

4. Conclusion

This section has been about facts. We have exposed the current situation of the African matrix, both in its current crucifixion and its “pangs of re-birth”. We have seen how the African spirit of inter-connectedness has been gravely damaged. We have pointed out the challenge the crucified masses issue to today’s African Church. It is a time where her credibility is at stake. We have proposed that the Church be invited to undergo a time of critical consciousness in order to fully honour the Gospel she proclaims. The following chapter will put us in the right track towards a new consciousness.

Chapter 2

Elusive and Mysterious Universe

“Theology will have to call on the findings of science to one degree or another as it pursues its primary concern for the human person, the reaches of freedom, the possibilities of Christian community, the nature of belief and the intelligibility of nature and history. The vitality and significance of theology for humanity will in a profound way be reflected in its ability to incorporate these findings.”

John Paul II⁴¹

1. Introduction

This chapter is about awareness. Mindful of the Pope’s exhortation as stated above, we are going to consider the very last scientific and cosmological discoveries

⁴¹ “Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Director of the Vatican Observatory,” June 1, 1988. Reprinted in *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A common quest for understanding*, ed. ROBERT JOHN RUSSELL, WILLIAM R. STOEGER, S.J., and GEORGE V. COYNE, S.J. (Rome: Vatican Observatory, 1997), M10, 13. Vatican II reflected in a similar way: “The Church is not unaware how much it has profited from the history and development of mankind. It profits from the experience of past ages, from the progress of the sciences, and from the riches hidden in various cultures, through which greater light is thrown on the nature of man and new avenues to truth are opened up.” Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 44

in our approach to reality.⁴² For the past years the science of new physics is offering us a radically new understanding of what reality is about. At the same time, new cosmological insights are opening to us a new astonishing understanding of the evolutionary story. We shall conclude this chapter analysing the role of humanity within this evolutionary process.

2. The Subatomic World: Elusive and Mysterious⁴³

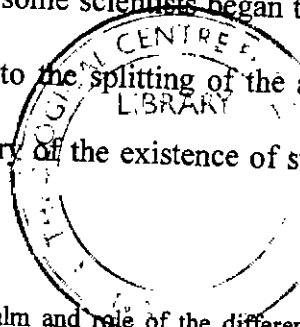
2.1. From Classical to Quantum Science⁴⁴

The type of science with which we are quite familiar in daily life, is what we call the *classical model*. This model presents a worldview that is neat, efficient and easy to comprehend. In the classical model atoms were considered the basic units comprising all life in the universe. They were indivisible and indestructible. This view prevailed up to the nineteenth century. Then, some scientists began to analyse the composition and nature of the atom. This led to the splitting of the atom, the tremendous energy contained in it, and the discovery of the existence of subatomic particles. A new world emerged, the subatomic one.

⁴² Before we begin this chapter it is good to clarify the realm and role of the different areas of knowledge we are dealing with in this essay. I find the following presentation of B. Swimme quite clarifying: "Science is not the same as cosmology, even when a cosmology is deeply informed by science... Cosmology is the story of the birth, development, and destiny of the universe, told with the aim of assisting humans in their task of identifying their roles within the great drama. Science on the other hand is focused on obtaining a detailed understanding of the physical processes of the universe... Theology is the rational inquiry into the nature of God and humanity's relationship with God. Theological terms of discourse were not invented to tell the story of the universe... Cosmology as an ancient wisdom tradition draws from science, theology, art, poetry, and philosophy, but is, strictly speaking, its own distinct tradition. It's not a question of eschewing scientific or theological terms altogether, but rather of aiming for language arising out of our experience of living within an unfolding cosmos." B. SWIMME, *The hidden heart of the cosmos. Humanity and the new story*, 97-100.

⁴³ "Scientists, in spite of much initial resistance to their new task, have now become storytellers. The cosmos they describe is no longer just a set of laws, but a narrative the quest for whose outcome is perhaps the major intellectual and spiritual inquiry of our time." J-F. HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature. Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, 122

⁴⁴ For this section you may consult the different books of D. O'MURCHU mentioned in this essay. Especially "*Quantum Theology*"



The subatomic world appears like a whole universe fully alive, an amazing network of energies. In the beginning of last century, little by little, scientists began to grapple with the elusive and mysterious nature of the subatomic world. Another scientific leap happened when Max Planck discovered that the energy of heat radiation is not emitted continuously, but appears in the form of energy packets. Einstein called these energy packets *quanta*.⁴⁵ Hence, the concept of the world made up of solid objects governed by deterministic laws of nature no longer made sense, so much so that with the new discoveries emerged an “alive” universe where everything seemed to connect, interact, even interrelate.

2.2. The Quantum World View

As O’Murchú states, “when viewed and explored within a multidisciplinary context, quantum theory assumes profoundly challenging implications for human and planetary life.”⁴⁶ Quantum theory brings to us a new global vision, a new way to deal with reality. Now, everything we perceive and experience is a great deal more than the initial and external impression we may obtain. Life is not experienced in isolated segments anymore, but in wholes (*quanta*). This “lumps of experience” which invade us are not inert, lifeless pieces of matter, but living energy.⁴⁷ (See: Appendix 1)

In essence, this new world view is unpredictable, open to the unexpected; it understands all interactions in terms of interdependence; the whole is greater than

⁴⁵ As O’Murchú spells out, the fascinating thing about these quanta is that one could never say for definite whether they are waves or particles of energy, or whether they could be said to exist at definite places or whether they tend to exist as “probability waves.” This is the kernel of the quantum theory. O’MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 45-47

⁴⁶ O’MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 27

⁴⁷ O’MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 47

the sum of the parts; everything is alive; everything is enriched by creative energy; all flows; and life comes in lumps of experience.⁴⁸

To keep in line with the scope of this essay, we shall focus on the first two characteristics: unpredictability and interdependence.

2.2.1. *A World of Chance*

In the quantum universe, nothing is predictable. Energy, the fundamental stuff of reality, acts like both wave and particle; it is impossible to pin down; it simply dances and is basically indeterminate.⁴⁹ As D. Toolan highlights: “Lawfulness at the microscopic level, it now appears, rides in fact on a wildly chancy underworld of vibrating, oscillating, aleatory clouds.”⁵⁰

Quantum theorists very much like the word “probability”. Surprise, expectancy, wonder, creativity, beauty and elegance are the kind of words that enable the quantum scientist to make sense of reality. They are words that make one befriend the chaotic dimension of reality. Thus, since elemental matter exhibits the characteristics of a field or wave, we can infer that the universe is radically interconnected.⁵¹

2.2.2. *A World of Communion*

In the quantum universe, all life is understood as functioning within one lump (quantum) of experience. Therefore, everything is affected by everything else.

⁴⁸ O’MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 52

⁴⁹ As Stephen Hawking puts it, quantum mechanics, which formulates the laws of this subatomic domain, “introduces an unavoidable element of unpredictability and randomness into science.” STEPHEN HAWKING, *A brief History of Time: From Big Bang to Black Holes* (NY: Bantam Books, 1988), 55.

⁵⁰ D. TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 180-81

⁵¹ TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 181

For the quantum theorists, the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts underpins all reality. O'Murchú comments that,

“...at the subatomic level the interrelations and interactions between the parts and the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. There is motion,⁵² but there are ultimately no moving objects; there is activity, but there are no actors. There are no dancers; there is only the dance itself!”⁵³

We are witnessing the ground of the cosmic dance, a dance emerging from the “all-nourishing abyss,” the mysterious reservoir where the eternal drive towards communion emerges in lawfulness and chance.

2.3. The Ground of the Universe

2.3.1. A Creative Vacuum

Brian Swimme invites us to notice the baffling dimension of the space that surrounds us. At least 95% of the Universe is empty space. But what looks as emptiness is anything but empty. The space that surrounds us is real and is full of subatomic particles all bristling with energy and potentiality. (See: Appendix 2) Swimme encourages us to contemplate a universe where, somehow, being itself it arises out of a field of “fecund emptiness.”⁵⁴

“Creative vacuum” is another way to call this “miraculous” phenomenon. The term points out the mysterious reservoir of creative energy, imbuing the universe as pure gift of promise and possibility. B. Swimme, in another attempt, calls it the “all-nourishing abyss,” the mystery that is at the base of being. He points out that the universe emerges out of all-nourishing abyss not only fifteen billion

⁵² “The constituents of everything in the cosmos, molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles, are signal systems in a state of constant motion, linking up with each other and with everything else in the cosmos.” TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 181.

⁵³ O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 35-6.

⁵⁴ B. SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 93.

years ago but at this very moment.⁵⁵ The theologian O'Murchú contributes in the same line saying:

“the ground of the universe is an empty fullness, a fecund nothingness [...] The base of the universe seethes with creativity [...] It is “an emptiness that overflows.”⁵⁶

This experience of apparently endless energy overflowing from the abyss shakes all of our rational theories of time. This discovery suggests that we can neither measure nor predict the future of reality.⁵⁷ What we can meaningfully affirm, borrowing from theological language, is the existence of a “paschal” logic at the very ground of existence.

2.3.2. *A Place of Creation and Destruction*

B. Swimme keeps on astonishing us noting that the more carefully we study the universe, the stranger it gets. This emergence of particles out of a non-visible field takes place throughout the entire universe. The usual process for particles is to erupt in pairs that will quickly interact and annihilate each other. At each instant, protons and antiprotons are flashing out of, and are as suddenly absorbed back into the all-nourishing abyss. Such creative and destructive activity takes place everywhere and at all times throughout the universe.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 100.

⁵⁶ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 41-56.

⁵⁷ “Fecund emptiness is the source of everything that exists. It is where the story of evolution begins, and it also is the reason why we cannot speculate with any degree of accuracy on how the whole thing will end, if indeed it ever will end. We have no way of knowing or measuring the amount of creative energy contained in the vacuum. The story itself strongly suggests that the supply is infinite. The life that ensues in its several forms is likely to continue forever.” O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary faith*, 43.

⁵⁸ SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 93.

“The all-nourishing abyss then is not a thing, nor a collection of things, nor even, strictly speaking, a physical place, but rather a power that gives birth and that absorbs existence at a thing's annihilation.” SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 100.

2.3.3. *An Eternal Story*

Swimme concludes: “The foundational reality of the universe is this unseen ocean of potentiality. If all the individual things of the universe were to evaporate, one would be left with an infinity of pure generative power.”⁵⁹ Going even deeper into the mystery Swimme takes the courage to declare: “at its most basic level, the universe is not so much matter, or energy or information, but story.”⁶⁰ Holmes Rolston would say: “the most expressive metaphor for what science finds in nature today is no longer law, but story.”⁶¹ In fact, we dwell in a profoundly mysterious universe.⁶²

3. Honouring the Story of Evolution

3.1. *From Old to New Cosmology*

The view of nature has been changing drastically from a mechanistic Newtonian view to our twenty-first century new post-Einsteinian view. As Toolan says, we are in a process of a paradigm shift, engineered by science itself that replaces the very manipulative idea of nature as a machine understood as deterministic, atomistic, mechanistic, and dualistic, by a new cosmology that is evolutionary, unpredictable, relational, holistic, and interdependent.⁶³ In this line, O’Murchú suggests that evolution itself is the story par excellence, the great

⁵⁹ SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 100.

⁶⁰ Quoted in: HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature, Ecology and Cosmic purpose*, 63. Similarly LaCugna says: “Person, not substance, is the ultimate ontological category” C. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, 248-49.

⁶¹ H. ROLSTON, *Science and Religion* (NY: Random House, 1987), 119.

⁶² M. SCOTT PECK, *Further along the Road Less Travelled*, 70.

⁶³ TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 130.

narrative within which every story unfolds.⁶⁴ Evolution is within itself an unfolding story; we are invited to enter into it. So let us start by considering its main features.

3.2. Evolutionary Features: Diversity, Self-Organisation and Communion

Swimme and Berry, in their original and provocative rendition of the universe story, highlight three pervasive and enduring features of evolution: differentiation, autopoiesis, and communion.⁶⁵

- “Differentiation” means that everything is uniquely different. This radical variety is enhanced by an essential newness that characterizes the unfolding of life at every level.
- “Autopoiesis” describes the propensity within all life forms to self-organize and self-renew. This happens through natural selection and genetic mutation.⁶⁶
- “Communion” is the goal of all movement, personal and planetary alike. Communion is the power within the evolutionary story that forever draws things into mutual interdependence. Relationship is the essence of existence; nothing makes sense in isolation.

Together, these three fundamental energies provide the “lifeblood” on which evolution unfolds and thrives,⁶⁷ an evolution that is woven around the undulating pattern of birth, death and rebirth.⁶⁸ Here we come to the great paradox written into

⁶⁴ O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 8.

⁶⁵ SWIMME & BERRY, *The Universe Story*, 71-79.

⁶⁶ As O’Murchú says: “a power from within that does not simply maintain balance, but engenders the enduring creativity that begets sustenance and growth.” O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 65.

⁶⁷ O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 66.

⁶⁸ J.F. Haught comments that many natural resources start out with a simple kind of orderliness, move through an incalculable phase of turbulence, but then end up manifesting surprisingly rich forms of

the very fabric of the evolutionary process: creation and destruction are present at all levels of evolution

3.3. Evolution as Rooted in Paradox

Evolution is rooted in paradox. The hub of the paradox is not so much the apparent contradiction as the largely incomprehensible connection in which the two aspects, destruction and creation, need each other in the service of greater life and complexity. That occurs through the theories of chaos⁶⁹ and complexity.⁷⁰ Hence, fundamentally, suffering, depletion, and destruction are inherent to evolution.⁷¹

3.4. Violence and Destruction in the Universe

Swimme and Berry fearlessly comment that we are living in a violent and destructive universe. Violence and destruction are present at every level of existence. Chaos and disruption characterize every era of the universe.⁷²

According to Swimme and Berry, resistance, energy and dreams are the sources of all violence. Things in the universe resist all efforts to reduce their presence in the world. Each thing has its role to play in the unfolding story of the universe. Our universe is self-energizing. The entire universe for its own development needs all the energy of the universe. Any activity in the universe takes and gives energy. In addition to that there is another tendency at work in the

unpredictable order in the midst of chaos. HAUGHT, *Science and Religion. From Conflict to Conversation*, 142-3.

⁶⁹ "Chaos, in common discourse, means "disorder"" HAUGHT, *Science and Religion*, 142.

⁷⁰ "When scientists speak of "complexity" today they mean elaborate, emergent, adaptive, self-organizing systems. Examples of "complexity" are cells, organisms, brains, ecosystems, economic systems-and even religions." HAUGHT, *Science and Religion*, 144.

⁷¹ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 105.

⁷² Swimme & Berry, *The Universe Story*, 51-4.

universe towards self-fulfilment. Unless this tendency is taken into account there is no way to understand an unfolding organism that interacts with its environment.⁷³

The ensuing destructibility is neither good nor bad; it simply is.⁷⁴ The destructive character of the universe invites us to consider the role of chaos as part of the evolutionary process.

3.5. Chaos as the Gate to Beauty

Thanks to recent scientific discoveries such as the theory of chaos and the various theories of complexity we are beginning to appreciate and comprehend that life in its great cosmic flow cannot be reduced to our linear and logical mental constructs.⁷⁵ Chaos seems to be everywhere, and it provides the crucial link to interpret and comprehend aspects of universal life that otherwise tends to be regarded as deviations.⁷⁶

According to Prigogine and Stengers chaos is a precondition or stimulant for activating the self-organizing creativity inherent in all living systems.⁷⁷ Scientists are discovering hidden patterns of order and beauty embedded in chaos.⁷⁸ It is precisely through the apparent meaningless chaotic stages of our evolutionary story that our universe becomes more beautiful, complex and communal.

⁷³ Swimme & Berry, *The Universe Story*, 52-4.

⁷⁴ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 101.

⁷⁵ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 96.

⁷⁶ O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 127.

⁷⁷ I. PRIGOGINE- I. STENGERS, *Order out of Chaos*, (Bantam Books: NY, 1984)

⁷⁸ The most astonishing example is about the black holes. Scientists began to identify super massive black holes at the centre of all galaxies. Research indicated that all the stars are affected by it. Hence, this led to the incredible discovery that the black holes themselves contribute significantly to the formation of both galaxies and stars. What, in metaphorical terms, serves as the ultimate symbol of destructibility is now emerging as a primary icon of creative possibility. O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 100

3.6. Towards Universal Communion

The capacity and urge to relate are at the heart of the evolutionary process. This feature, more than any other, orientates the evolutionary story from the very beginning. Everything around us and within us is interconnected and is forever forging new links and connections. Relationality and interdependence are not just features of our universe; they constitute the heart and soul of what creation is all about.⁷⁹ We, humans, as integral part of this peculiar universe, are invited to be radically relational.

4. Consciousness' Drama of Violence and Destruction

4.1. Humanity's Adolescence: our Refusal of the Evolutionary Logic

We are the children of a 'storied' universe. We are part of a story that has been told for aeons past. And we are now the privileged participants in that story becoming conscious of its own unfolding.⁸⁰

In us humans, evolution becomes conscious of its violent and destructive dimension. With such conscious self-awareness, life understands that it is simultaneously precious and liable to destruction. As Swimme and Berry tell us, it is out of this new depth of fear, in front of the ever-threatening nature, that humans devoted themselves to eliminate violence and destruction.⁸¹ As they say:

“...a new kind of insecurity emerged in the universe. The elegance of the balanced world burst into awareness of itself, and, at times, the accompanying terror, chaos and destructivity, proved to be too much for humans to manage creatively.”⁸²

⁷⁹ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 77

⁸⁰ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 16.

⁸¹ SWIMME & BERRY, *The Universe Story*, 56.

⁸² SWIMME & BERRY, *The Universe Story*, 56.

This process is not an easy one. In terms of our human role in the evolutionary cosmic process, E. Sahtouris suggests that we behave like belligerent adolescents and that the time is now ripe for us to move toward the stage of young adulthood, thus leaning to respond in more responsible and creative ways.⁸³ As an adolescent humanity, we use our creativity in order to steer clear of what we consider to be unacceptable aspects of the universe. O'Murchú points out that destruction and violence baffle us and that we cannot stomach the helplessness of not being able to do anything to remedy or eliminate it.⁸⁴ Destruction and suffering are our great enemies, the ones we would dearly love to get rid of. This refusal of justifiable suffering is to opt for a reduced existence. It is often our attempt to conquer the enemy that reinforces its ability to undermine us,⁸⁵ and life becomes inhuman and superficial. Consequently, if we want to live faithfully our evolutionary story, there is no way out but to face the mystery of suffering that seems meaningless to us.

4.2. Human Beings, Creators of Meaningless Suffering

According to O'Murchú the great paradox of human suffering is that we humans, and not nature, are responsible for most of the meaningless suffering in the world.⁸⁶ This suffering arises from our refusal to accept and embrace the meaningful suffering inherent to the inner logic of the evolutionary process. Our central life

⁸³ E. SAHTOURIS, *Gaia: The Human Journey from Chaos to Cosmos*. (Pocket Books: London & NY, 1989) Quoted in: O'MURCHÚ, *Religion in Exile*, 71.

Thomas Merton intuited that something in this line was already happening: "We are living in the greatest revolution in history, a huge, spontaneous upheaval of the entire human race. Not a revolution planned and carried out by any particular party, race or nation, but a deep elemental boiling over of all the inner contradictions that have ever been in people, a revolution of the chaotic forces inside everybody. This is not something we have chosen, nor is it anything we are free to avoid." T. MERTON, quoted in: O' MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition. Making Sense of a Changing World*, 7.

⁸⁴ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 101.

⁸⁵ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 101.

⁸⁶ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 102.

project, according to Swimme and Berry, must be one of embracing the pain and suffering inherited in the very logic of evolution. We must be fully aware that suffering and destruction are intimately associated with existence itself. Then only we shall be able to enter into this reality in a creative rather than an unconscious and destructive manner.⁸⁷

Suffering though remains a mystery. Moltmann says that suffering is intrinsically connected with love. "We suffer and die because and insofar as we love."⁸⁸ To love is to be one with reality, to accept reality in all its dimensions. According to Moltmann suffering can be understood in different ways: there is a suffering that can be eliminated and another kind that cannot; the third one is the suffering we place on others. It is the suffering we try to overcome by transferring it to others.⁸⁹ Gabriel Daly claims that the greatest and most meaningless suffering ensues from human behaviour, intensified by the conscious or unconscious desire to inflict pain onto others.⁹⁰ It is by this meaningless suffering that Africa is mostly afflicted.

4.3. Africa, the Great Evolutionary Scapegoat of our Time

Africa, as explained in the first chapter, is a wounded continent. Africa represents the open wound of a world torn to pieces by injustice and oppression. With O'Murchú we can firmly say, that Africa bears in a unique way the unresolved

⁸⁷ SWIMME & BERRY, *The Universe Story*, 59-60.

"Nonhuman violence, devoid of this conscious malice, is more easily tolerated and integrated. If the human contribution to the world's pain was eliminated, or at least diminished significantly, the meaning, relevance, and necessity of suffering would be a great deal more apparent. We humans are the great enigma in the cosmic, evolutionary drama." G. DALY, *Creation and Redemption*. (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988), 167.

⁸⁸ J. MOLTSMANN, *The Crucified God: The Cross as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, 253.

⁸⁹ L. RICHARD, *What are they saying about the theology of suffering?*, 44.

⁹⁰ G. DALY, *Creation and Redemption*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988), 167.

strains and tensions of suffering humanity. We, mainly the Western world, project⁹¹ onto Africa and its peoples the issues that we do not like in ourselves, and we make of Africa and its peoples the great evolutionary scapegoat of our time.⁹² We can say that Africa is playing the unconscious role of scapegoat to humanity. Humanity is sick; it is going through an adolescent process of denial and of repression of its very nature. Within the dynamics of the human family, Africa is the vulnerable member that has been loaded with the unresolved pain of the human race. As O'Murchú comments, the scapegoating is painfully illustrated in the violence that we project onto Africans and black people in general.⁹³ It is this projection that makes the crucified Africa suffer from a strong inferiority complex, and that makes her undergo so much inner division and violence, betraying thus her original communitarian spirit.⁹⁴

As we saw in the first Chapter, it is in Africa that humanity finds its origin. Africa is present at the very roots of humankind. The pain inflicted on today's Africa is the pain we inflict on our own humanity, it is the refusal of what we are. So, as O'Murchú highlights, "it is now when we begin to see how integral the African experience is to our ongoing growth and evolution. We begin to realize the healing that needs to take place, the reconciliation that needs to be activated, and the

⁹¹ "Jung defined projection as an unconscious, automatic process whereby an unconscious content transferred itself to an object and seemed to belong to it. The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious, that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the subject." CLIFT, *Jung and Christianity*, 21.

⁹² O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 160

⁹³ "Racism is just one aspect of this complex set of projections, but it is underpinned by a more complex and dangerous set of perceptions. We regard humans, and Africans in particular, as innately violent and aggressive. And we attribute this violent streak to our long primitive history, represented to this day in the tribal behaviours of African people in particular." O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 160.

⁹⁴ O' Murchú points out that the interconnectedness and relationality that characterize many new developments in modern physics and cosmology are endemic to the African psyche. Nothing makes sense in isolation. It is not in our separateness that we become our true selves, but in our interconnections. True selfhood always is relational. O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 158.

new socio-economic policies that need to be put in place not just for the benefit of Africa, but also for the well-being of the entire planet.”⁹⁵

So at this juncture, we are invited to ask ourselves about the way out. Jung gives us a key insight: “The only contribution the individual can make to society is to withdraw his or her own projection”⁹⁶ This is the way of integration and communion, the way to become, once again, happily conscious of our God-like role in the story of evolution.

4.4. Embracing our Shadow: The Path Towards Oneness

In this section we are invited to enter into the root cause of our meaningless suffering. We shall unveil the cause of the unnecessary violence and destruction happening within ourselves, and that, consequently, is projected onto others. For that we shall use the tools provided by psychoanalysis. According to Carl Jung all of us carry a “shadow personality”. Part of it is made up of unwanted and underdeveloped characteristics, which could have become part of consciousness but were rejected.⁹⁷ We can say that the shadow is what exists before the contents of the unconscious have been differentiated. The shadow is potentially both creative and destructive. Creative in as far as it represents potential dimensions of oneself that have been suppressed or that might yet be realized; destructive in the sense that suppressed aspects of oneself tend to undermine or disturb one’s conscious image of self.⁹⁸ The real task towards oneness is to learn how to deal with one’s own shadow. O’Murchú

⁹⁵ O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 155.

⁹⁶ CLIFT, *Jung and Christianity*, 48.

“Projection is the refusal to let be. To let others be different. This refusal to let be comes from an iner refusal to let oneself be, to be with oneself”. M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 160.

⁹⁷ J.-A. SANFORD, *The Invisible Partners*, 9.

The shadow personality can also be thought of as the un-lived life. SANFORD, *Evil. The Shadow Side of Reality*, 51.

⁹⁸ D. SHARP. *Personality Types. Jung’s Model of Typology*, 94-95.

suggests three important attitudes we are invited to take into consideration once we face our shadow. First we must acknowledge that the shadow is a real and powerful dimension of all life. Secondly that we cannot eradicate or eliminate the shadow, and that the more we try, the more power we give it over us. Lastly, we have to recognize that the shadow can become a potential source for creativity precisely when we engage with it in a spirit of receptivity and dialogue, as we strive to integrate it into the rhythm and flow of life.⁹⁹ Embracing our shadow is to do something real for the world, to be agents of unity and peace. Neglecting our shadow is to guarantee violence and destruction to continue within and without ourselves. In the next section we are considering two aspects of the realm of shadow and light that in today's world are crucial to be embraced: our personal feminine consciousness and our collective feminine unconscious.

4.4.1. Embracing our Feminine Consciousness

Most if not all of our contemporary cultures are characterized by an imbalance of the masculine and the feminine traits in favour of the masculine (Patriarchy). In a patriarchal society feeling, imagination, intuition and creativity (values needed to befriend chaos, destruction and violence) are all held to be suspect; they are not easily managed or controlled, and they militate against the male passion for absolute power.¹⁰⁰ To the patriarchal mind-set relational values like openness, trust and freedom are a prescription for anarchy and chaos. The patriarchal culture in seeking to eliminate the passionate aspects of life (pride,

⁹⁹ O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 149

¹⁰⁰ O'MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition. Making Sense of a Changing World*, 96.

creativity, ecstasy, freedom to flow with experience), undermine those very qualities, which form the essential nature of womanhood.¹⁰¹

Both, male and female are victims of this situation. Whether we are male or female, we all possess a feminine and masculine dimension we more or less are conscious of. Both are needed at personal and societal level alike.¹⁰² The feminine points to the power of the heart; the masculine is focussed on the head. While the masculine articulates the need to dominate and control, the feminine extols the inner freedom of “letting be” and “letting go.” The feminine consciousness is essential for going meaningfully through the process of pain, disorientation, and ecstasy that marks every new becoming.¹⁰³ The feminine can live with chaos and change; it does not suffer from the male obsession for law and order. Indeed, it believes that the chaos can be life-giving and highly creative.¹⁰⁴

This integration is a life process. We are called to grow in consciousness, honesty, and courage and to struggle with this duality in us, trying to integrate this inherent tension. According to O’Murchú learning to embrace the chaos, acknowledging its cultural and personal impact, and striving to integrate its effect on

¹⁰¹ O’MURCHÚ, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, 109

¹⁰² As we are emerging from a protected era of masculine consciousness, there is a need felt for complementarity. Integration of our masculine and feminine consciousness is called for. Before though any integration on conscious level becomes possible both men and women have to get in touch with their contra-sexual side, their invisible partner that constitutes their unconscious shadow-side. Many men are not aware of the invisible partner they host, their anima, and likewise many women are not aware of their animus as they constantly feel threatened by the male world and are not inclined to embrace this part of themselves. If men and women are not in touch with their opposite pole, they will have difficulty relating with someone of the other sex in a mature and fruitful way.

¹⁰³ O’MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition. Making Sense of a Changing World*, 97.

“The evolutionary shift which we are going through defies rational explanation. The masculine frame of mind cannot grasp nor “control” what’s going on. The feminine stance that is more in touch with the unconscious and hidden energies of the psyche is very urgently needed at this time.”

“The current transition is from a dominant male-power image (top-down) “bossy mentality”, “isolation” to the emerging female-enabling image (from the centre out) “inclusive mentality”, “togetherness.”” O’MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 103

¹⁰⁴ “So, our rational mind needs to embrace intuition and imagination; the anthropocentric will to power needs to learn the wisdom of non-violence; we need to come home to a deeper awareness that everything within and around us is alive.” O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 200.

our lives, personally and collectively, are among the major challenges of our time.¹⁰⁵ This integration and communion within ourselves will bring us to the liberating realm of the “collective unconscious.”

4.4.2. *Embracing our “Collective Unconscious”*

We move here from the personal to the collective aspect of our unconscious. As far as its content is concerned, it is much vaster and more ancient than the personal unconscious. Its material is buried much deeper in the unconscious and contains all the vital forces and instincts within us, which are not the effect of our personal experience but are the outcome of the long evolution of the human race.¹⁰⁶ Our instincts and certain patterns of behaviour are carved into our genes. Hence, at our birth we are not an empty screen or a “tabula rasa”. There exist embryonic talents, which are hidden in the unconscious.

O’Murchú comments that the collective unconscious is like a mass envelope of creative, divinely-endowed energy surrounding the entire cosmos. Many scholars, scientists and psychologists, note the close connection with the energy of the creative vacuum.¹⁰⁷ The collective unconscious is a reservoir of spiritual, psychic, and mental energy, and it exists everywhere. We cannot escape its influence. We cannot change its past, but we can contribute to its future unfolding.¹⁰⁸

Increasingly we realize that integration of the shadow is not merely a personal challenge of our times, but also a socio/cultural one. The collective

¹⁰⁵ O’MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 130.

¹⁰⁶ Jung says: “the collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind’s evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual.” Quoted in: CLIFT, *Jung and Christianity. The Challenge of Reconciliation*, 18.

¹⁰⁷ O’MURCHÚ, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, 42

¹⁰⁸ “For Jung, it is a type of divine energy that we access through archetypes, symbolic behaviour, and ritual, predominantly through dreams, intuition, and imagination.” O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 172

unconscious brings us to the fact of our being-in-relation. All of us are products of our relationships. The collective unconscious influences social processes much more powerfully than it affects individual behaviour. In our interdependent world, we humans are much more influenced by global and cultural events than we are capable of influencing them. In this line, all of us, in different ways, are influenced, passing through the collective unconscious, by the patriarchal mindset of power and control. The current patriarchal mindset can be considered as a very strong unilateral collective conscious that in its turn has constellated an even stronger collective unconscious. Patriarchal people, under the illusion that they are in perfect control of their lives are in fact driven and dominated by their repressed collective unconscious that harbours all the chaotic and more feminine aspects of reality by which they are mesmerised. This unilaterally developed collective conscious of our patriarchal society, if not integrated and embraced meaningfully, will destroy us through structural sins like biocide, genocide, dualism, militarism, idolatry, etc. It will also trigger off irrational and over-feminised reactions coming from the neglected collective unconscious. There is indeed an urgent need for integration and healing. O'Murchú puts it very pointedly:

“Wisdom is to respect the shadow side of life for what it really is: an essential incompleteness forever awaiting fulfilment, a fertile emptiness out of which creativity yearns to explode. Such is the paradoxical nature of the great shadow, the ecstasy and pain of life which we are ever invited to embrace anew.”¹⁰⁹

5. Conclusion

New physics and new cosmology are presenting to us an extraordinary new picture of what the universe is about. We are in an alive and radically inter-

¹⁰⁹ O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 150

dependent universe. The universe itself is story, a continuous flow of life moving inexorably towards greater complexity, communion and beauty through the unending logic of birth-death-rebirth. We have seen that we are living in a universe where violence and destruction are part and parcel of it. We exposed our particular role in this story: to participate consciously in it. We pointed out the difficulty to assimilate creatively the violent dimension of the universe, due to our humanitarian adolescent stage. This cuts us off from the flow of life and causes meaningless suffering. Lack of integration brings projection. Africa becomes the scapegoat bearing the fears of humanity. We concluded expressing the need to embrace our shadow so as to fully integrate ourselves in the universal logic.

Chapter 3

God's Eternal Drama

“God in his great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in his life and glory. He generously pours out, and never ceases to pour out, his divine goodness, so that he who is creator of all things might at last become “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28)”

Missio ad Gentes, 2

1. Introduction

This third chapter is a theo-logical one.¹¹⁰ We are invited to enter into the realm of our Christian and Trinitarian faith. In the previous chapter we gained new

¹¹⁰ Note: This Chapter takes in consideration two key theo-logical presuppositions: the first one is the belief that God has been totally involved in the unfolding process of creation from the very beginning of evolution. (O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 33) I believe this new awareness of the cosmic evolution can enhance and enrich traditional teachings about God and about God's way of acting in the world. Evolutionary Theology discerns in evolution a most illuminating context for our thinking about God today. (HAUGHT, *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, 36)

The second one is the conviction that what happens in the material world happens also to God. God is unsurpassably related to all events in the cosmos and is affected by them. As Haught puts it: “God's being, without in any way jeopardizing the divine transcendence, actually includes the world... God is internally affected, indeed changed, by what happens in the cosmic process. When nature suffers,

insights into reality. We saw that the very ground of the universe is relational and dynamic; it is a *paschal story* where creation and destruction at once are happening endlessly. This very logic is what makes evolution to exist. At this juncture, we endeavour to unveil something of the *paschal* face of God from what science and cosmology taught us. From there we shall move to the person of Jesus, in whom we shall encounter the very same God, but now with personal human features. Finally, we shall consider the mystery of the Trinity, attempting respectfully to explore 'their' inner life. Finally we shall make a reference to the mystery of evil.

The main concern of this chapter will be to approach from God's perspective the mysterious tragic dimension of reality.

2. Unveiling the Universal Paschal God

Thomas Berry highlights: "The universe itself is the primary revelation."¹¹¹

In this section we are invited to unveil the presence of God as it comes across in the evolutionary story¹¹² and the new physics. We have seen that the capacity and urge

God' suffers." (J. HAUGHT, *The promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic purpose*, 35) Technically, this is called panentheism (God-in-all, all-in-God) In the same line, Denis Edwards claims that the self-communication of God is activated in and through creation. Edwards invites us to view creation as wisely transparent and receptive to the revelation of God. (D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution. A Trinitarian Theology*. Paulist Press: NY. 1999; *Jesus the Wisdom of God. An Ecological Theology*. Orbis Books: NY. 1995)

¹¹¹ T. BERRY, *The New Story: Comments on the Origin, Identification and Transmission of Values*, Cross Currents 37 (Summer/Fall 1988), 195.

"God is not only infinitely great but, as Dionysius the Areopagite wrote, "God is also small," infinitely small. And as , when we look through a telescope we can contemplate the image of God's infinite greatness, so, when we look through a microscope, we can discover God's infinite smallness. As the starry sky or the sea proclaim themajesty of God, so the eye of an insect or the digestive apparatus of an ant proclaim His humbleness. For it we can say that God is greater than the entire universe, we can also say that God is smaller than an electron," E. CARDENAL, *To Live as to Love*, 62.

¹¹² The Catholic Church during the last years is coming to a more open attitude towards the theory of evolution and its consequences for our faith. In 1996, Pope John Paul II concludes that new knowledge has led to the recognition that evolution is more than a hypothesis. This new evidence comes from a variety of independent sources: "it is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favour of this theory." (*The Theory of Evolution*

to relate are at the heart of the evolutionary process. Everything around us and within us is interconnected and is forever forging new links and connections. Relationality and interdependence are not just external features of our universe; they form the heart and soul of what creation is all about.¹¹³ This is woven around the undulating pattern of birth, death and rebirth. This very pattern invites us to think of God as follows:

2.1. God as Powerless Love

Haught argues that creation is not an expression of divine might, but a signal of divine humility. At the heart of the divine life, so to speak, there is a deliberate self-contracting, a self-emptying withdrawal of the infinite presence and power. It is this kenosis that allows God's "other," the universe, to emerge.¹¹⁴ This is the divine modesty present in the whole universe,¹¹⁵ a universe capable of self-organization.

The universe seems to be creating itself. Haught comments that it is only because of a "kenotic" God, a God who is infinitely loving and humble, that a self-organizing universe can come into being. We suggest, with Haught, that it is the self-outpouring of divine love that both invites the world into being and continually challenges it to raise itself ever further above indefiniteness and nothingness.¹¹⁶ This is made possible only by a non-interfering powerless love of God.

and the "Gospel of Life" in *Catholic International* 8, N° 1 (1997): 14-16, the address was given on October 23, 1996. See *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), October 30, 1996)

The Pope calls for a philosophical and theological exploration of evolution, which respects both the "ontological difference" that marks human beings as spiritual creatures and the "ultimate meaning of the Creator's design". To explore more about this point: D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 72-4.

¹¹³ O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 77.

¹¹⁴ J. HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 159-61.

¹¹⁵ R. Rohr argues that when you have real authority you don't have to prove it. When you are truly in charge, you don't have to go throwing your weight around. R. ROHR, *Job and the Mystery of Suffering. Spiritual Reflections*, 47.

¹¹⁶ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 151-2.

The fact that God allows creation to be free doesn't imply that God is not fully delighting and also suffering with it.¹¹⁷ God is the one who creates through the losses and gains of evolutionary history. It is a God who *works out* artfully and purposefully in the unpredictability and contingency of nature, the "freedom" of creation.¹¹⁸ As John Polkinghorne indicates, God is the great "*allower*" and "*respector*" of freedom.¹¹⁹ We are in front of a God who is vulnerable up to allowing the misuse of human freedom; a God who is not free or not willing to simply abolish all suffering. Paradoxically, the very same God reveals to be a revolutionary one.

2.2. God the Revolutionary

The "Chaos and complexity" theory pictures God not only as the source of cosmic order but also as the source of surprise. Chaos is an essential feature of a universe created in such a way that it remains unfinished. Though chaos seems to reign supremely at times, there remains the possibility of surprising outcomes,¹²⁰ for which we usually must wait with patience.¹²¹ As novelty enters into any situation of

¹¹⁷ John Haught argues that God is internally affected, indeed changed, by what happens in the cosmic process. HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, 35.

¹¹⁸ D. Edwards writes: "The God who creates through natural selection, and interplay of chance and lawfulness, might be thought of as a painter at work on a canvas, as a writer with a poem coming to birth within his or her consciousness, as a gardener developing a beautiful landscape, as a host preparing a meal for friends. Two insights are important in all these images: first, the work is exploratory and improvising; second, the artist can only work with what is there, with the possibilities and constraints offered by the materials and the subjects of the work. What is original and beautiful comes from the interplay of creativity and respect for what is already there." EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 55.

¹¹⁹ J. POLKINGHORNE, *Reason and Reality* (London: SPCK, 1991), 84, and *Science and Providence* (London: SPCK, 1989), 66-67. Quoted in D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 44.

¹²⁰ O'Murchú sees the God of the evolutionary Story as the one who outpaces all our constructs and who unceasingly lures us to radically new places and new ways of being. O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 55.

¹²¹ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 155-6.

O'Murchú comments in the same line: "And within the evolutionary process itself is a faithfulness, a sense of unrelenting promise, that there will be a future, that this future will evince hope and confidence (while continuing to be baffling and bizarre at times from the human point of view), that

order, it inevitably stirs things up.¹²² So, if we think of God as the ultimate source of this novelty, as the “One who makes all things new,” then divine creativity must be quite familiar to chaos.¹²³ Surprisingly, chaos is a signal that God cares for us, that God wants the world to become something more than what it already is.¹²⁴

Haught invites us to understand chaos as a consequence of divine discontent with the status quo, a signal of a Creator who is still creating and who invites our own participation in making the world new.¹²⁵ Toolan says: “God is a revolutionary God.”¹²⁶

Theologically speaking, then, “chaos and complexity” emerge from a divine longing for the world to become ever richer, more diverse, and more beautiful.¹²⁷ In fact, it is at the “edge of chaos” that the more fascinating things happen.¹²⁸ Hence, we can say with O’Murchú that, fundamentally, suffering, depletion, and destruction are inherent to God’s evolutionary plan, and if theology is to honour the evolutionary story and the divine creativity at work within it, then it must concede that the divine is at work also in this paradox. In sum, the evidence of evolution seems to suggest that God does not have a problem with the suffering and destruction that are inherent to the unfolding process.¹²⁹

our universe will continue to grow in complexity and explode in the elegance of mystery, and that meaning will continue to outpace meaninglessness.” O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 36.

¹²² HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 154.

¹²³ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 154.

¹²⁴ “The sciences of chaos and complexity exhibit a universe remarkably comfortable to the theme of faith’s promise: many processes in the natural world [a] begin with an amazing modesty and simplicity, [b] unfold into a turbulence or chaos, but then [c] eventually burst out into the richest and most beautiful of patterns. Such a universe is remarkably congruent with the basic outline of religious faith.” HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 155-6.

¹²⁵ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 155.

¹²⁶ “God has filled the Universe with contingencies and chances. The Creator of so much turbulence must be a God of “holy discontent” who disrupts and displaces the reigning order of things.” TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 201.

¹²⁷ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 155.

¹²⁸ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 148.

¹²⁹ O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 105.

3. Jesus: Power Rendered Vulnerable

In this Christological section we intend to highlight the life of Jesus from a very particular perspective, namely, his compassionate identification with the most marginalized to the extent of sharing their very fate.

3.1. *Jesus' Ministry: The Fearless Life of God Him/herself*

3.1.1. *His Compassion*

Jesus saw something that so many others have missed: that all is in God and God is in all.¹³⁰ The Kingdom of God is among you. Jesus' whole life was rooted in his relationship with an Abba-Father of compassionate love. In fact, Jesus incarnates in his life the very compassion of God. Jesus taught us: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate"¹³¹ The compassion Jesus offers challenges us to enter into the fearless life of God himself, a life of radical inclusiveness rooted in God's unconditional love for everyone. The life of God is revealed as boundless generosity, as totally illogical to our human standards. God welcomes everyone to his/her "universal table fellowship".¹³² God is like the shepherd going in search of the lost sheep, the woman lighting the lamp and sweeping the floor in search of the lost coin, and the father running to embrace his prodigal son, the shocking story of the land owner who pays all workers a full wage.

"There is suffering that is rooted in the incompleteness of God's creation" C. HEYWARD. *Saving Jesus for those Who are Right*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 24.

¹³⁰ M. FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 70.

¹³¹ Lk 6, 36 The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989. All Biblical passages in this Essay are from NRSV

¹³² "Jesus' celebratory meals witness to the inclusive graciousness of God. Jesus welcomes the untouchables of society as friends to what are, in fact, anticipatory celebrations of God's Kingdom. These meals are a pledge and sign of divine forgiveness and an invitation to conversion." EDWARDS, *Jesus the Wisdom of God*, 47.

Jesus incarnates in his very life this compassionate and illogical God, a God with a preferential option for the poor and outcast.¹³³

3.1.2. *Outcast by Choice*¹³⁴

Jesus' compassion pushed him to mix socially with the lowest of the low and identified himself with them. The suffering of the poor and the oppressed had a powerful effect upon Jesus. In their suffering they became the privileged places where Jesus found God. This compassion made Jesus to become an outcast by choice. As Moltmann says: "He became the kind of man we do not want to be: an outcast."¹³⁵

3.1.3. *Being Fashioned by the Hidden Face of God*

Jesus understood and lived his ministry in reverse. Jesus took people very seriously, acknowledging the presence of God in their lives. He was recipient as well as giver. He challenged and allowed himself to be challenged.¹³⁶ Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?"¹³⁷. Much of his mission's agenda was reshaped by his interaction with people. Jesus allowed the outsider to raise embarrassing issues, as with the Syro-phoenician woman: "Even the dogs under the table eat the children's leftovers"¹³⁸ Jesus marvelled in front of unexpected responses

¹³³ A. NOLAN, *Jesus before Christianity*, 27.

"Jesus dealt with each individual person who came into his life or into his thoughts, in such a way that nobody was ever excluded and everybody was loved for their own sake ... Jesus loved all people and lived in solidarity with all humankind. And for this very reason Jesus sided with the poor and the oppressed, with those who have nothing to recommend them except their humanity, with those who were excluded by others. Solidarity with the "nobodies" of this world, the "discarded people," is the only concrete way of living out a solidarity with humankind." NOLAN, *Jesus before Christianity*, 79.

¹³⁴ NOLAN, *Jesus before Christianity*, 34.

¹³⁵ J. MOLTSMANN, *The Crucified God*, 205.

¹³⁶ Especially and critically, by women: the Syro-phoenician woman, the Samaritan women at the well, the Mary's.

¹³⁷ Mk 10:51

¹³⁸ Mk 7:28 "Her petition challenges Jesus' very identity and mission (his ideology of chosenness, which restricts his mission and his disciples' mission to Israel) It confronts Israel's imperialistic

from the most unlikely people, and saw them as manifestations of his Father's grace above and beyond his own doing.¹³⁹ In his mission the faith of others supported his own faith.¹⁴⁰ Jesus understood the world of the poor as being holy ground. The suffering of the Galilean peasant was tremendous and terrifying, and yet their life was fascinating for Jesus. It was a dark and fearful world. Jesus was magnetized by their world, the world of the lowlands of history.¹⁴¹ This interaction was so intense that he became the marginal one. He accepted to suffer the fate of being rejected, becoming the scapegoat of humanity.¹⁴² It was his radical compassion with the outcast that brought him to challenge the religious and political authorities.

3.1.4. *Jesus the Revolutionary*

Jesus was a revolutionary of his time. He dared displacing Moses' authority with his own; he overturned the selling tables in the Temple; He forgave sins; He challenged religious authority and taboos, being inclusive with women, foreigners (the Samaritan and the woman at the well), and children; He freely expressed his femininity, his tenderness, care, mercy and sensitivity to the mystery of life and of God. He did not hide his tears on hearing of the death of his friend Lazarus,¹⁴³ He wept in disappointment at Jerusalem's refusal of his message¹⁴⁴ and lamented at the

ideology. She demands that Jesus make available to her what is available to Israel ...Her witty response opens up new possibilities for Jesus..." W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins*, 323-4.

¹³⁹ Matt 9:22; 15:28; Mk 10:51

¹⁴⁰ Lk 7:9. A. GITTINS, *Bread for the Journey*, 58.

¹⁴¹ Jesus was continually "passing over", all through his life, and his final "pass-over" is simply the most total expression of this ongoing reality of his life. *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and of all Humankind*. Spearhead, n°59, 53

¹⁴² "Those who help the lost are lost" (Bertolt Brecht) "Jesus dines with the wrong crowd. He stands with the scapegoats, the outcastes, and outsiders, all those who do not belong, won't fit, and upon whom a society projects its own evil and fear of death. He is a scandal that must be sacrificed as so many people today." TOOLAN, *At home in the Cosmos*, 207.

¹⁴³ Jn. 11:35

¹⁴⁴ Lk 19:41

unbelief of Chorazin and Bethsaida;¹⁴⁵ He let himself be touched, kissed and anointed by a public sinner;¹⁴⁶ and all this in the middle of a patriarchal society that ended crucifying Him.¹⁴⁷ His radicalism brought him to the cross.¹⁴⁸

3.2. Jesus' Passion: The One Who Carries the Sins of the World

3.2.1. Being Drawn by the Powerlessness of God

Jesus' project of radical inclusiveness was totally rejected. Everyone abandoned him. He felt alone. It seems that all what he did proved to be ineffective. All that was left was the power of love in suffering. Jesus had to shoulder the very weight of sin. As Jon Sobrino comments, in Jesus "sin is no longer the absence of fellowship; it is something that has real power and that will lead him to the cross if he shoulders it."¹⁴⁹ The taking upon himself of the sins of the world will unmask the power that made the coming of God's Kingdom impossible: the religious power which had hidden the real face of God and the political power that suppressed the dignity of people.

Bravo points out that Jesus gradually discovers that God's way of being in history is not in power but in kenosis, in hiddenness, respecting human freedom

¹⁴⁵ Lk 10:13-15

¹⁴⁶ Lk 7:36-50

¹⁴⁷ L. BOFF, *Trinity and Society*, 183.

¹⁴⁸ M. Fox. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 69.

"Jesus' insistence on social transformation and on how he and others were to be instruments for compassion and justice actually brought about Jesus' death. The cross was a political event, the result of too much Good News". M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 302.

¹⁴⁹ J. SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 94-5.

even when it is used against God's plan.¹⁵⁰ Now God is going to be revealed through powerlessness,¹⁵¹ the powerlessness of the cross.

3.2.2. *Hanging Naked in Front of "Mystery"*

Jesus was abandoned by all his disciples. He underwent his passion completely alone. Eventually he felt abandoned even by God: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"¹⁵² Crucified between two thieves, he did not even have a grave of his own. Jesus became totally identified with humanity in its lowest form.¹⁵³ Moreover, Jesus' death is located "outside" the Holy City,¹⁵⁴ the place where the leftovers of the cultic sacrifices were dumped.

This new pattern of God's relationship with Jesus is the most emptying element of Jesus' death. At that moment, what will be heard from God is much more silence than a word of closeness. Jesus clearly died with every expression of the most profound horror. He was hung naked, helpless, and totally empty in front of 'Mystery'. Surprisingly, it is at this particular moment that he gave us his last

¹⁵⁰ C. BRAVO, *Jesus of Nazareth, Christ the Liberator* in *Systematic Theology. Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 118.

¹⁵¹ Jesus decided not to assume his own defence but to leave himself in the hands of Abba. He did not choose to compromise with the powerful and the privileged in order to survive.

¹⁵² Matt 27: 46

John M. Waliggo believes that the single root-cause of Africa's suffering is rejection, both by the powerful outsiders and powerful insiders. Therefore it is on this theme of rejection that his Christological reflections are constructed. He sees the theme of rejection as central in the life and ministry of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It is a very interesting contribution to today's African Christology. See *African Christology in a situation of suffering* in *Jesus in African Christianity. Experimentation and diversity in African Christology*, 93-101.

¹⁵³ "As John Dominic Crossan has so powerfully pointed out... it is important to realize just how horrifying Jesus' execution must have seemed at that time. One of the cruellest aspects of Roman crucifixion was the way it robbed its victims of even their post-mortem existence, for in most cases, the bodies of the victims would be left hanging on their crosses long after they died, to be slowly picked apart by crows or scavenging dogs." R. HORSLEY & N. A. SILBERMAN, *The Message and the Kingdom*, 89.

¹⁵⁴ Hebrews 13:13.

witness, one of unconditional trust in his Father: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."¹⁵⁵

3.2.3. *The Ultimate Incarnation in History*

Jesus was able to enter into communion with God in the powerlessness of the cross. This is the occasion of the ultimate incarnation: God's presence in the weakest and most vulnerable form of suffering. According to Scripture we know God through what God does and says in history. But on the cross God does not act or speak, does not intervene, he let things simply be. Jon Sobrino highlights:

"The cross therefore raises the most serious problem, whether and how not acting, not speaking, how silence, withdrawal, inaction can reveal anything of God."¹⁵⁶

Being honest with revelation we must say that God himself has accepted to become consistently incarnated in history, to let himself be affected by sin, a sin which brings death. The cross should be seen as a consequence of God's original choice, incarnation, a radical drawing near for love and in love, wherever it leads, without escaping from history or manipulating it from outside. This is God's accepting of suffering.¹⁵⁷ God, neither provides meaning for suffering nor deprives it of meaning. The only thing the cross says is that God himself bears suffering.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Lk 23:46.

"...although Jesus would not have had an explicit awareness of the complete meaning of his death, he would have had the firm hope that his life and death were the immediate announcement of the Reign, in other words, that the definitive coming of the Reign was through his life and his death, between which a continuity must be accepted, so that his death was but the culmination of his life, the definitive moment of his total surrender and commitment to the proclamation and the realization of the Reign." I. ELLACURIA, *The Crucified People in Systematic Theology. Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 276.

¹⁵⁶ J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 240.

¹⁵⁷ J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244.

¹⁵⁸ J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 242.

3.2.4. *Mediating Through Smallness*

What can we know of God from his crucifixion? What the cross directly reveals of God is his non-action and his suffering. Sobrino comments: "God does not only reveal himself as the "greater," but also, as the "lesser" God."¹⁵⁹ The revelation of God may be fulfilment, but also scandal. On the cross we see God mediating through smallness. God is also in what is small, in suffering, in negativity; all this also affects God and reveals him. Once we accept this side of God, then God becomes more transcendent, more indescribable, more of a mystery.

The cross reveals nothing of what is usually presented as divine; there is only God's silence. A silence that reveals God in a way we had not imagined. The cross reveals not power, but impotence. God succumbs to the power of evil. But God shows himself the true One through his defeat.¹⁶⁰ In practical terms, the best way to know God on Jesus' cross is "carrying" the cross and taking responsibility for the crucified. To stand at the foot of Jesus' cross and to stand at the foot of historical crosses is absolutely necessary if we want to know the crucified God.¹⁶¹ What God

¹⁵⁹ J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 248.

"The Pauline structure of thought is that the wisdom of God, which is already revealed to us in the wonder of creation, is now revealed in a staggering way in the cross of Jesus. Paul's theology keeps before us the confronting idea that divine Wisdom, at work creatively and continuously in the expanding universe and in our evolutionary history, stands revealed above all in the vulnerability and "foolishness" of the cross, God's freely self-emptying and self-limitation of love." EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 118.

¹⁶⁰ J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 248.

¹⁶¹ "In societies where death is all about us, we are forced to open our eyes to what is happening, in order to be willing to respond to God, in faith, to the questions that come to us from the "Africa of the villages" and the Africa of the slums, from depths where men and women and children are locked up in hellholes of misery and despair... After all, it is Jesus himself who walks unrecognised today in the African people." ÉLA, *Christianity and Liberation in Africa*, 143.

Today there is a profound rethinking of the cross going on. There is a new understanding coming from below, taking seriously the story of the passion of Jesus as related in the gospels and tying it to people's suffering. I believe that we cannot understand properly the cross of Jesus if it is not in the light of the suffering experience of the African crowds.

"Christology must be done in the light of the cross: the full and undiminished deity of God is to be found in the complete helplessness, in the final agony of the crucified Jesus, at the point where no

encourages us to do is to become really incarnated in history, because only in this way history will be saved. God wants us to be really "foolish." It is his loving foolishness for suffering creation that brings liberation and healing. The cross of Jesus is not only the foolishness of divine love but also the power of that love at work, filled with liberating resurrection-life, with the promise of justice for the poor of the earth and the transformation of all creatures.¹⁶²

3.3. Resurrected, Yet Wounded

Jesus made such a profound impact upon his followers that they found it impossible to believe in a person who would be his equal. Jesus was everything; in him all prophecies were fulfilled.¹⁶³ The man Jesus revealed such greatness and profundity in his humanity that at the end of a long process of meditation the apostles and those who knew him had to say: Only God himself could be so human. And they began to call him God.¹⁶⁴ Therefore we are in front of a scandal greater than the cross, the Easter faith: the one who died on Calvary was none other but the Son of God.

Boff affirms that Jesus' resurrection took place at the very moment of his death. On the cross Jesus gave himself completely, he emptied himself and lost his life for God and human beings. Hence, there too, God's greatest communication took place. And God's greatest communication is called resurrection. Therefore, the

"divine nature" is to be seen." Paul Althaus, quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 206. Today's African Christology has to focus on the mystery of the cross; it has to be a "Christology of the cross." It is crucial to dwell on the scandal of the cross in itself and not to rush to dissolve it through the "solution" of the resurrection. J. SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator*, 234.

¹⁶² Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God*, 77.

¹⁶³ NOLAN, *Jesus before Christianity*, 164-65.

¹⁶⁴ L. BOFF, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 179.

incarnating process is completed and ends with the resurrection.¹⁶⁵ The resurrection perpetuates and deepens Christ's participation in each human being. God, therefore, is not far from us. He is our greatest depth. Jesus hides himself behind each human face. Faith in the resurrection involves that we look profoundly into the face of our brothers and sisters; love them, give them food, clothe them and visit them in prison.¹⁶⁶ The resurrected Christ is eternally wounded.¹⁶⁷ When the Risen Christ commissioned his disciples, it were the scars of his passion that revealed to them who he was.¹⁶⁸ The wounds are those of the historical Jesus, of the suffering servant or the prophet who is persecuted and crucified for announcing Good News.¹⁶⁹

4. The Trinity: Entering into the Hidden Heart of God

McFague daringly points out:

“what is urgent for us to consider is what it means for the Triune God as Creator to make a world where suffering and tragedy are built into the very fabric of cosmic existence.”¹⁷⁰

This section tries to face this urgency. We are entering into one of the most exciting sections of this essay. We are invited to “immerse” ourselves into the inner life of the Triune God. It is an exploration into the very essence of God, into his/her hidden heart.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 201.

¹⁶⁶ Mt. 25:42-43

¹⁶⁷ Jn 20:21

¹⁶⁸ D.J. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 513.

¹⁶⁹ M. FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 104

¹⁷⁰ MCFAGUE, quoted in GREY, *Introducing Feminist Images of God*, 93.

¹⁷¹ This Trinitarian section is meant to be a theo-logical exploration. We shall see in the next chapter the key missionary connotations of all that we shall discuss.

“The reality of the Blessed Trinity is inaccessible to human reason; even after it has been communicated, it can be known by the human mind indefinitely without ever being totally grasped; the triune God is mystery, not simply for the human mind but in itself, because the Trinity is essentially infinite and eternal; in salvation-history terms the triune God is a sacramental mystery, that is, a mystery that is communicated to us through the attitudes and words of Jesus and in the action of the Holy Spirit in ecclesial community and in human history.” L. BOFF, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 122.

We have observed the existence of a *paschal* logic as the ground of all that is. Our question of departure is: does this reality have anything to do with our creator, the Triune God? Next we shall highlight different attempts to make sense of it. We begin by considering God as the “Motherly Father,” the one who, in pangs of birth, labours in order to beget the Son in eternal creative love.

4.1. The Eternal Merciful Pain of Giving Birth

God, understood as “Father of the Son,” is the one who gives “birth”, the Motherly Father. The Son is begotten from the womb of the Father and is born from the Father’s own being.¹⁷² Therefore, God, as Motherly Father, gives birth in that passionately painful feeling of mercy.¹⁷³ Moltmann comments: “having mercy is characterized as a motherly feeling, but what is meant is not soft-heartedness, nor any feeling of bliss, but rather creative love which is like the pangs of birth.”¹⁷⁴ Having mercy denotes the pain of bringing the dead to life. Mercy is a life-giving power. Therefore, we can say, with Moltmann, that the Son is Son of the eternal mercy of the Father, and the Fatherhood of God is none other than this life-giving mercy. To say “God is Love” is to say “God is life-giving mercy.” God is the source of all life that gives birth and inexhaustibly has mercy.¹⁷⁵ This makes us to believe,

¹⁷² Council of Toledo [675] Quoted in: J. MOLTMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 22.

¹⁷³ As Moltmann points out there is a question, which has barely been considered at all in Christian theology; that is the idea of creation outwards or inwards. Christian theology has consistently distinguished between an act of God inwards and an act of God outwards. God has an inner, self-sufficient life and creation is an act of the triune God in his unity, directed outwards. Here we are tackling a crucial issue: the male/female dimension of God in the act of creation. Moltmann comments that creation as God’s act in nothingness and as God’s order in chaos is a male, an engendering activity. Creation as God’s act within him/herself must rather be called a feminine activity, a giving birth: God creates the world by letting his world become and be in himself: Let it be! J. MOLTMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 109.

¹⁷⁴ “Having mercy means more than just being compassionate and being affected by the suffering of others; having mercy also goes beyond solidarity.” J. MOLTMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ J. MOLTMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 23.

“Suffering is built into the birth process of the entire cosmos” M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 146.

in the same line with Wendy Farley, that our existence happens in the midst of God's eternal own pain and that, somehow, the tragic dimensions of living, will never be overcome.¹⁷⁶ Gandhi would say: "suffering is the badge of the human race."¹⁷⁷ Our suffering, as co-creators with God, is a participation in God's eternal suffering, and vice versa, God's very pain is affected by our own. So, if this is true, creation must happen within God him/herself.

4.2. The Universe as the Manifestation of the Inner Life of the Trinity

In this section we are considering the universe as unfolding within the life of the Trinity, a life yearning for relation and mutuality.

4.2.1. Unfolding Within the Trinity

The Jewish theologian Isaac Luria developed the idea of creation within God in his doctrine of *zimsum*.¹⁷⁸ The question at stake is: How can God create out of "nothing" when there cannot be such a thing as nothing, since his essence is everything and interpenetrates everything? Luria's answer is that the very first act of the infinite Being was not a step "outwards" but a step "inwards", as Gershom Scholem states: "a self-withdrawal of God from himself into himself".¹⁷⁹ It was a *passio Dei*, not an *actio*. As Moltmann explains, the first act of God is one that veils, not one that reveals. It is only in the second act that God comes forth from

¹⁷⁶ Farley says: "God's very vulnerability to human suffering and the world increases the pain of God." W. FARLEY quoted in: M. GREY, *Introducing Feminist images of God*, 60.

Grey would say: "God weeps with our pain." M. GREY, *Introducing Feminist images of God*, 59.

¹⁷⁷ I. RAGHAVAN, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, (Oxford University Press, 1978), 284.

¹⁷⁸ *Zimsum* really means "concentration" or "contraction", a withdrawal into the self. J. MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 109.

¹⁷⁹ J. MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 110.

him/herself as creator into the primal space that he had previously released in the first act.¹⁸⁰

Luria's theological exploration points to an understanding of evolution as two-sided. Every stage in the creation process contains within itself the tension between the light flooding back into God and the light that breaks forth from him. God continually creates inwards and outwards simultaneously. Creation in chaos and out of nothing, which is an act of power, is also a self-humiliation on God's part, a lowering of him/herself into his/her own impotence. Creation is a work of God's humility and his/her withdrawal into him/herself. His/her action is grounded in his/her passion.¹⁸¹ Therefore, we are pointing to a double painful step, the pain of withdrawing within him/herself and the pain of his/her giving birth in creative love.

In Trinitarian terms we ask with Moltmann: can the omnipotent and omnipresent Triune God have an "outward" aspect at all? The Trinitarian relationship of the Father/Mother, the Son and the Holy Spirit is so wide that the whole creation can find space, time and freedom in it.¹⁸² God created the world "in himself", giving it time in his eternity, finitude in his infinity, space in his

¹⁸⁰ Haught shares in similar terms when he says: "In order to create a distinct universe God freely "withdraws" the exercise of divine power and expansive presence. The creation is not an expression of divine might, but a signal of divine humility. God freely undergoes a self-emptying so that something "other" than divine reality can come into existence. At the heart of the divine life, so to speak, there is a deliberate self-contracting, a reduction of God's expansiveness to "nothing," a self-emptying withdrawal of the infinite presence and power. It is this kenosis that allows God's "other," the universe, to emerge." HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 160-1.

Moltmann comments that God permits an existence different from his own by limiting him/herself. His/her *passio* is a sign of radical Love. S/he withdraws his/her omnipotence in order to set his/her image, men and women, free. It is here that we see pictured the divine power. J. MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 267ff.

¹⁸¹ For J. Moltmann and Jakob Emden the doctrine of *zimzum* is the only serious attempt ever made to think through the idea of "creation out of nothing" in a truly theological way. Quoted in: J. MOLTMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 110.

¹⁸² "The three persons share an infinite "space" of divine life, a space of dynamic giving and receiving, of infinite exploration." EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 32.

omnipresence and freedom in his selfless love.¹⁸³ In the same line, Denis Edwards suggests: “the universe can be understood as unfolding “within” the Trinitarian relations of mutual love.”¹⁸⁴ At the very core of this tragic story is God’s yearning for relation and mutuality, God’s eternal self-sacrifice in Love.

4.2.2. *The Manifestation of a Yearning for Relation and Mutuality*

C.E. Rolt develops his doctrine of the Trinity from this axiom: God sacrifices him/herself in eternity, and his/her whole nature is embodied in this act. God is the lover (Father/Mother), the beloved (Son) and the love itself (Spirit).¹⁸⁵ But because his/her being is absolute, there is nothing outside himself that he can sacrifice in eternity. So it follows that what God eternally sacrifices is him/herself. His/her whole being is the eternal sacrifice of self-love. But because God, as perfect love, is at the same time perfectly selfless, s/he loves him/herself in the most extreme and complete self-forsakenness.¹⁸⁶

Through this understanding of God’s self-love and self-sacrifice, Rolt’s Trinitarian interpretation of God’s eternal self-love leads to a doctrine of the Trinity that is open to the world. Love has to give, for it is only in the act of giving that it truly possesses, and find bliss. That is why God has to give him/herself; and s/he cannot possess him/herself apart from this act of serving. God has to give him/herself

¹⁸³ MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 109

¹⁸⁴ EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 30.

“Creation happens and flourishes within the divine life. Going even further, the events of creation and redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ can be understood as taking place within the eternal dynamic life of the divine persons.” EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 30.

Within this perspective we see creation as the self-expression of the Trinity, whereby the divine Persons-in-Relation make space for what is not God within the divine life. We can say that creation is the free expression of the fecundity of divine life. Bonaventure [1221-1274] sees creation as the free ecstatic overflow of the fecundity of the divine Trinitarian love. Quoted in: EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*.

“Outside God there is nothing but nothing”, ECKHART quoted in: M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 149.

¹⁸⁵ C.E. ROLT, *The World’s Redemption*, 247.

¹⁸⁶ ROLT, *The World’s Redemption*, 95.

completely; and it is only in this way that s/he is God.¹⁸⁷ Heyward says that God creates out of a yearning for relation and mutuality.¹⁸⁸ Humanity was born from this yearning of God.¹⁸⁹ All of creation is an overflow of life and communion of the three divine Persons, inviting all creatures to also enter into the dramatic play of communion between themselves and with the divine persons. This is our vocation, to become conscious of our share in the divine banquet of love that does not count the cost, in self-sacrifice. This love is unveiled in its most radical form in the passion and death of Christ.

4.3. The Centre of God's Eternal Being

In this section we approach another dimension of God's eternal suffering, the one caused by his/her compassionate participation in the destiny of humanity.

4.3.1. The Pathos of God

Recent studies of the doctrine of the Trinity begin with the passion of Christ. Moltmann comments that the deepest ground for the passion of Christ is the pathos of God who from eternity is love. If this is true the Father cannot remain unaffected by the suffering and death of his Son.¹⁹⁰ If we see God as "Father of the Son" then he must be passionately involved in the fate of the Son. The Son is from him, but he

¹⁸⁷ "He has to go through time; and it is only in this way that he is eternal. He has to run his full course on earth as servant, and it is only in this way that he is the lord of heaven. He has to be man, and nothing but man; and it is only in this way that he is completely God. So God's divinity is not cut off from his humanity, and his humanity is not cut off from his divinity." MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 33.

"It was necessary for God to be Man, for only so could He be truly God" ROLT, *The World's Redemption*, 203ff.

¹⁸⁸ "If we accept that relationality is fundamental to our experience of life in the world, must not this relationality be grounded in the divine life? If friendship and interpersonal love (understood as self-transcending love) is the deepest and most important experience we have as human beings, must not we suspect that this reflects something that is in God?" EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 22.

¹⁸⁹ HEYWARD quoted in: M. GREY, *Introducing Feminist images of God*, 49.

¹⁹⁰ "Here we see how the doctrine of the Trinity "christifies" God more than it divinises Christ." MOLTSMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 22.

is also dependant on the Son, for they are one in their mutual love.¹⁹¹ This brings us to consider the mystery of tragedy within God.

4.3.2. *Tragedy in the Hidden Heart of God?*

Nikolai Berdyaev has developed a Trinitarian theology of the “tragedy of God”.¹⁹² He understands the story of human freedom as the passion story of God, who must suffer because he wants his creatures to be free. It is a single movement, which originates at the centre of the Trinity and it is completed at Golgotha: the passion of God is the tragedy of human freedom.¹⁹³

Rolt in his book “The World’s Redemption”¹⁹⁴ brightly deals with the mystery of God’s capacity for suffering.¹⁹⁵ He poses that what Christ, the incarnate God did in time, God, the heavenly Father, does and must do in eternity. If Christ is weak and humble on earth, then God is weak and humble in heaven.¹⁹⁶ Therefore “the mystery of the cross” is a mystery which lies at the centre of God’s eternal being.¹⁹⁷ If we believe that the historical passion of Christ reveals the eternal passion

¹⁹¹ MOLTSMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 20.

Moltmann makes us aware of the Trinitarian implications in our understanding of God-Father: “So anyone who wants to understand God in Trinitarian terms as Father must forget the conceptions of the patriarchal Father-religion (God Father of all, the one who possess fullness of power and gives legitimation to all authority in heaven and on earth. This creates a patriarchal ordering of the world, a theistic order, not a Trinitarian one) look to the life and message of the firstborn brother Jesus Christ.” MOLTSMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 20-21.

¹⁹² N. BERDYAEV, *The Meaning of History*, Geoffrey Bles, 1925.

“Love-force is a tragic gift... Tragedy is not catastrophe... The only tragedy that is really catastrophe is the death of love.” W. MCNAMARA, *Mystical Passion. Spirituality for a bored Society*, 122.

¹⁹³ MOLTSMANN, *History and the Triune God*, 24.

¹⁹⁴ ROLT, *The World’s Redemption*, 95. Quoted in: MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 31.

¹⁹⁵ “The immediate occasion for developing the power of God’s suffering theologically was the apologetic necessity for providing a reply to Darwin’s theory of evolution.” Quoted in: MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 31.

¹⁹⁶ The response to the reality of death, loss and suffering calls into question the popular and traditional view that there are no limits to what God can do. This theological view is replaced by a theology of God’s free self-limitation in love. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 39.

¹⁹⁷ In Germany Karl Barth and H. Urs von Balthasar were the first to demand that the being of God and the cross of Christ be considered together.

of God, then the self-sacrifice of love is God's eternal nature.¹⁹⁸ Yet we, and creation as a whole, share in the Son's passion, the passion of the Cosmic Christ. Feminist theologian M. Grey reflects upon the link of both. She makes her point very clear when writing:

“yet, as tragedy is indisputably a dimension of life on this planet and, because it is one expression of the embodiment of God, it must somehow find its rootedness in the nature and mystery of God.”¹⁹⁹

Hans Urs von Balthasar has this to say:

“It is the drama of the “emptying” of the Father's heart, in the generation of the Son, that contains and surpasses all possible drama between God and the world. For any world only has its place within that distinction between Father and Son that is maintained and bridged by the Holy Spirit.”²⁰⁰

For von Balthasar, every drama that can be played out in creation is already contained in and surpassed by in the eternal “event” of inner Trinitarian love whereby the Father begets the Word. The begetting of the Word is an eternal act of letting go, of divine kenosis, of creating space for the other. Von Balthasar speaks of God's action in redemption and creation as “the play within the play.”²⁰¹ Our play, the drama of creation and redemption, plays within the larger play of the divine life. The drama of divine action in creation takes place within the drama of Trinitarian life.²⁰² It is the drama of God's need of the Son's loving and free response; it is the

¹⁹⁸ “The sacrifice of love is not, either, merely a divine reaction to man's sin. Nor is it a free decision of will on God's part, in the sense that it need not have been made. For the cross of Christ is not something that is historically fortuitous, which might not have happened. God himself is nothing other than love. Consequently Golgotha is the inescapable revelation of his nature in a world of evil and suffering.” MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 32.

¹⁹⁹ M. GREY, *Introducing Feminist images of God*, 86.

²⁰⁰ H.-U. VON BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Vol. IV: *The Action*, 327. Quoted in D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 30.

²⁰¹ VON BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Vol. I: *Prolegomena*, 20. Quoted in D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 31.

²⁰² See J. O'DONNELL, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 139-50, quoted in D. EDWARDS, *The God of Evolution*, 31.

drama of our free unconditional response to the one who loved us first. It is the drama of God needing us.²⁰³

5. The Mystery of Evil and God's Suffering Love

We conclude this chapter reflecting about the theo-logical mystery of evil.²⁰⁴ We must face evil if we want to make sense of chaos in our world. We have a tendency to divorce evil from God. How can the one who is eternally good allow evil to exist? Richard Rohr says that God is surely tolerating evil; and it appears that, beyond tolerating, God is even making use of it.²⁰⁵ It is as if God created a situation where good seems to include evil.²⁰⁶ Sallie McFague goes even further saying that, in one sense, evil is God's "responsibility," part of God's being. All the same, God is also 'victim' of evil; God is involved in the suffering caused by evil.²⁰⁷ Rabbi Harold Kushner argues that in our evolutionary world process many things happen by chance, and even God does not control their outcome. God's role in our lives, therefore, is not to make something good to happen or to prevent something bad from happening, but to help us cope in a creative way with what actually does happen, whether good or bad.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ "Love that communicates itself requires response if it is to find bliss. But from his image in the world the Father can only expect the love that is a free response; and in order to make this free response possible, love must concede freedom and offer freedom to the beloved. In order to experience the free response it desires, love, must wait patiently. God participates in man's destiny, making the sufferings of his people his own. Conversely, through his indwelling, the Spirit and the divine Wisdom in history, people participate in his life and in his will; they love with his love and suffer with his suffering." MOLTSMANN, *The Crucified God*, 267ff.

²⁰⁴ Here, I refer to evil in its two dimensions: physical and moral. Physical evil comes from the very logic of evolution. We can say that apparently God doesn't have any problem with physical evil. Physical evil, as we have seen, appears to be part of the logic of evolution, a necessary step in the unending universal growth towards conscious life. Human growth in consciousness inevitably integrates pain. Work, effort, rivalry against the process of evolution, and frustration are parts of progress in the direction of higher consciousness. C. F. MONEY, *Theilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, 107. God is not strange to it. God befriends all that happens in existence, either in chaos or order. O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 54

On the contrary, moral evil, according to Teilhard de Chardin, means especially that capacity of humankind to endanger the whole movement of evolution by a refusal of our last destiny: to be all one in God. MONEY, *Theilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, 104.

²⁰⁵ Maybe that is the great work of transformation, "bringing life out of death, and calling into being what does not exist" [Rom 4:17] R. ROHR, *Job and the Mystery of Suffering*, 45.

²⁰⁶ ROHR, *Job and the Mystery of Suffering*, 45.

²⁰⁷ "The evil occurs in and to God's body." S. MCFAGUE, *Imaging a Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body in Liberating Life. Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, CH. BIRCH, W. EAKIN, AND J.B. MCDANIEL, Eds, 215-16

²⁰⁸ H. KUSHNER, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 113-148.

Rolt proposes that in order to be completely itself, love has to suffer. It suffers from whatever contradicts its own nature. But if God is love and nothing but love, can there be anything that contradicts his being, so that he suffers from it and has to endure it as part of his own self-sacrifice? What would this be? Rolt calls it evil. "God loves himself unselfishly, and therefore He must suffer evil."²⁰⁹ By suffering evil he transforms evil into good.²¹⁰

As human beings we are in a process of growth in consciousness of who we are. In this process, as indicated in the previous chapter, we are going through an adolescent stage.²¹¹ We rebel against God.²¹² This attitude of rivalry is part of humanity's process of assimilating the critical demands of God's Logic (birth-death-rebirth). God is conscious of these difficulties. God understands and assimilates this stage of rivalry against him/her. God suffers and rejoices with humanity. Farley calls it compassion. She says that compassion is the power to bring to life what is broken by pain, to bring to justice and redemption what is twisted by brutality.²¹³ What seems clear is that, as Moltmann says, all human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, "is taken up into this 'history of God.' Accordingly, there is in human life no suffering or joy that does not become part of the unending life of God."²¹⁴ God, in effect, never despairs of trying to bring order out of chaos, to "save" the creature from its own misguided decisions.²¹⁵ God keeps "pushing" the universe. S/he keeps "pushing" humanity (especially through the role of the

²⁰⁹ Rolt, *The World's Redemption*, 119.

²¹⁰ Rolt shows very well how in the evolutionary story God's suffering love transforms "brute force" into "vital energy." Suffering love overcomes brutality of evil and redeems the energy of evil, which is good, through the fulfilment which it gives to this misguided passion. Rolt sees this principle as acting at all stages of evolution. He tries to show that the process of evolution is the process of redemption through suffering love. He means by this the continuous transformation of deadly violence into vital energy. MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 33.

Paul Fides has spoken of "the creative suffering of God." Quoted in: MOLTSMANN, *History and the Triune God*, xvi-xvii.

St Paul's: "but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rm 5: 20)

²¹¹ In terms of our human role in the evolutionary cosmic process, E. Sahtouris suggests that we behave like belligerent adolescents and that the time is now ripe for us to move toward the stage of young adulthood, thus leaning to respond in more responsible and creative ways. (From the 2nd Chapter)

²¹² This brings moral evil to our lives. Moral evil is part of our fragility; it is a consequence of our limitations to integrate meaningfully the impact of physical evil in our lives.

²¹³ FARLEY quoted in GREY, *Introducing Feminist Images of God*, 93. This is the God who helps, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says "only the suffering God can help." D. BONHOEFFER, *Letters and Papers from Prison*. The Enlarged Edition, SCM Press and Macmillan, NY 1971, 361.

²¹⁴ MOLTSMANN, *The Crucified God*, 246.

²¹⁵ J.-A BRACKEN, *God in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, M. DOWNEY, ed.

prophets) towards the stage of adulthood; a stage in which we enter into communion with God's Logic and Wisdom. We enter consciously into God's story, we agree to peacefully be wrapped by the benign mystery that penetrates all that exists. It is then when we are invited to discover the great mystery, as John Jacob Raub says, that God doesn't know evil.²¹⁶

6. Conclusion

We began this chapter considering God as powerless and revolutionary. The God who is revealed through reality is a paschal God. It is a God who befriends fearlessly all stages of evolution, whether birth, death or rebirth. From there we moved on to the scriptures. Through the life of Jesus we observed the very same God, the one who embraces reality in its totality. We saw Jesus' understanding of mission, focussing especially on the mystery of the cross. He was able to enter fully into God's plan, witnessing to us in his obedience unto death, death on a cross. He led us to the fullness of time. Finally we entered into the mystery of the Trinity trying to grasp its inner drama, a tragic drama that happens in eternity. We are active participators in God's eternal paschal story as creation unfolds within the Trinity. We ended acknowledging that the very God who created us needs us, in this way giving room and meaning to our mission; a mission that must face meaningfully the mystery of evil.

²¹⁶ J. J. RAUB, *Who told you that you were Naked? Freedom from Judgement, Guilt and Fear of Punishment*, 75-9. Raub comments that evil is the cause of an illusion: our belief that we are separated from God. We believe that God is an idol who wants us to serve him selfishly. The key problem is that we don't experience ourselves as worthy to be loved. We don't believe that we are eternally loved by God. We don't believe that God is fully in communion with us. This fear rooted in an illusion is at the core of the patriarchal system and the different empires that have existed through human history. This illusion has brought humanity to a loss.

painful experiences still engraved in our being... Probably it is the most difficult missionary task.²⁵⁸ Rohr says: "The most courageous thing we will ever do is to bear humbly the mystery of our own reality. That is everybody's greatest cross."²⁵⁹ We are all wounded in different degrees; we belong to a fragile humanity touched by physical and moral evil. Everyone is in need of healing. The unresolved pain of our life can be considered as our "inner enemy,"²⁶⁰ what prevents us to embrace the eternal "other" within us. At this stage let us briefly highlight some essential attitudes that will help us to be efficient in our inner missionary journey.

6.1.3. "Tender Care that Nothing Be Lost"

Chrys McVey says: "Mission begins in humility and ends in mystery."²⁶¹ Our first task is to see correctly who we are, to accept fully our life story, to be really faithful to that truth. For that to happen, as M. Fox says, we must feel graced from the very beginning of our journey.²⁶² Secondly, once being graced, we are

engulfed by contradictions, which God alone can resolve. With Jonah, we will be delivered. But first we will be swallowed into darkness." P. J. PALMER, *In the Belly of a Paradox*, 10. Quoted in S. ZUERCHER, "Merton. An Enneagram Profile", 162.

The mystic maintains simultaneously an inner relationship with the mysterious, faithful, all-powerful/less God, alongside a sense of being at home in the fragmented reality of daily life. The mystical pursuit is one of integration, holding together the diverse energies of universal life.

²⁵⁸ "Even the most elemental knowledge of oneself is something that most people resist with the greatest determination" J. A. SANFORD, *The Invisible Partners. How the Male and Female in each of us affects our Relationships*. Paulist Press: NY, 1980, 9.

"For the most part all our trials and disturbances come from our not understanding ourselves" ST. TERESA OF AVILA (*Interior Castle*, IV,1,9)

²⁵⁹ ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 84.

²⁶⁰ Rohr highlights that until there is love for enemies, there is no real transformation, because the enemy always carries the dark side of your own soul. Jesus offers not just a suggestion; you've got to love your enemy to grow up. Jesus rightly puts it in the imperative form: Do it! Also, what we don't like about ourselves is our inner enemy. We must learn to love and forgive that enemy too. Sometimes that takes great humility and great compassion. R. ROHR & J.B. FEISTER, *Jesus' plan for a new world. The Sermon on the Mount*, 152.

²⁶¹ Quoted in: T. RADCLIFFE, *Mission to a Runaway World: Future Citizens of the Kingdom* (Sedos 2000)

²⁶² "Until we can feel graced, a psychological word for that might be high self-esteem, we're not in a position to deal with our wounds or anyone else's wounds. We run out of steam very early and give up the struggle.... I'm saying we can't deal with the lamentations, the grief of our time, the grief of the struggle of the Earth, the Earth creatures, the grief of the despair of our young people, the grief of

encouraged to believe that our story is part of God's story. Whatever we have lived is meaningful in God's eyes. Our pains and wounds were already born by God. Our painful story is part of God's eternal story.²⁶³ In Whitehead's words, God is the "tender care that nothing be lost."²⁶⁴ We must urgently unite both.²⁶⁵ Lastly, we are invited to enter into an inner process of healing, through reconciliation and forgiveness. Rohr points out that this process can be brutal. It is a process of deciding whether or not we will forgive ourselves.²⁶⁶ It is a process of grieving, of living our many "deaths" as paschal ones, opening us to new life and new spirit.²⁶⁷ In the end, we are called to allow our roots to bless us. As Rolheiser says, "this is true not only if those roots are healthy but even if they were negative or positively abusive."²⁶⁸ Then, once our fears are removed in reconciliation with our past, we

our own wounds caused by racism or colonialism or sexism or homophobia or any other shadow in our collective histories except on a path of praise." FOX, M. & SHELDRAKE R., *Natural Grace, dialogues on Creation, Darkness, and the Soul in Spirituality and Science*, 57.

²⁶³ "The forgiveness inherent in our faith teaches that all of us are much larger than the good or bad stories we tell about ourselves. Please don't get caught in just "my" story, my hurts, my agenda. It's too small.... Strangely, your life is not about "you." It is a part of a much larger stream called God." ROHR, "*Everything Belongs*", 121.

²⁶⁴ A.-N. WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality: An essay on Cosmology*, 525. See: Appendix 4

In the same line, Toolan says: "God is eternal, but it is an eternity that is inclusive of, rather than separate from, temporality. God takes in all the events of the world's temporality, including its suffering, weaving them into the fabric of his own everlasting life and thereby preserving their value forever." TOOLAN, *At home in the Cosmos*, 149.

²⁶⁵ "The great vocation of the minister is to continuously make connections between the human story and the divine story. We have inherited a story which needs to be told in such a way that the many painful wounds about which we hear day after day can be liberated from their isolation and be revealed as part of God's relationship with us. Healing means revealing that our human wounds are most intimately connected with the suffering of God himself. To be a living memory of Jesus Christ means to reveal the connections between our little life and the great life of God in us." H. NOUWEN, *The Living Reminder. Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ*, 24-5.

²⁶⁶ ROHR, "*Everything belongs*", 89.

"Forgiveness is about letting go guilt (some imagined, some real) and about letting go of fear. There is no healing, no salvation, without forgiveness". M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 163.

²⁶⁷ R. ROLHEISER, *The Holy Longing. The search for a Christian Spirituality*, 164.

"We are here to learn. Everything that happens to us helps our learning. And nothing helps us to learn more than death." M. SCOTT PECK, *Further along the Road less Travelled. The unending journey toward spiritual growth*, 64.

²⁶⁸ "One of the great anthropological imperatives, innate in human nature, is that we eventually must make peace with the family. No matter how bad your father and mother may have been, some day you have to stand by their graveside and recognize what they gave you, forgive what they did to you, and received the spirit that is in your life because of them." R. ROLHEISER, *The Holy Longing*, 165.

shall experience God's first love,²⁶⁹ the most original one, the one who sustains us from eternity.

6.1.4. *Experiencing Eternity Within Ourselves*²⁷⁰

It is at that particular moment that we enter the mystery of God within ourselves. We gain a taste of eternity.²⁷¹ We submerge ourselves into our "collective unconscious" that makes us one with the whole spiritual heritage of humankind's evolution. This makes us profoundly compassionate and we are able to say with Rohr:

"...Who you are is who you were in God before anybody thought anything: before you thought about whether you are good or bad, before anybody else thought about whether you are good or bad. You came forth from God and you will return to God. You are eternal. That's the only solid ground [...] We are an eternal creation of God, and there is no point in denying it, or dressing it up: it already is. That's the ultimate good news."²⁷²

To experience eternity within ourselves unveils to me that my story is much more than "I", my personal story is part of a "big" one: God's! A story that is eternal, evolutionary and takes the whole living universe into account; a universe to which I am radically united. This new awareness opens the doors to our reconciliation with each other and with the whole cosmos; it makes us acknowledge that we need one another in our search of the eternal God who speaks to us "face to face".²⁷³

²⁶⁹ "A mystic is a person whose identity is deeply rooted in God's first love" NOUWEN, *"In the Name of Jesus. Reflections on Christian leadership"*, 28.

²⁷⁰ "My ground and God's are the same." Eckhart, quoted in: M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 161.

²⁷¹ "Now the seed of God is in us. [...] The seed of God grows into God." M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 183.

²⁷² ROHR, *Jesus' Plan for a New World. The Sermon on the Mount*, 78.

²⁷³ Ex .33:11

6.2. *Missio ad Altera*:²⁷⁴ *Listening to God's Story in our Neighbour*

Personal communion with God makes us aware that we are not alone, that we are walking together, that we need mutual support in our adventurous missionary journey.²⁷⁵ Mission acquires a new perspective; now mission is in reverse. We discover that the stranger is not only within us, but also without.²⁷⁶ Here we are invited to move from hostility to hospitality.²⁷⁷ The stranger is not anymore the one who is our scapegoat, the one onto whom we project our fears, but the one who unveils God's presence to our lives; the stranger is the one who bears the mystery of God differently, revealing to us a different chapter of God's story. Through the stranger God offers us the gift of wholeness in the middle of our estranged lives. It is through the stranger that our consciousness is deepened and expanded.

Hospitality means primarily the creation of an inner space free of fears, where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.²⁷⁸ Whenever we practice hospitality we actively invite the unknown and the uncertain to cross our threshold so that on the one hand we may trust and love them, on the other they may discover themselves as created free and unconditionally loved. Therefore, hospitality

²⁷⁴ R. Scheider highlights that missionary institutes *ad gentes* have tried to redefine *ad gentes* as *Missio ad altera* (that is, to those who are made "other") and *ad extra* (that is, simply going out from where one is). He asks himself what will the metaphors be which will shape the social imagination of Mission. He proposes the metaphors of accompaniment. Mission as *inserción*, as walking with the poor, as dialogue (especially dialogue of life), as solidarity -- all bespoke a strong sense of Mission as involving a strong attachment to and identification with the people the missionary served. SCHREITER, *Challenges Today to Mission "Ad Gentes."*

²⁷⁵ "We stretch out to God in our neighbour, God who is most other, so to discover God in the centre of our being, God as most inward. For God is utterly other and utterly inward. Which is why to love God we must both love our neighbour and ourselves." T. RADCLIFFE, *Mission to a Runaway World: Future Citizens of the Kingdom.* (Sedos 2000)

²⁷⁶ Here I recommend the reading of three valuable books of ANTHONY GITTINS: *"Gifts and Strangers. Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation."* Orbis Books: NY, 1989; *"Bread for the Journey. The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission."* Orbis Books: NY, 1993; *"Ministry at the Margins. Strategy and Spirituality for Mission."* Orbis Books: New York, 2002.

²⁷⁷ H. NOUWEN, *Reaching Out. The three movements of the Spiritual Life*, 45-79.

²⁷⁸ NOUWEN, *Reaching Out*, 51.

is not about changing people but about offering a space where mutual evangelization, discovery of God's story, can occur. In the end, it is the powerless Jesus himself who comes to us in the stranger, in the least of our brothers and sisters. Yet, it is the Cosmic Christ²⁷⁹ who comes to us through the "big stranger," the universe itself.

6.3. *Missio ad Universa: Listening to God's Story in the Cosmos*

As we exposed in chapter 2, humanity is still going through a stage of anthropocentrism. We believe that we are the centre and masters of the universe. Our experience in the cosmos is one of being strangers. Haught comments that our anthropocentrism is intimately related to a pervasive sense of cosmic homelessness; humanity finds itself being "lost in the cosmos."²⁸⁰ We, in fact, believe that the universe is inert, without life.

On the contrary, as we stated earlier, our universe is fully alive and fecund;²⁸¹ emptiness is the source of all that exists. Our universe is innately energised with a will-to-meaning; as O'Murchú highlights, everything in the universe veers towards life-giving relationships.²⁸² It presents itself as a dramatic evolving organism,²⁸³ an *adventure* story.²⁸⁴ We can envisage the entire universe as

²⁷⁹ In order to have a wonderful elaboration of what the Cosmic Christ means consult the book of MATTHEW FOX "The Coming of the Cosmic Christ".

²⁸⁰ HAUGHT, "Religious and Cosmic Homelessness" in: "Liberating Life. Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology," 160-1.

²⁸¹ "The cosmos is in motion: more than that, the cosmos is in birth". M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 180.

²⁸² This includes the paradoxical interaction of death-birth and rebirth. O'MURCHÚ, *Religion in Exile*, 128. "We must believe that we live in a friendly universe. The big question we ask ourselves is: Is this whole thing out there on our side or not? Is the universe hostile or benevolent? Is it radically okay or is it not? Our inner experience tells us that we are in a benevolent universe. The universe is radical grace. Therefore, we do not need to be afraid." ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 60.

²⁸³ HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 127.

²⁸⁴ HAUGHT, *Religious and Cosmic Homelessness*, 174.

"The cosmos is itself a risk-taking, a struggle from simplicity toward more intensely ordered and complexity." HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 64

being on a pilgrimage, as a long story of “homeless” wandering.²⁸⁵ And it is from this universe endowed with a spiritual energy that humanity emerged.²⁸⁶ In other words, we are endowed with a spiritual giftedness because the universe itself is innately spiritual. We can say that the universe itself is the primordial revelation. It is not an object but a creative subject.

Taking all this into account we are aware of the crucial missionary task facing us. Gradually we are beginning to understand that we belong to the universal reality, and that without it our lives are devoid of true meaning. If we want to fully exercise our Mission we need to allow ourselves to be embraced by the evolving universe itself. We belong intimately and inseparably to creation in its universal dimension.²⁸⁷ The missionary is called to feel that s/he belongs to a universe filled with meaning and creativity, an adventurous universe. The universe itself appears now as the story of an adventurous quest into mystery,²⁸⁸ moving forward in eternal trust. Our Mission emerges from this missionary universe. We sustain and prolong the adventure that has been going on in the universe from time immemorial.²⁸⁹ Through our Mission the cosmos seeks itself adventurously in view of expanding and intensifying its own being, of enhancing its beauty.²⁹⁰ The universe, therefore,

“It is terrifying. God plays preposterous games. God allows complexity, encourages complexity. God obliges us to play the game of becoming... We have to struggle to replace the functionalist, bureaucratic God with an artist God, that is to say a God who loves both beauty and risk... God’s willingness to run risks for the sake of a risky delight should boggle our minds.” S. MAITLAND, *A big enough God: A feminist’s search for a joyful theology*, 43.

²⁸⁵ HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 62.

²⁸⁶ The context and precondition for humanity’s spiritual adventure is the universe’s own inherent “instability” Haught, *The Promise of nature*, 62

²⁸⁷ “We belong to the impregnating stardust that exploded within the cosmic womb itself.” O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 200.

²⁸⁸ HAUGHT, *Religious and Cosmis Homelessness*, 173.

Swimme comments that the universe at its most basic level is story. Quoted in: HAUGHT, *Religious and Cosmis Homelessness*, 174.

²⁸⁹ HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 64.

²⁹⁰ HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 53.

becomes the archetype of the fellow traveller on our sacred journey into mystery.²⁹¹ Mission becomes con-templation, awareness, consciousness of what God has done and does. The missionary becomes aware that, in fact, it is not his/her Mission but God's. All is about entering into the mysterious story of God. As Rohr says, "finally, all we have to give away is our own journey, our own story. Then we become living witnesses."²⁹² We become living witnesses of our Missionary God. A God who is eternal self-sacrifice in Love, powerless, revolutionary, explorer, a God who befriends any stage of evolution, whether birth, death or rebirth. In the end, we become living witnesses of the Cosmic Christ, the one who is always presented with wounds, the wounds of the historical Jesus, the suffering servant or the prophet who is persecuted and crucified,²⁹³ the wounds of today's Africa.

7. Missio ad Gentes: Listening to God's Story in Today's Africa

We are entering in the most crucial part of this essay where we are invited to see how, considering all we have reflected upon up to now, we can be empowered. What is at stake is to be more faithful to what God expects from us today, particularly in today's Africa. Let us begin by reconsidering, in the light of what has been discussed above, our understanding of *Missio ad gentes*.

"God's will is not only the creation of beauty but its increase as well. The divine dynamism promoting the intensification of beauty is the most significant "force" in the cosmos. It is the creative source of our emergent universe. God's will for us humans is that we contribute our own lives to the adventure of enhancing the beauty of the universe. We are not the originators of value, but we may intensify its presence in the cosmos." HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 33.

"The theology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty [...] The type of Truth required for the final stretch of Beauty is a discovery and not a recapitulation [...] Apart from Beauty, Truth is neither good, nor bad... Truth matters because of Beauty". A.N. WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, New York, 265-67.

²⁹¹ HAUGHT, *The Promise of Nature*, 62. Archetype, understood as a primordial pattern in the universe that triggers off in us a promising way of behaviour (note of the moderator).

²⁹² ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 105.

²⁹³ FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 104.

7.1. *Ad Gentes: the Last Stage of Mission*

Today's approach to Mission is still very much marked by an "imperialistic/patriarchal approach." This had its origin in the increase of Missionary activity, which began with the European imperialistic attitude towards other continents in the late fifteenth century. It was closely connected with the expansionist designs of the European conquerors. This influenced in great measure the way Mission *ad gentes* was understood and organized.²⁹⁴ History tells us that missionary activity is rarely distracted from the concrete conditions of the societies from which it originates and to which it goes. Now, in our age of globalisation, we should be prepared to think differently again.²⁹⁵ Missionary institutes are already in that process. They interpret *ad gentes* as *ad extra* or *ad altera*.²⁹⁶ This has been clearly determined by the compression of space that has been created by globalization.

At this point we suggest a different approach. Our understanding of Mission is influenced by the new cosmology and new physics²⁹⁷ that brought us to see

²⁹⁴ As Robert Schreiter says, the empire not only provided a necessary infrastructure for transportation, protection, and even fiscal support for missionaries, but no doubt figured into the thinking of how Mission itself was to be organized. Even more we see how Mission assumed the military rhetoric of the empire-builders. The convergence of Mission *ad gentes* and empire created, firstly, a powerful way of thinking wherein the notion of Mission *ad gentes* became bound up with territory; secondly, provided models of Mission which were derived from the empire and colonizing process. Most prominent throughout the period of European empire was the civilizing model, which meant bringing European education, technical training, and health care *ad gentes*. What evangelization is becomes extended in terms of an infrastructure, which supports Mission; lastly, provided also models of relationship between missionaries and the *gentes*, as well as metaphors for Mission itself. Winning souls for Christ, rescuing them from the clutches of Satan, and expanding the Church all owed a great deal to military metaphors which had parallels in the process of empire-building. R. SCHREITER, *Challenges Today to Mission "Ad Gentes"*

²⁹⁵ "The fact of thinking of Mission *ad gentes* in terms of territory is something that only became prominent in the second half of the second millennium of Christianity." SCHREITER, *Challenges Today to Mission "Ad Gentes"*

²⁹⁶ SCHREITER, *Challenges Today to Mission "Ad Gentes"*

²⁹⁷ Haught points to the need of allowing our theology to be influenced by cosmology. Theology must be determined by evolutionary thinking. That will reshape drastically our way of perception of God. HAUGHT, *Religious and Cosmic Homelessness*, 170-71.

Mission as rooted, first of all, in contemplation. Mission *ad gentes* must be primarily rooted in Mission *ad intra*. If we follow the logic of this chapter, we will notice that Mission *ad gentes* comes at the fourth stage in our understanding of Mission. We believe that Mission is primarily towards oneself, but the *gentes*, the *territory* to be evangelized happens to be within us. Then it becomes more of a faith journey in mutual support with our neighbour. This makes us aware of being enwrapped in a universe willed-to-meaning, a universe that is evolutionary. It is in this particular context that we are encouraged to exercise our *Missio ad gentes*.

Our Missionary journey *ad intra*, *ad altera*, and *ad universa*, empowers us in a very meaningful way. It makes us humble, honest and realistic. We approach *Missio ad gentes* in a spirit of mutuality. God is present everywhere; “emptiness that overflows” happens universally; any stage of evolution, whether birth-death-rebirth, has a message, a signal of God’s real involvement. Consequently, Mission becomes awareness of a presence, removal of misguided perceptions and of spiritual blindness. Mission becomes experiential sharing, everyone and everything unveils God’s story of love. So, let us explore how this perception of Mission shapes our commitment *ad gentes* in to today’s crucified Africa.

7.2. Mission in Today’s Africa: Dialoguing with a Crucified People²⁹⁸

It was pointed out at the beginning of our essay that Africa is a Paschal continent. Life and death coexist in a dramatic way. Nevertheless, our reflection is concerned with its crucified dimension. Crucifixion is intolerable in its nature and

²⁹⁸ The expression “a Crucified People” proceeds from I. Ellacuría, Spanish Jesuit assassinated in El Salvador in 1991.

calls for a stand.²⁹⁹ This stand must commence with a profound act of reverence to reality in front of us. The African Church is invited to make this stand her own. We are called to dialogue, to a real exercise of mutuality with this crucified people. So, at this stage of our reflection we move towards concrete ways so as to empower our mission in today's Africa.

7.2.1. *The Crucified Africa: Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today*³⁰⁰

The crucified dimension of Africa puts us in front of a paradox. God unveils Him/herself as powerless, bearing the sins of the world, and, at the same time, God is rebellious in a strong determination to bring new life in a context of despair. Today's crucified Africa, as the Suffering servant, is victim and saviour. It is in front of this continent that the missionary stands.

7.2.1.1. Africa: the One Who Bears the Sins of the World

In chapter 2, we considered Africa to be the great evolutionary scapegoat of our time. As Ellacuría says, "the crucified people are the historical continuation of Yahweh's Servant."³⁰¹ The crucified Africa is the "continent of sorrows acquainted with grief," "no form or comeliness... no beauty." Africa, like the Suffering Servant, is "disfigured," is not considered human, and people "hide their faces from her." Africa is "despised and rejected" not only in life but also in death, "her grave is with the wicked and her tomb with evildoers." Africa is "oppressed and afflicted, yet she

²⁹⁹ "The cross expresses a type of death actively inflicted. To die crucified does not mean simply to die, but to be put to death; it means that there are victims and these are executioners." J. SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 50.

³⁰⁰ See Appendix 6: Cantic of the Suffering Servant.

³⁰¹ "...whom the sin of the world continues to deprive of any human decency, and from whom the powerful of this world continue to rob everything, taking everything away, even life, especially life" I. ELLACURÍA quoted in: SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 51.

opened not her mouth," she dies in total meekness.³⁰² Finally Africa "is taken away defenceless and without judgement."³⁰³ Africa is the image of the divine victim. Successive empires have left Africa behind like it were Christ they left, "they have made a Christ of her."³⁰⁴

The crucified people, as the servant of Yahweh, are chosen. They are singled out for this task from the womb of God.³⁰⁵ It is "the mission of the people who suffer."³⁰⁶ This is the most mysterious facet of all. Because of this the missionary must take off his/her shoes in front of a crucified people. Facing the reality of crucifixion is impossible without contemplation. The missionary is able to contemplate a disfigured people because he has first unveiled the presence of Christ in his personal cross [*missio ad intra*], the one of his neighbour [*missio ad altera*] and the one in the cosmic process [*missio ad universa*].³⁰⁷ The missionary stands in awe in front of the crucified people because of the message they proclaim: God unveils his/her very being. God shows that S/he is powerless, that S/he cannot do anything but to suffer, and to bear the sins of the world. God shows His/her self-limited love. It is the God who befriends and embraces chaos and death, precisely because S/he knows that something greater and beautiful is to come.

³⁰² There are thousands and millions of Africans who do not say a word. It is not known how they live or how they died. Their names are not known.

³⁰³ Isaiah 53: 1-12 Fourth Canticle of the Suffering Servant transposed to Africa.

³⁰⁴ Ellacuria, referring to the crucified people of Latino America. Quoted in: SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 51.

³⁰⁵ In Isaiah 42, in the first of the four songs, the prophet declares that Yahweh calls him by name before he was born, singled him out to serve in the cause of right.

³⁰⁶ C. MESTRES, *The Mission of the people who Suffer*. [Longman and Todd: Athlone, 1990]

³⁰⁷ The realm of the cross is one of chaos and destruction; the missionary courageously enters into it anchored in his/her feminine consciousness. All the same, s/he experiences compassion because his/hers are the joys and pains of the world, his/her "collective unconscious" is the place of encounter with suffering humanity.

The crucified people, as the suffering Servant, take us to the realm of God's eternal service. The missionary is called to enter into the "mystique of service."³⁰⁸ His/her concern is not anymore in saving but in serving. Service to a crucified people involves the creation of awareness of God's purpose in the middle of their destroyed lives. The crucified are servants not because the service of God consists in that misery, but because God assumes their slavery as His/her own. To make this belief acceptable is a tremendously difficult task. We have to face the reality that many people live in a hopeless situation crying with Jesus: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"³⁰⁹

But the vocation of the suffering Servant is also to unveil the truth of who we are. Jon Sobrino points out:

"The Servant not only proclaims the truth of the crucified people, but also the truth about their killers. All of us can and must look at ourselves reflected in the crucified people in order to grasp our deepest reality."³¹⁰

So, let us consider the saving dimension of today's crucified Africa.

³⁰⁸ "When speaking of mystique [or vocation] we allude to an experience that comes gratuitously. And gratuity –as Simone Weil had seen so well intuitively– is sister to beauty. The will to serve contrasts with the wish to save: nobody can aspire to being the saviour of somebody else, although all of us can help each other mutually. And help implies contact, direct, immediate knowledge. This which has been lacking in many "saving" movements is fundamental: because it is by contact that one comes to discover beauty in the midst of much desolation: as a star is discovered at night, or as one discovers the overwhelming beauty of the desert, or the beauty of fire [which at first frightens]. It is then that one passes from fear to love, a love that has a stronger guarantee of lasting out." J.-I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, "*To Serve.*" *For a Spirituality of the flight for Justice in the "Canticles of the Servant" of Isaias.* [Cuadernos Cristianisme i Justicia] [This Article is available in Internet: www.fespinal.com]

³⁰⁹ Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34. It is a daily cry for plenty of people of faith; they feel abandoned by the hand of God. They cannot understand their suffering. Their passion is meaningless. It is a crucified people who don't believe in God anymore, people who have abandoned their faith in their terrible experience of abandonment. This brings them to violence, exploitation, and all kind of survival strategies [alcohol, drugs, sexual promiscuity...] It is the power of evil mastering the African Continent.

³¹⁰ SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 53

"It is repeated that a great part of humanity is sustaining with immense suffering the march onward of our world, we have full right to suspect that the world is behaving badly with them. Perhaps unconsciously in the beginnings. But later in guilty fashion when, despite seeing the bad effects of our system of life together, we still refuse to give it up in view of the advantages this system brings us. And we even deceive ourselves by reassuring ourselves that it is also the best for them." GONZÁLEZ FAUS, "*To Serve.*"

7.2.1.2. The Salvation “Crucified Africa” Brings

The scandal for the world is to realize that the crucified people themselves are the bearers of salvation.³¹¹ God says of today’s crucified Africa that he/she will set her up as a “light for the nations.”³¹² Africa is showing to the nations what they really are. They are a light that unmask lies. Africa is our conscience; her suffering confronts us with our own selves, at the level of co-responsibility with others and honesty with reality.

The crucified people also offer positive salvation. They offer values that are not offered elsewhere.³¹³ African people impress by the way they manage to keep their dignity and hope in the middle of inhumanity. It is the cry of today's Jesus "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*"³¹⁴ To commit their spirit to the Lord doesn't mean to take a passive, resigned, or alienated attitude in front of the oppressors, it means to try to find alternatives to their crucified existence. To surrender themselves to the Lord means to discover the God of life in the middle of all misfortunes; it means to discover that poverty is not the last word, to discover a God who still gives his life for them, a God who hears their cry and get involved in their struggles. It is this acceptance in rebellion that makes them so evangelical. C. Boff and G. Pixley say that the poor impress not only through the intensity of their religious life, but also through the deep human values they embody, linked to their religious life:

“A list of these might go like this: generosity and mutual sharing, solidarity in suffering, hospitality to strangers, resistance in the face of hardship, patience to

³¹¹SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 53.

³¹² Isaiah 42:6;49:6

³¹³SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 55.

³¹⁴Lk. 23:46

obtain the necessities of life; common sense of realism, ability to communicate with all sort of peoples...³¹⁵

The missionary's task is to prevent these values from disappearing. All together are invited to practice mission in reverse. Africa is saved by the dignity, faith, readiness to forgive and hope of the poor.

7.3. Mission in Today's Africa: Dialoguing with a People in "Pangs of Birth"

Africa is not only crucified but also in the "pangs of birth." God is present in Africa's struggle for liberation. God is continually breaking into history and liberating the oppressed from their present suffering.³¹⁶ God, "the tender care that nothing be lost," takes as his/her own the pains of the African people, and it is from this radical compassion that God emerges and leads Africa to full humanity.³¹⁷ As we gathered from the previous chapter, God does not have any problem with the suffering and destruction that are innate to the unfolding process of evolution. God embraces chaos, and chaos, as Haught says, becomes even a signal that God cares for us, a signal that a new creation, new life, a most beautiful one, is coming.

"Chaos is a signal that God cares for us, that *S/he* wants the world to become something more than what it already is. Though chaos seems to reign supreme at times, there remains the possibility of surprising outcomes, for which we usually must wait with patience. We cannot calculate the specific character of emergent natural beauty in advance of its actual arrival, but we have nonetheless grounds for expecting it to emerge in surprising ways."³¹⁸

³¹⁵ C. BOFF and G.V. PIXLEY, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 225.

Jon Sobrino values their humanizing potential as follows: "The poor offer community against individualism, co-operation against selfishness, simplicity against opulence, and openness to transcendence against blatant positivism." SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 55.

³¹⁶ "What does God do all day long? God gives birth. From all eternity God lies on a maternity bed giving birth". ECKHART quoted in: M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 220.

³¹⁷ "Newness comes from expressed pain. The history of Jesus is the history of entering into the pain and giving it voice, so bringing newness and hope." BRUEGGEMANN, *The prophetic Imagination*, 88

³¹⁸ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 155-6.

O'Murchú comments in the same line: "And within the evolutionary process itself is a faithfulness, a sense of unrelenting promise, that there will be a future, that this future will evince hope and confidence [while continuing to be baffling and bizarre at times from the human point of view], that our universe will continue to grow in complexity and explode in the elegance of mystery, and that meaning will continue to outpace meaninglessness." O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 36.

The African Synod, with the same faith, proclaimed a message of hope for the African People. The Bishops declared that the African Church “must strengthen in all Africans hope of genuine liberation,” because God's promise “assures us that history is not closed in upon itself but is open to God's kingdom.”³¹⁹ And it is the very life and destiny of the suffering Servant, today's Africa in pangs of birth, that brings us hope, because God “shall prolong her days.” “Through her God's will shall prosper,” Africa “shall see light out of her anguish,” “shall make many righteous,” and “shall receive a portion with the great and will divide the spoil with the strong.”³²⁰ The suffering Servant was/is raised from the dead, so are the African people. Being raised from the dead is a new birthing, hence also a new suffering but this time a creative one. Africa is called to become a liberated sufferer with God. Africa is joyful in her suffering insofar as she has to suffer for freedom. Africa groans in labour pains. She “will be set free from her bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God,”³²¹ the God of Life, the living One, the one who loves life as the “sons and daughters of Africa”³²² do.

The missionary reveals God's will to justice and integrity.³²³ The missionary enters into the African struggle for liberation. The missionary, like the prophets and Jesus, grieves,³²⁴ “groans inwardly,” weeps,³²⁵ is moved with compassion.³²⁶ S/he

³¹⁹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14.

³²⁰ Isaiah 53, 10-12

³²¹ Romans 8, 21

³²² *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

³²³ MCKENNA, *Prophets, Words of Fire*, 21.

³²⁴ “Real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the most visceral announcement that things are not right.” BRUEGGEMANN, *The prophetic Imagination*, 20.

³²⁵ “Jesus understood grief as the ultimate criticism that had to be addressed against Jerusalem [Mt 23:27; Lk 19:41] “Jesus wept.” Jesus knew what we numb ones must always learn again: [a] that weeping must be real because endings are real and [b] that weeping permits newness. His weeping permits the kingdom to come. Such weeping is a radical criticism, a fearful dismantling, because it means the end of all machismo.” BRUEGGEMANN, *The prophetic Imagination*, 60-61.

cuts down through the numbness of death imposed by the oppressors.³²⁷ The missionary keeps alive the imagination of the people. S/he knows that God is at work figuring out a new African People. And it is the African People who witness God's grief to the missionary. Africa incarnates the God who thirsts for life,³²⁸ joy and self-fulfilment; the God who wants to reconcile all to Him/herself, the one yearning for the eternal blissful embrace.

We conclude this section of *Missio ad Gentes* in today's Africa acknowledging the powerful message we have received: *Missio ad Gentes* is about mutuality, dialogue, capacity of listening, con-templation, compassion, "mystique of service," in sum, about re-membering together. Africa unveils to us God's story as it unfolds through her. In her crucifixion, Africa witnesses to us a powerless God, a humble and loving God, a God who serves us. It is the God of the suffering Servant, the disfigured one. In her "pangs of birth," Africa witnesses to us a "revolutionary" God, who is discontent with the status quo, a God who yearns and thirsts for life, the Living One. In mutuality, the missionary shares with Africa God's story in his/her life. The very same God, the powerless and revolutionary, is present in the inner life of the missionary. So, Africa missions as much as the "missionary" does. Both exercise *Missio ad altera* in mutuality. They journey together enwrapped in an

³²⁶ "Jesus in his solidarity with the marginal ones is moved to compassion. Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously. Empires live by numbness. Corporate economies expect blindness to the cost in terms of poverty and exploitation. Jesus penetrates the numbness by his compassion and with his compassion takes the first step by making visible the odd abnormality that had become business as usual. Jesus enters into the hurt and finally comes to embody it" BRUEGGEMANN, *The prophetic Imagination*, 85-86.

³²⁷ "The task of prophetic imagination is to cut through the numbness, to penetrate the self-deception, so that the God of endings is confessed as Lord. Three tasks: to offer symbols, to bring to public expression those very fears and terrors, to speak metaphorically but concretely about the real deathliness that hovers over us and gnaws within us." BRUEGGEMANN, *The prophetic Imagination*, 49-50.

³²⁸ "The primary and most fundamental fact noted by the synod fathers is the thirst for God felt by the peoples of Africa." *Ecclesia in Africa*, 47.

adventurous universe, a universe that, in “pangs of birth”, brought them to existence. Both, Africa and the missionary, narrate God’s story, both are “living scriptures,” both proclaim the “living God,” both are called to become conscious of their vocation: to be “living mysteries.”

8. A “Living Mystery”: The Missionary as Being “Hidden with Christ in God”

We concluded the last section noticing that, in the end, we missionaries, are called to become conscious of our primordial vocation: to be “living mysteries.”

Cardinal Suhard once said:

“To be a missionary does not consist in engaging in propaganda nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would make no sense if God did not exist”³²⁹

Considering this wonderful and inspiring statement I ask myself: What does being a “living mystery” mean in today’s world? How does a missionary become a “living mystery”? My first conclusion is an obvious one: in order to be a living mystery one has to dwell “in the realm of mystery.” And we are not. I believe that we are “sleep-walkers.” Rohr says it:

“We have to accept that we share a mass cultural trance, a hypnotic trance. We’re all sleep-walkers [...] We human beings do not naturally see. We have to be taught how to see.”³³⁰

In the section “mission as re-mem̄bering” we got many insights so as to re-member our real identity as children of God. We highlighted the importance of *Missio ad intra*, recognizing that, in fact, Mission happens simultaneously (either being *ad intra*, *ad altera*, *ad universa* or *ad gentes*.) All is about re-entering the

³²⁹ CARDINAL SUHARD quoted in: T. RADCLIFFE, *Mission to a Runaway World: Future Citizens of the Kingdom*. (Sedos 2000)

“Mystery heals. Unites. Saves.” M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 164.

³³⁰ ROHR, “*Everything Belongs*”, 28.

mystery, making people aware that life is more than being alien and a stranger to all, but about communion in all. In the end, mission is about seeing, about becoming conscious that we are hidden with Christ in God.³³¹ Once the missionary, having been graced, reaches this level of “hiddenness” in God, then, I believe his/her way of living mission becomes profoundly transformed. The rest of the essay is about this: Mission as being “hidden with Christ in God”; the missionary as a “mystic.”³³² So, let us begin acknowledging the mysterious universe in which our Mission takes place.³³³

8.1. The Universe as our Context of Mission

8.1.1. Mission in an Infinite and Overflowing Universe

The “mystic missionary” enters in a different awareness of space and time. They are “boundaries that no longer hold.”³³⁴ The “quantum worldview” claims that things can be in several places simultaneously. Reality is perceived to be porous, fluid, and fundamentally open-ended. This has powerful theological and missiological implications. Human beings feel a strong need to frame things in time and space.³³⁵ But, actually, all is about eternity. Temporality happens within eternity, space is open-ended. Surprisingly, O’Murchú comments that “even the Big Bang theory is no longer a tenable position; in fact, it may be quite erroneous.” He continues saying:

“Ever since the discovery of dark matter, we are confronted with the fact that ours may be only one of several evolutionary cycles that may have existed in the past

³³¹ Col. 3: 3-4

³³² “The mystic is not detached from history but committed to its transformation.” L. BOFF, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, 162-3, 70

³³³ “We dwell in a profoundly mysterious universe.” SCOTT PECK, *Further along the Road Less Travelled*, 70 [quoted in Chapter 2]

³³⁴ O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 110.

³³⁵ O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 110.

and that could evolve again in the distant future. Our universe may be a great deal older than we currently assume. There may well have been more than one Big Bang. And faced with this prospect, the eminent scientist Stephen Hawking suggests that it may now be more responsible [even more scientific] to think in terms of a world without beginning or end”³³⁶

For the “mystic missionary” time happens within mystery. Time belongs to his/her engagement with cosmic creation.³³⁷ And it is in this cosmic belonging that we discover our true identity: our being eternal. As Nouwen says “from all eternity we are hidden “in the shadow of God’s hand” and “engraved on his palm.”³³⁸

Altogether, eternity happens in space that denotes fullness, not emptiness. Our universe is fully alive, is an “emptiness that overflows.” Our universe is so much alive, so full of energy that it contains at least 125 billion galaxies in a diameter of 30 billion light years.³³⁹ Moreover, when contemplating our galaxy we are in awe:

“Our galaxy, Milky Way, has at least four billion suns. Many of these suns are thousands of times larger than our own, and vast millions of them have whole planetary systems, including literally billions of satellites, and all this revolves at the rate of about a million miles an hour, like a huge oval pinwheel. Our own sun and its planets, which includes the earth, are on the edge of this wheel.”³⁴⁰

These challenging insights bring us to a new awareness about the reality of space and time; invites me to say with Ernesto Cardenal: “We move in His love as the fish swims in the water.”³⁴¹

³³⁶ O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 114.

³³⁷ O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 115.

³³⁸ H. NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son. A Story of Homecoming*, 105.

³³⁹ “The distance light travels in a year is about six trillion miles, so to reach a diameter of 30 billion light years, one multiplies 30 billion by six trillion to get some 180 sextillion miles. This is, a very, very long trip.” Toolan. *At home in the Cosmos*, 139

Swimme keeps on saying that we are in a universe, which because of expansion is “space rushing into existence”, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, 87. Another very challenging thought of our universe is that everything is centre. As Swimme notices “we are in an omni-centric evolutionary universe, a developing reality which from the beginning is centred upon itself at each place of its existence”

³⁴⁰ H. GOLDEN quoted in: R. Holloway. *On Forgiveness. How can we forgive the unforgivable?*, 15-6.

³⁴¹ E. CARDENAL, *To Live is to Love*, 49.

8.1.2. Mission in an Evolutionary Universe

The “mystic missionary,” rooted in eternity, does not only believe “big” but also thinks “big.” S/he honours the story of evolution. Re-entering the mystery means re-discovering God in our great story, a story unfolding over billions of years (perhaps over eternity).

Who are we? As we stated in the 2nd chapter “we are the progeny of a storied universe.”³⁴² Carl Sagan, in the *Dragons of Eden*, shows the history of our universe and our relative place on it. He asks us to imagine a “cosmic clock,” the 15-billion-year lifetime of the cosmos compressed into the span of a single year... In this context human beings emerged, in the cosmic scenario, late in the last day of the year, and all recorded history would fit into the last ten seconds...³⁴³ The birth of Christ would have occurred four seconds before the end of the year.³⁴⁴ (See: Appendix 4)

“For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’” Acts 17:28

“The cosmos can and needs to be imagined as a cosmic womb, a cosmic soup, in which all creatures swim”. M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 284.

It makes me think of the doctrine of “zimzum” we shared in the 3rd chapter. The first act of God is self-withdrawal into him/herself, so to create the evolving universe within Him/herself. Consequently, I concluded that evolution can be conceived as happening within the inner life of the Trinity; the “missionary universe” occurring in the very womb of God.

³⁴² O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 16.

³⁴³ TOOLAN, *At home in the Cosmos*, 140-43.

To speak in evolutionary terms helps us to think big enough; encourages us to enter into the dark stages of history with faith and hope in a different future, a most beautiful one. To experience reality in evolutionary terms brings us closer to see life from the perspective of eternity, from God’s eyes. In the context of today’s Africa there is a real need to analyse reality from the evolutionary perspective. That will remove anxiety and will grant much more serenity to the missionary.

³⁴⁴ As Owen Barfield points out, one would have expected that those who considered Jesus of Nazareth to be the culminating point of the history of the earth, indeed its saviour, would “feel that we are still very near to that turning point, indeed hardly past it; that we hardly know as yet what the Incarnation means”... O. BARFIELD, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1958, 1988), 167.

“How can we begin to apprehend such an epiphany if we do not have our ears to the ground, to hear the primordial sound, the subtle vibration that John’s Gospel calls the “Word made flesh”?” TOOLAN, *At home in the Cosmos*, 144.

This scale of time and our place in it put us brutally in front of our reality.

Rohr would say:

“A humble person is simply a brutally honest person about the whole truth. You and I come along a few years ago; we’re going to be gone in a few years. The only honest response to life is a humble one.”³⁴⁵

And it is not only in front of the time scale that we have to exercise our humility and honesty, it is also in front of our radical dependency on the universe itself. We are its creatures. We are a dimension of our storied universe; privileged participants becoming conscious of its own unfolding; becoming conscious that life is begotten from stardust; that “we are, quite literally, stardust.”³⁴⁶ We are the fruit of a universe that sacrifices itself through an unending cycle of birth-death-rebirth. The Sun witnesses to us in a perpetual act of self-sacrifice, a sacrifice that gives birth, a sacrifice that invites us to incarnate its inner logic. Swimme writes:

“Human generosity is possible only because at the centre of the solar system a magnificent stellar generosity pours forth free energy day and night without stop and without complaint and without the slightest hesitation. This is the way of the universe. This is the way of life. And this is the way in which each of us joins this cosmological lineage when we accept the Sun’s gift of energy and transform it into creative action that will enable the community to flourish”³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 103.

I invite you to make a parallel between the life time-span of a human being in the context of the evolutionary story and the description of Swimme about the nature of the ground of the universe: Swimme says that the more carefully we study the universe, the stranger it gets. This emergence of particles out of a non-visible field takes place throughout the entire universe. The usual process for particles is to erupt in pairs that will quickly interact and annihilate each other. At each instant, protons and antiprotons are flashing out of, and are as suddenly absorbed back into the all-nourishing abyss. Such creative and destructive activity takes place everywhere and at all times throughout the universe. [From Chapter 2]

³⁴⁶ J. J. MCFADDEN quoted in: O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 16

³⁴⁷ SWIMME, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, 44.

In the same line: “the Sun is, with each second, giving itself over to become energy that we, with every meal, partake of. We so rarely reflect on this basic truth from biology, and yet its spiritual significance is supreme.” SWIMME, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, 87.

“Every time we eat food there is sacrifice. That’s why I talk about the Eucharistic law of the Universe, that we are always eating and being eaten and so is the Christ, so is the divine presence in this space and time called the Universe. There is a law here of sacrifice. Even divinity gets sacrificed, and we’ve cut ourselves off from that.” FOX, *Natural Grace*, 74.

What we can observe and experience in evolution is an “extravagant generosity.”³⁴⁸ O’Murchú contributes in the same line:

“Everything is given as a total gift with no conditions set down. Such is the outrageous generosity of the Originating and Sustaining Mystery, a proclivity that we witness everywhere in the created universe. The prodigious fecundity of our erotic universe mirrors the prodigious fecundity of our God.”³⁴⁹

Merton would say: “There is nothing we can steal from God at all because before we can think of stealing it, it has already been given.”³⁵⁰ And it is this “universal table fellowship” that occurs at every single moment. We are immersed in the divine eternal banquet, and we keep on moving as “sleep-walkers.” Why is humanity so blind to God’s gratuitous love? In the 2nd chapter we attempted to analyse its main reason. We reached the conclusion that humanity is going through an adolescent process, unable to handle creatively the violence and destruction inherent to a dynamic evolutionary universe, a universe that is the manifestation of God’s self-sacrificial love. Now, how does the “mystic missionary” fit in this entire picture? What is our call like taking into account our cosmological awareness and humanity’s rivalry with God?

8.2. The “Mystic Missionary” and the “Sign of Jonah”

Jesus’ said that the only sign he will give us is the “Sign of Jonah”: “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”³⁵¹ That’s the only sign Jesus offers. Entering into the dark night and allowing oneself to be transformed is the only pattern Jesus promised

³⁴⁸ HAUGHT, *Science & Religion*, 67.

³⁴⁹ O’MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 92.

³⁵⁰ T. MERTON, *Prometheus: A Meditation. The Behaviour of Titans* (New Directions: Norfolk, 1961), 23.

³⁵¹ Matt. 12: 39-40

Chapter 4

A People in “Pangs of Birth”

“Despite the mainly negative picture which today characterizes numerous parts of Africa and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the Church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome. She must strengthen in all Africans hope of genuine liberation. In the final analysis, this confidence is based on the Church's awareness of God's promise, which assures us that history is not closed in upon itself but is open to God's kingdom. This is why there is no justification for despair or pessimism when we think about the future of both Africa and any other part of the world.” (Ecclesia in Africa, 14)

1. Introduction

This last chapter deals with the Missionary implications of the two previous ones. We intend to develop the way our Missionary endeavour can be empowered, so as to engage meaningfully in today's African paschal situation. We are set to reflect on the Trinity as a source of Mission, then, considering our previous research, we shall define *Missio Dei* and our participation in it. Once this will have been clarified we shall briefly evaluate how faithful we have been to it. We shall consider

“passion for reality” as the attitude underpinning all Missionary spirituality. We shall put forward as today’s paradigm for Mission: Mission as re-membering, which implies an active process of listening to God’s story. Then will be suggested a new understanding of Mission *ad gentes*, that can no longer be exercised unless missionaries take a more contemplative stance. Next we shall ponder on the implications this new understanding of Mission has for our Mission in today’s Africa. The conclusion of this chapter will provide a renewed image of today’s Missionary as a “living mystery.”

2. Trinity as Source of Mission

In the previous chapter we have reflected in depth on the paschal dimension of the inner life of the Trinity. Today’s Mission theology is invited to take its ground in the Trinitarian mystery. Mission is God’s.²¹⁷

It was under the influence of Karl Barth that the Willingen Conference of the IMC (1952) discussed seriously the idea of *Missio Dei*.²¹⁸ Mission was understood as deriving from the very essence of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity. As far as Missionary thinking was concerned, this linking with the doctrine of the Trinity constituted an important innovation. Our Mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called

²¹⁷ “Mission is basically grounded in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, in its processions and Missions, in God whose whole being is self-communication and self-giving [...] Mission is an integral part of the eternal plan of God for the world. Mission is, therefore, first of all “Mission Dei”, and so we are justified in calling Mission God’s very own work. And whatever God plans and wills, he takes the responsibility for.” MÜLLER, *Mission Theology. An Introduction*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1987, 46.

²¹⁸ David Bosch, in his book “*Transforming Mission*” traces back the introduction of *Missio Dei* in Missiological discussion to Karl Barth. Barth may be called the first clear exponent of a new theological paradigm, which broke radically with an Enlightenment approach to theology. D. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 389-90.

Mission.²¹⁹ God is a Missionary God.²²⁰ All the mainline Churches in their various assemblies later picked up this idea. The Catholic Church discussed it in Vatican II. The Missionary document *Missio ad Gentes* declares clearly the Trinitarian origin of Mission.²²¹ Mission springs off from the life of the Trinity. After having stated that the Church is Missionary by its very nature, the Council defined Missionary activity as “nothing else, and nothing less, than the manifestation of God’s plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and in history.”²²² This plan flows from “fountain-like love.”²²³ Taking this as our background, let us define “Missio Dei” in the context of our essay.

3. What is Missio Dei?

Taking into consideration the discussion of the previous chapter we can define Missio Dei as *God’s eternal paschal²²⁴ story of love, whereby the universe, sustained in the Spirit, becomes the self-expression of God’s loving story between the Father/Mother and the Son.* God’s paschal story of love is eternally dynamic,

²¹⁹ “Mission was not seen in triumphant categories, though. Willigen recognized a closed relationship between Missio Dei and Mission as solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ.” BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 389-90.

²²⁰ J. AAGAARD, *Trends in Missiological thinking during the Sixties*. (International Review of Mission vol 62), 8-25. D. Bosch, attempting to flesh out the Missio Dei concept, says: In the new image Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. To participate in Mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is fountain of sending love. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

²²¹ *Missio Ad Gentes*, 2

²²² *Missio Ad Gentes*, 9

²²³ The Council continues proclaiming: “God in his great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in his life and glory. He generously pours out, and never ceases to pour out, his divine goodness, so that he who is creator of all things might at last become “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28)” *Missio Ad Gentes*, 2

²²⁴ The term “Paschal” includes the dimension of tragedy and drama. Drama is understood as an exciting or emotional event.

always moving in a re-creative “birth-death-rebirth” logic, and reaching out towards increased beauty and communion so as to become, eventually, total bliss in itself.²²⁵

What is our role then? Humanity, as part of the universe, plays a crucial role in *Missio Dei*, the role of becoming conscious participators in God’s inner story of love. Humanity exercises her role in freedom under the eternal care and providence of God’s powerlessness. Altogether, God will always be in need of us, because of his/her eternal grace to make of us his/her very Word. Our contribution shapes the God’s story itself, making of it a more or less interesting one, bringing joy and tears to it, without influencing the final result: God’s total bliss in eternal Trinitarian communion.

So, in the context of *Missio Dei*, humanity’s Mission can be defined as *the conscious participation in the eternal loving story of the inner life of the Trinity*.²²⁶ The Church’s Mission becomes sign and instrument for humanity of God’s very story. In the words of our Pope, “the ultimate purpose of Mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son.”²²⁷ In the same line, McCabe understands the Church’s Mission as an entering into the mystery of a Missionary God.²²⁸ The protestant Carl Braaten experiences Mission in terms of exploration of the universal significance of the Gospel in history.²²⁹

²²⁵ According to D. Bosch, *Missio Dei* is God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world and is actively involved in and with the world. It embraces both Church and world, and the Church is privileged to be called to participate in God’s Mission. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 10

²²⁶ In Appendix 3 you will find a litany of key assumptions presented in this essay; assumptions that are the cornerstone for such definition of Mission.

²²⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 77.

²²⁸ “A Missionary God whose love embraces the world and all its inhabitants, the mystery of the Spirit’s power present in unexpected places and unsuspected ways; the mystery of people’s participation in the Paschal mystery in ways we have never known or imagined.” M. MCCABE, *Towards a New Vision: Mission as Exploration and Transformation*. Presentation during the 1998 General Chapter of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. Ref.: *Petit Echo*, n. 894, August 1998, 328

²²⁹ Quoted in: MCCABE, *Towards a New Vision: Mission as Exploration and Transformation*, 327.

In sum, we have outlined the Trinitarian foundation of Mission. We now know that Mission is the Divine story itself; Mission is God's and happens within God. Mission is rooted and has its full meaning in God's story; a story that is paschal (eternal birth-death-rebirth); a story that is dramatic at its very core. We know that Mission, in his human dimension²³⁰, becomes conscious of being a Divine story. Hence, Mission is to see and experience as God does; it is to be one with the God who has no problem with the suffering and destruction that are innate to the universal story. Finally, Mission is endlessly restless, yearning for the eternal Divine bliss.

This rather abstract theological definition of Mission has crucial connotations for our Missionary involvement in the context of today's crucified Africa. I believe that, once taken seriously, it can empower us in a fundamental way. The next section is one of touching down. Firstly, we shall briefly evaluate today's current situation of numbness; secondly, we shall put forward concrete measures so as to empower our Missionary commitment in today's Africa.

4. Mission and the Fear of Death

As pointed out in the first chapter we noticed a big gap between the Church and today's crucified African people. The Church in Africa is greatly influenced by the "imperialistic" consciousness of the world. Today's "imperialistic" consciousness is very much infiltrated with the phenomenon of Globalisation.²³¹

²³⁰ When I say: "Mission in his human dimension" I presupposed that, as I have pointed out in the definition of *Missio Dei*, the whole universe is God's Word, and therefore Missionary. What makes us especial is the gift of our consciousness.

²³¹ Robert Schreier asks himself: is Globalisation a new colonialism? He proposes that, after all, it would appear that many of the effects of globalisation are the same as does of colonialism: peoples

Globalisation, in its negative dimension,²³² defines the human person on the basis of how much they can buy and consume; people are excluded and exploited rather than included. It destroys our sense of what the person is, created in the image and likeness of God.²³³ According to O'Murchu, globalisation is a new patriarchal and anthropocentric movement with the only concern of keeping humans in control. He says that this movement is powerfully fuelled by a subconscious need to play God.²³⁴ In the end, like any empire in history, this particular consciousness leads people, oppressors and oppressed alike, to be cut off from reality, in other words, it leads them to numbness, especially to numbness about death. The Church, wanted or not, is victim of this consciousness. All of us, in one way or another, have deep commitments to it.²³⁵

Hence, the question is how can we have enough freedom to imagine and articulate a real historical newness in our situation? How can we recover our Christian consciousness and imagination so as to be a counter-sign in today's

are robbed of their sovereignty; they lose control over their natural resources; their ways of life are disrupted by cultural requirements laid upon them from outside; and their lives are dictated by distant centres of power. Therefore, he concludes, from the side of the receivers there is not much difference whether you call it globalization or colonialism; the effects are all the same. R. SCHREITER, *Globalization and Reconciliation. Challenges to Mission*. In: *Mission in the Third Millennium*, 132-33.

²³² Francis Cardinal George comments that Globalisation in its positive side is an aspiration here on earth to live in harmony and unity. It holds up the hope and the promise of a truly united human family, bound together in deep communion. Globalization has the potential to link all humanity together in an unprecedented way. F.-C. GEORGE, *Globalization: Challenges to the Church's Mission*.

²³³ GEORGE, *Globalization: Challenges to the Church's Mission*.

²³⁴ O'Murchu proposes as alternative another force emerging nowadays: the "new cosmology." The new cosmology translates into a mystical and intellectual pursuit of a unity that predates and underlies all the divisions and distinctions humans have made in their attempts to make sense of creation. O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 195.

²³⁵ Jean Marc Éla points out this risk when describing the God preached to the African people in time of colonial regime: "The God proclaim to the African human being in the precise context of the colonial situation is a God who is a stranger to the times, indifferent to political, social, economic, and cultural occurrences, having no prospect of involvement such as would necessarily be implied in the Promise. At most, the God of the Christian churches in the times of colonization commanded adaptation and subMission to the existing order of things" ÉLA, *African Cry*, 30.

world?²³⁶ How can we dismantle our fears so as to be fully conscious of God's story of love within and without ourselves? How should we be an illuminated and honest people who have learnt how to see reality in depth, capable of decoding self-serving "truths" and cultural lies? The answer is rooted in a basic attitude: passion for reality.

5. Passion for Reality: Today's Missionary Spirituality

Here lies the cornerstone of all spirituality. All in life is about interaction with reality. Our attitude towards reality determines who we are.²³⁷ As we saw in previous chapters, reality, at its very core, is mysterious story.²³⁸

Jon Sobrino highlights three prerequisites for any genuine spirituality: honesty about the real, fidelity to the real, and a certain "correspondence" by which we permit ourselves to be carried along by the "more" of the real.²³⁹

5.1. Being Honest with Reality

We have an innate tendency to subordinate truth and to evade reality.²⁴⁰ To grasp and accept truth is to allow reality to be.²⁴¹ We allow reality to be, once we are honest to it. To be honest with reality is being able to appreciate reality as it is, as it manifests itself. Being honest with reality is being fearless in front of new

²³⁶ BRUEGGEMANN, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 44-46.

²³⁷ "Every human being has a spiritual life. Like it or not, know it or not, each of us is confronted with reality and endowed with the ability to react to that reality with ultimacy." J. SOBRINO, *Spirituality and the following of Jesus*, 236.

²³⁸ "Reality is not as simple as we humans would like it to be, nor does it always function according to our rational logic." O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 116.

²³⁹ SOBRINO, *Spirituality of Liberation. Toward Political Holiness*, 13-22 and *Spirituality and the following of Jesus*, 233-256.

²⁴⁰ "This must be a central facet of human existence: to have the truth right in front of us and yet be unable to see it or recognize it." SWIMME, *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos*, 1.

²⁴¹ SOBRINO, *Spirituality and the following of Jesus*, 237.

discoveries that can shatter and shake our faith, our perceptions and logics, our securities and needs to tie it all together. Being honest with reality is being able to take seriously our personal and universal story, opening the horizons of our consciousness; becoming aware of the wonderful story of the universe and of humanity.²⁴² Honesty about the real involves a radical “yes” to what reality is. Reality is an eternal invitation to enter in communion; an endless process of growth towards radical freedom. This requires faithfulness.

5.2. Being Faithful to Reality

Reality is synonym of faithfulness, and requires from us the very same attitude. Once we have a glimpse of what reality is about, we are enabled to experience two main feelings: one of awe, the other of fear. Awe, because we enter into the flow of eternal life and radical freedom, we are no longer owners of ourselves but living reminders of what God eternally does. Fear, because reality wants all from us and is jealous like a lover. We fear to lose our identity and securities whenever we will enter in communion with our real nature, our vulnerability. To be faithful to reality is difficult and costly. Faithfulness to the real requires full acceptance of its logic, full availability to be born again, to grow in complexity and richness. Faithfulness is being courageous and fearless. It requires readiness to be radically changed, to be radically taken and transformed by the “more” of reality.

²⁴² “Unless we live our lives with at least some cosmological awareness, we risk collapsing into tiny worlds... In truth, we live in the midst of immensities, and we are intrinsically woven into a great cosmic drama... To be out of touch with this cosmological context is to risk living within a shrunken and distorted version of reality.” SWIMME, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, 60.

5.3. Being Ready to Be Swept Along by the “More” of Reality

The “more” of reality is this everlasting energy blooming from the all-nourishing abyss.²⁴³ It is a never-ending call to be transformed to what reality is, so that the more you carry it, the more it carries you. This means that reality in its concreteness is also steeped in grace and gratuitousness. Reality itself offers us direction and strength to traverse, and make history in that direction. This is the case because in concrete reality there is an accumulated goodness as well that moves us. There is a hope-filled, honest, loving current there, which becomes a powerful invitation to us, and once we have entered into it, we can allow ourselves to be carried along by it. To accept that grace emerging from concrete reality is allowing ourselves to be borne up on the “more” with which reality is pregnant and which is offered to us freely, again and again, despite all.²⁴⁴

Passion for reality is essential for any missionary endeavour. God’s Mission happens in the realm of reality, not in our illusions and dreams. Jesus was an utter *realist*.²⁴⁵ So, the most urgent task for today’s Mission must be to re-gain, to remember our original communion with reality, reality that is story, story that is Divine, the ground of all that is.

6. Mission as Re-Membering: Listening to God’s Story

As we just come from discovering, the most crucial aspect for today’s Mission is re-membering.²⁴⁶ It is about re-joining our original unity with God’s story

²⁴³ See Chapter 2.

²⁴⁴ SOBRINO, *Spirituality and the following of Jesus*, 240,

²⁴⁵ R. ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 153.

²⁴⁶ In the context of today’s patriarchal will to power and consequently of fear of death, we have been left with a grossly distorted sense of our world and ourselves. O’ Murchú highlights Brueggemann’s claim “that there is a way out and a way forward, and it begins with the enormous task of “re-membering.” He deliberately spells the word in hyphenated form to highlight the double task of

and his/her logic (birth-death-rebirth). We need to become members again; members of God, of the evolving universe, of the earth, of our fellow humanity, and of our very selves. This will come about when we will be able to embrace God's eternal story that is narrated first and foremost within ourselves. Consequently, we shall commence this section by considering that Mission is primarily directed *ad intra*. Mission is towards ourselves. From here we move on to *Missio ad altera*, to the others who are strangers, and so come to *Missio ad universa*, Mission as reconciliation with the entire universe. Finally we shall focus on *Missio ad gentes*, taking as case study the current situation of today's Africa. In fact, this process of different kinds of *Missio*'s, which we make follow one after the other out of pedagogical considerations, happens simultaneously and each of them is influencing the other in a holistic manner. This very simultaneity makes the mutuality of being evangeliser and being evangelised possible at the same time. This is precisely what evangelisation in reverse is about. Every missionary who allows him/herself to enter into this dance of mutually influencing forces enters fully into this logic of remembering.

In the end we shall always find the Cosmic Christ who is all to all and who is still waiting to be embraced in the stranger. So, let us start with *Missio ad intra*, recognizing that we are in need of conversion and self-evangelization.²⁴⁷

reclaiming the deep memory of our evolutionary story, and in that process, putting back together again that which we have fragmented and destroyed, namely, the interconnected sense of universal reality, the one earth, now carved up into nation-states, warring factions, ethnic tensions, and gross exploitation of the resources of wealth and food.

When we engage with the creative re-remembering, we quickly discover that relationality (Brueggemann uses the biblical word "covenant") underpins all reality, and this requires of us a whole new way of engaging with life at every level." O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 165.

²⁴⁷ "We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew everyday" JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 47.

O'Murchú puts some flesh on these words pointing out concrete ways in which we can be converted: "As we grow into deeper understandings, we will find ourselves marvelling at the wonders within

6.1. *Missio ad Intra: Listening to God's Story within Ourselves*

In the last section of the second chapter we already pointed out the need to consider seriously our inner world. Considering today's patriarchal world we were invited to embrace our shadow, especially our feminine consciousness and our "collective unconscious." In this section we point out the need of facing ourselves, our mysterious self.

6.1.1. "Entering the Mystery"

As we have said above, Mission is all about our conscious participation in God's story. God's story happens first and foremost within us. McCabe says: "It is only in prayerful contemplation that missionaries are able to attune themselves to God's Missionary agenda."²⁴⁸ So, today's missionary is called to be a contemplative. The contemplative is the one who is one *with* the universe, with the universal temple (con-templum: with-the-temple). Hence, the missionary of today must be a contemplative, a mystic. But, what do we mean by mystic and mysticism? E. Stevens captures much of its depth and richness in this description:

"Mysticism is the art of becoming fully conscious. It is the way of removing the filters. It is the path to getting fully in tune with reality. Mysticism is a new way of being that transforms everything it touches. It puts me in touch with my deepest

and around us. The growth of such wisdom cannot be arrested. However, there are formidable hurdles to negotiate before this wisdom can be accorded universal significance. The rational mind needs to embrace intuition and imagination; the anthropocentric will to power needs to learn the wisdom of non-violence; we need to come home to a deeper awareness that everything within and around us is alive. These "conversions" will take time." O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 200.

²⁴⁸ "Mission in the coming millennium will have overcome the activism of the modern Missionary movement and combine prayer and contemplation... Prayer is an intrinsic, not an extrinsic dimension of Mission." MCCABE, *Towards a New Vision: Mission as Exploration and Transformation*, 384. "My contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of Mission depends to a great extent on contemplation. Unless the Missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way... The Missionary must be a "contemplative in action" "" JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 91

self, my hidden powers. So profoundly does it transform me that the mystic state is described as touching the divine.”²⁴⁹

Etymologically speaking, the word *mysticism* comes from the Greek *mystikos*, which seems to have two basic meanings: to “shut one’s senses” (the one who has ceased projecting and is open-minded)²⁵⁰ and to “enter the mysteries,” where the universe itself is considered to be the primal mystery.²⁵¹ In this sense, mysticism calls for a spiritual awakening to the mystery of the universe and our existence in it.²⁵² The mysterious universe we enter includes the universe of our minds and imaginations, the universe of our memories and life stories, of God’s being within us, as well as the mystery of the cosmos itself. But, as Matthew Fox says:

“...given the wounds of the human condition, to enter these mysteries as fully as possible some letting go is needed, some returning to a space of emptiness and openness and primal ability to wonder.”²⁵³

In this way, *Missio ad intra*, basically, consists in letting go, befriending, reconciling, embracing, forgiving ourselves, “inner bonding.”²⁵⁴

6.1.2. *Journeying Towards our Inmost Self*

Missio ad intra is a very peculiar missionary journey where one is invited, eventually, to embrace the divine story within him/herself. *Missio ad intra* can be defined as *an adventurous journey towards what is more original within us*.²⁵⁵ Apart

²⁴⁹ E. STEVEN, *An Introduction to Mystical Mysticism*, 15-16.

²⁵⁰ M. FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 38.

²⁵¹ “We dwell in a profoundly mysterious universe” M. SCOTT PECK, *Further along the Road less Traveled. The unending journey toward spiritual growth*, 70.

²⁵² M. FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 39-40.

²⁵³ M. FOX, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 40.

²⁵⁴ “True life comes only through death journeys wherein we learn who God is for us. Letting go is the nature of all true spirituality and transformation, summed up in the mystic phrase: “Christ is dying. Christ is risen. Christ will ever come again.”” ROHR, “*Everything belongs*” 152

²⁵⁵ Some psychologists will call it our “inner child.” “The “inner child” is the aspect of our personality that is soft, vulnerable, and feeling-oriented, our “gut” instinct. It is who we are when we were born, our core self, our natural personality, with all its talents, instincts, intuition and emotion

from being a spiritual journey towards conversion of heart, *Missio ad intra* is also a psychological adventure whereby the world of the unconscious is taken as a realm of evangelization.²⁵⁶ To be able to consciously journey towards our inner self we must develop what the psychologists call “our observer self.” As we evolve and grow in life we discover that there is a part of us that is able to step back and to watch, witness or observe what is happening in our life. Expanding our consciousness, we can soon become aware of the part we play in the larger drama, the “cosmic drama.” We witness our own personal dance or melodrama by stepping back through the power of our imagination.

Once we are able to take distance from ourselves we can embark on our inner missionary journey. The very goal is towards communion with our real identity, communion with eternity within us, communion with God’s mysterious story of love (birth-death-rebirth). This is utterly difficult and takes immense courage. We must face many hindrances, inner contradictions and paradoxes,²⁵⁷

[...] The “inner child” is the part of us that existed before we had experience.” M. PAUL, *Inner bonding, becoming a loving adult to your Inner Child*, 13.

To speak of the “inner child” is not to over-romanticize childhood. Our “child within,” as anything in reality can be creative or destructive:

“The Creative Child is made of all the healed and healthy attitudes and memories of your early life that help you be: open, loving, quick to forgive, trusting, imaginative, spontaneous, creative, playful, inquisitive, unaffected, free, willing to try new things, responsive.

The Hurt Child is made up of the unhealed attitudes, memories, and reactions to those memories which sometimes cause us to regress to negative childhood behaviour [...] The childish adult at times may want: to get control, speak in a childish voice, cry to get his way, be extremely self-centered, think the world revolves around him, look for someone to blame for his problems, avoid responsibility, run away from problems (or want to), resist change, have a great sense of inadequacy, [...]” J. BRADSHAW, *Home Coming: Reclaiming and Championing your Inner Child*.

²⁵⁶ Scott Peck says: “If you want to know the closest place to look for grace, it is within yourself. If you desire wisdom greater than your own, you can find it inside you. What this suggests is that the interface between God and man is at least in part the interface between our unconscious and our conscious. To put it plainly, our unconscious is God. God within us. We were part of God all the time. God has been with us all along, is now, and always will be.” M. SCOTT PECK, *The Road Less Traveled*, 281.

²⁵⁷ “Our first need... is to live the contradictions, fully and painfully aware of the poles between which our lives are stretched. As we do so, we will be plunged into paradox, at the centre of which we will find transcendence and new life. Our lives will be changed. Both our beliefs and our actions will be more responsive to God’s spirit. But this will happen only as we allow ourselves to be

us. It is the very pattern we have been speaking of during this essay (birth-death-rebirth). In fact there is no more mystery. All is about that, as O' Murchú puts it:

"So, what is the essence of life? What is its hidden secret? I suggest that the secret is in the story itself. And in a sense, there are no secrets. All is revealed in the evolving process."³⁵²

Moreover, Jesus told us: "Do not be afraid," "trust," "and re-member I am with you always to the end of age."³⁵³ As we are concluding this essay Jesus becomes undeniably "the way, and the truth, and the life."³⁵⁴ And he exemplified it with his life, passion, death and resurrection. In the end all is about that; and the Cosmic Christ is about that. It is for this reason that the "mystic missionary" knows that the universe is paradoxical, through and through. Merton says: "like Jonah himself I find myself travelling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox".³⁵⁵ The "mystic missionary" has learned to befriend paradox and to live immersed in it. S/he experiences his/her faith in Christ as the great paradox of all. As Raub says:

"Christianity is the paradox of all time: that tragic comedy where Christians are always lost, yet always found; always dead, yet always alive; always crucified, yet always risen; always sinner, yet always justified"³⁵⁶

In the end there is no way but to surrender in love, to surrender to the paradoxical love of God; to accept to be transformed, to fully embrace the "Sign of

³⁵² O' MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 63

³⁵³ Matt. 28: 20b

³⁵⁴ Jn. 14: 6

"The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life." JOHN PAUL II, *Faith and Reason*, 7-8.

³⁵⁵ T. MERTON. *The Sign of Jonas. The day-by-day experiences and meditations of a Trappist Monk*, 21.

³⁵⁶ RAUB, *Who told you that you were Naked? Freedom from judgement, Guilt and Fear of Punishment*, 148.

consequences, adding awful suffering to the meaningful one that comes from evolution itself. Humanity, nowadays, symbolizes the figure of the "Prodigal Son" in need of conversion.³⁵⁹

The "mystic missionary," as a part of humanity, is emerging from this situation. By providence s/he has reached the adult stage, "hidden with Christ in God," and starts seeing humanity from the depths of God's memory (his/her collective unconscious.³⁶⁰) The "mystic missionary" is the one who bears

³⁵⁷ "Becoming like the heavenly Father is not just one important aspect of Jesus' teaching, it is the very Heart of his message." NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 125

³⁵⁸ O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 140

³⁵⁹ "It is easy to accept evolution as a notional or intellectual concept, as an idea in the head: to embrace it as a dimension of living experience, a feeling of the heart, demands not one but many conversions" O'MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 124.

³⁶⁰ In the second chapter we have pointed out the need to embrace our collective unconscious. Let us remember that through our "collective unconscious" we are invited to enter into the memory of God, the God of "tender care that nothing be lost."

offence to Him/herself. "And if there are not offences there is nothing to forgive."³⁶⁸ S/he doesn't need to forgive because in fact there is no judgement. Jesus told us "do not judge"³⁶⁹ because He is "one" with his Father/Mother. For this reason there can be no enemies in God's world because no offence is every taken.³⁷⁰ Rohr says: "if the world is a temple, then our enemies are sacred, too."³⁷¹ In God's eyes "everything belongs". And it is this radical compassionate love, this "perceiving Christ in the least of all", in the nobodies of society, and in our enemy, that pushes the "mystic missionary" to give the most foolish step one can imagine: to become the "Prodigal Son" him/herself, the "suffering Servant of Yahweh."³⁷²

8.2.2. *The "Mystic Missionary" as the Prodigal Son*

The heart of the "mystic missionary", like the heart of God, cannot be at rest until the entire creation, like the "Prodigal Son", returns to God's bosom.³⁷³ S/he humiliates him/herself like a slave out of love for humanity; becoming the suffering Servant; s/he carries the sins of the world, as God does. S/he becomes the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." As Nouwen says:

³⁶⁸ RAUB, *Who told you that you were Naked?*, 60.

³⁶⁹ Matt 7: 2

³⁷⁰ "Division of others into friends and enemies is only our doing. In reality there is no such division. No one can be our enemy unless we judge him to be offensive. But an offence is something that occurs only in our judgmental mind. No one could offend us if we weren't first an offence to ourselves." J. Raub, *Who told you that you were naked?* 60

³⁷¹ ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 52.

³⁷² "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Cor 1: 18

"...we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." 1 Cor 1: 22-25

³⁷³ "But the father of the prodigal son is not concerned about himself. His long-suffering life has emptied him of his desires to keep in control of things. His children are his only concern, to them he wants to give himself completely, and for them he wants to pour out all of himself" NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 128.

"God, in effect, never despairs of trying to bring order out of chaos, to "save" the creature from its own misguided decisions." J.-A. BRACKEN, *God in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*.

“Jesus is the prodigal son of the prodigal Father who gave away everything the Father had entrusted to him so that I could become like him and return with him to his Father’s home.”³⁷⁴

S/he, as “hidden with Christ in God”, is the powerless one, the one who loves in a self-limited way, allowing and respecting the freedom of humanity.³⁷⁵ S/he knows that this is the only way, God’s way. And this is a major challenge for the “mystic missionary” of today, “to show the beauty of the poor and powerless God.”³⁷⁶ (See: Appendix 7)

It is because of this grandiose mystery that the “mystic missionary” lives filled with awe in his/her radical incarnation in the world. S/he enters into the great paradox of good and evil. S/he knows that “the full knowledge of good and evil is the exclusive privilege of God.”³⁷⁷ She knows that we are a mixture of weed and wheat and that we always will be.³⁷⁸ S/he knows that all human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, “is taken up into the ‘history of God,’ into the Trinity. Because, in the end, all is radically OK, all is right. Rohr writes:

“You can trust yourself because God trusts you, using your journey, your experience. Nothing is wasted; all is forgiven. Nothing will be used against you. In fact, I will even use your sins to transform you!”³⁷⁹

The “mystic missionary” knows that, in the end, the work of redemption “is about coming home to ourselves, from our self-imposed exile and alienation, as

³⁷⁴ NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 56.

³⁷⁵ “The Father’s love does not force itself on the beloved. Although he wants to heal us of all our inner darkness, we are still free to make our own choice to stay in the darkness or to step into the light of god’s love” NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 78.

³⁷⁶ T. RADCLIFFE, *Mission to a Runaway World: Future Citizens of the Kingdom*.

³⁷⁷ “God is the night of Love and the night of mystery” CARDENAL, *To Live is to Love*, 61

³⁷⁸ To hold weed and wheat together in our one field of life takes a lot of patience, compassion, forgiveness, and love.” ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 37-8.

³⁷⁹ ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 110.

“Everything belongs. God uses everything. There are no dead-ends. There is no wasted energy. Everything is recycled. Sin history and salvation history are two sides of one coin. I believe with all my heart that the mystery of forgiveness is the entire Gospel. When you “get” forgiveness, you get it [...] Forgiveness is the mystery we fall into: the mystery is God. God forgives all things for being imperfect, broken and poor.” ROHR, *Everything Belongs*, 111-112.

creatures of God".³⁸⁰ And we conclude with the very last paradoxical twist: it is the very "mystic missionary" who is the eternally compassionate Father/Mother and the eternally powerless prodigal Son; it is this very one who is the eternally revolutionary, enwrapping the entire eternal scene, bringing to it dynamism and inner force so as to reach eternal bliss. And all this happens simultaneously.

8.2.3. *The "Mystic Missionary" as the Revolutionary Prophet*

It is from this unity in pain and suffering with humanity that the "mystic missionary" becomes a prophet and a revolutionary.³⁸¹ It is by entering into the chaos of the human situation that s/he accompanies humanity towards a new creation.³⁸² The "mystic missionary" re-members humanity and traces it back to its original unity with the Triune God in which humanity is immersed. S/he opens the eyes of humanity to a new consciousness, by which we discover in us an innate capacity of relating lovingly and meaningfully. The "mystic missionary" has a radical but not fanatic response to life. S/he says "No" to injustices. S/he loves the oppressed by being with them as much as s/he loves the oppressors by being against them.³⁸³ S/he tells the oppressors the plain truth, denounces them and unmask

³⁸⁰"Redemption is the invitation and responsibility to remain transparent to the transformation that authentic relationships make possible, as each relational context unravels (reveals) the divine intent of God's fundamental relationship with the whole of life. It is not about setting right something that has gone wrong along the way, or correcting a fundamental flaw built into the process from the beginning. There is no fundamental flaw, and there never has been. From the divine perspective nothing has gone wrong. Therefore we don't need a "theology" to set it all right, but rather an "anthropology" to highlight how thwarted our human imaginations can become precisely when we disconnect from our spiritual inheritance" O' MURCHÚ, *Religion in Exile*, 119-20.

³⁸¹ "Gandhi does not define justice-making as wining/lossing but as loving people into transformation; this love includes, for a period, absorbing their hatred". M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 291.

³⁸² "We are all meant to be mothers of God. For God is always needing to be born". ECKHART quoted in: M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 222. And "In compassion peace and justice kiss", 292.

³⁸³ SOBRINO, *The Principle of Mercy*, 65.

them.³⁸⁴ That is his/her paradoxical form of love, offering them salvation by denouncing their sinfulness.

S/he dwells in the “realm of transcendence”. The “mystic missionary”, “hidden in God”, is not the one who dwells vertically “up above.” S/he is the one who comes into the world from the realm of the future, from “up ahead.”³⁸⁵ S/he is totally present in the now, not as the “absolute present” steeped as s/he is in the powerlessness of humanity, but as the “absolute future”,³⁸⁶ the one who, in love, demands growth, the one who knows the real potentialities of humanity, the one who wants to bring together the scattered children of God, so to unite all things in Him/her, things in heaven and things on earth.³⁸⁷

Concluding this section we can say that the missionary as a “Living Mystery”, “hidden with Christ in God”, is rooted in the overflowing and evolutionary universe that manifests the paradoxical life of God Him/herself. The missionary becomes a mystery to him/herself and to the world because s/he ventures him/herself to be lost in the sign of Jonah, in this becoming a mystic by following Christ’s way and by entering into his Father’s logic. The missionary is as much the Father/Mother of the prodigal son as s/he is the prodigal son himself. In assuming compassion and suffering at the same time s/he becomes a sign of contradiction to him/herself and to the world and starts speaking in the name of God as all the former prophets have done.

³⁸⁴ “God is justice”. JULIAN OF NORWICH, quoted in: M. FOX, *Original Blessing*, 286.

³⁸⁵ TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 149.

³⁸⁶ KARL RAHNER, *Theological investigations*, vol 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 59-68.

Jurgen Moltmann consistently reminds us that in the biblical view the word “God” means, first of all, “future”. MOLTSMANN, *The Coming of God: A Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996)

³⁸⁷ Eph 1:9,10

9. Conclusion: Essay's Final Empowerment

I conclude by honouring the very definition of *Missio Dei* given at the beginning of this chapter: God's mission as an eternal paschal story of love, where the universe (where everyone is included: myself, the church, the African people, and all of humanity) is eternally sustained in the Spirit, and becomes the very self-expression of God's loving story. Our only role in this is to become conscious participators in His/her eternal loving story, an eternally paradoxical story.

This very eternal story of love has taken flesh in this essay. It became toally my story! In the end of my journey all has become a paradox. I began this essay with big certitudes and dreams of how to resolve the relation between the African Church and the Crucified Africa, and I am concluding it feeling lost in a paradoxical world.

All has been honoured. This essay has ended immersed in mystery, it has become mission itself, *Missio Dei*, Living Scripture. Yes, because I have come to see that the word to be proclaimed is not mine but God's. What emerges are not my solutions but His/her eternal wisdom. The only message I can offer at the end of this journey is God's. This essay has become a tragic comedy, a theo-logical drama, of which in fact, I don't understand anything and yet all makes sense. Where I started with pride and arrogance, I continue surrendering in humility and I have ended being enwrapped by God's eternal mystery. All has been honoured: mission starts in humility and ends in mystery. All has been honoured: the powerless and revolutionary God has taken flesh in this essay, in myself; the God of surprises, the eternal explorer, the "improviser of unsurpassed ingenuity", the "extravagantly generous", the one who works with chances, "the one who outpaces all our constructs and who unceasingly lures us to radically new places and new ways of

being”³⁸⁸. This is the God of our great evolutionary story, the one who makes of life an eternal parable. In fact this essay has become a living parable about my own journey.³⁸⁹ I wanted to end with concrete solutions, and the only Word I can give is: mystery. The only empowerment I can offer is a humble invitation to enter into the paradoxical logic of God: entering into the mystery itself, and allowing oneself to be guided by it. Once lost in it, the very mystery will disappear, because the only thing mystery asks from us is to befriend it; the only thing God asks from us is to be his/her friends, just to be hidden within Him/her eternally. All is about wisdom, a wisdom that overflows from the foolishness of the cross, and it is this very wisdom that we can offer in the manner God is offering it from all eternity. It is “the wisdom of humanity’s ultimate destination, the Kingdom of God”³⁹⁰ A kingdom that is not only among us, but also within us, a Kingdom that is the eternal banquet to which we are invited. All is about opening our eyes. Mission is about opening our eyes, it is about re-entering the mystery, about participating consciously in the flowing with the embracing course of benign mystery; “the mystery of a missionary God whose love embraces the world and all its inhabitants; the mystery of the Spirit’s power present in unexpected places and unsuspected ways; the mystery of people’s participation in the Paschal mystery in ways we have never known or imagined”³⁹¹ Yes, because all is Paschal, we live immersed in “*Paschality*.” All is God’s, all is

³⁸⁸ O’ MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 55.

³⁸⁹ I remember reading the following reflection about the life of Jesus: “Jesus’ life is his great parable. We think we know how stories will end, but great storytellers and parable makers *throw a curve* at the end—workers overpaid, prodigals embraced, Samaritans who heal. We know that Jesus’ cross and death are the end, but God *throws us a curve*—life out of death, power out of powerlessness, fullness out of emptiness. That is what the parable of Jesus’ life proclaims for him and for us.” J. DUNNING, *Liturgy as Prophetic* in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*. This, in fact, has taken flesh in my essay and life story. (Throwing a curve means that nothing in the infinite universe is rectilinear or straight.)

³⁹⁰ T. RADCLIFFE, “*Mission to a Runaway World: Future Citizens of the Kingdom*”

³⁹¹ MCCABE, *Towards a new vision, mission as exploration and transformation*.

CONCLUSION

I concluded the preceding section, sharing with you the empowerment I received during this journey. Now allow me to fulfill my promise in sharing with you my personal journey throughout this essay.

This essay written on ending my four years of theological formation, wants to be a transparent sharing of what God is unveiling in my life. Because in the end all is about that, all is about knowing God. Theology is an invitation to enter into a theological drama. This has taken flesh in this paper. It started as a formal paper of theology. I began by knowing the answers, thinking I was in control, and I ended in the middle of a drama, in the middle of a paradoxical world, in the middle of a tragic comedy where my whole life became unveiled.

I started off taking all I read and reflected upon from the objective point of view, trying to be in control of the situation... I said to myself "I am the one who knows, I know the answers before beginning..."

This essay has become the return of the prodigal son, and it is through my theological reflection that God took me by the hand. S/he took flesh again in my sorrows, and showed me the way, the truth and the life. After expressing to Him/her my sorrows, my lack of faith, the nonsense of so much suffering... (reflected in the first chapter), S/he took me all around through the second and third chapters. S/he took me through the whole of nature; he made me enter into the mesmerising world of the microcosmos, S/he opened to me the wonderful and terrifying horizons of the evolutionary story, then showed to me, S/he who is the God of Evolution, the “why” of so much meaningless suffering: we are afraid to enter into his evolutionary vision. S/he put me then in front of the suffering of Today’s Africa, and opened my eyes to the reality of projection, the defense mechanism that had kept me blind and numb. S/he confided me then that all I had met on my journey of the 2nd Chapter was Him/herself: *“I am the powerless and revolutionary, I am the one who suffers and the one who wants things to change.”* Next S/he guided me to the very cross of Jesus and to his wounded Resurrection, and after that to the very secret of his/her heart, to his Trinitarian life. Wherever I saw suffering, I saw also transformation. Subsequently, S/he told me that, in fact, All is in him/her, that all happens in him/her, that S/he is not only the source of mission but that the whole of creation is an overflowing within Him/herself. However, after all these marvellous theological discoveries I was reluctant to enter into the scene. Right up to the beginning of Chapter 4 I was still speaking about Mission, fear of death and about unfaithfulness as realities outside myself. Next God brought me gently to a new awareness. S/he invited me to be honest with reality, faithful to it, and be ready to be taken by the more of it. It is then that it started downing upon me that I was narrating my

personal story, that in fact I was trying to make sense, to find meaning in the meaningless suffering of my life, of my existence as the suffering Servant, and at the same time I was trying to make sense of my unfaithfulness to the Lord, by projecting it onto the Church.

Towards the end of this journey I had the deep certitude that God was taking me by the hand and that I was walking with Him/her through this essay.³⁹³ Entering into the section of *Missio ad intra*, S/he began to unfold His/her plan to me. S/he told me that I had to reconcile my self with my life story, that there is no way but to acknowledge that all my experiences of disfiguration (being the suffering Servant of Yahweh) was in fact His/her plan for my life from all eternity, and that in the end there is no other way but to forgive, to let go. This is the greatest mystery: mission starts in humility and ends in mystery. Again S/he took me a step further and invited me to enter into the womb of the suffering Servant of Yahweh. S/he told me that S/he called me there from His/her very womb, S/he confided me that S/he was Light to the Nations through my scars and pains. *“Yes, you have a vocation, to carry the sins of the world, and this is my personal call for you.”* It was a powerful happening to experience the powerlessness of God; it was a time of consolation and awe in front of this incredible mystery. It is at this particular time that I proclaimed my faith in Jesus, as the Son of God. In Him all mystery was unveiled; He is the Way, and he gave us only one sign, the one of Jonah. Then, S/he raised me up, and took me to Him/herself. S/he told me that, in the end, all is about being hidden with Christ, the eternally resurrected and wounded, in Him/her. S/he told me: *“Yago, You are called*

³⁹³ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” (Eph. 2:10)

to see as I see, you are called to exist as I exist, you are called to love as I love, you are called to suffer as I suffer, you are called to be all in all, because now we are one in one. And you are called to be the Father/Mother of the prodigal son, and you are called to be the prodigal son himself, you are called to enter into the ultimacy of history, into the suffering of humanity, and you are called to be the revolutionary one, the one who leads and pushes humanity towards eternal bliss." It was then that I surrendered and got lost, that I didn't know any longer which title to give to the long essay. It was then that I not only surrendered but in fact felt overpowered, because S/he was all around in my powerlessness. In front, S/he was attracting me to enter into His/her eternal embrace, and behind pushing me towards growth, and maturity. It was when I had surrendered to Mystery all around me and felt lost that all came together and started making sense. Yes, "everything belongs". Then also God told me that I had started my essay immersed in illusion. I started seeing that seen through God's eyes there are no gaps (between the Church and the poor). All is happening in eternity, we are just manifestations, all is paradoxical, all is geared towards life, but in the end God knows, S/he knows all. The powerful experience I went through is that God has taken me to Him/herself on the occasion of this reflection. S/he took me to Him/herself in the most unexpected and illogical way. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord"³⁹⁴ "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways"³⁹⁵

This is the empowerment I have received and openly share with you; it is the empowerment I invite the reader to go in for. All has been honoured. This essay has

³⁹⁴ Isaiah 55:8

³⁹⁵ Rm 11:33

ended honouring the very ground of God “emptiness that overflows”. In the end I learned to unnerve my projection by which I disguised my own unfaithfulness and misinterpreted the suffering happening in the Church and in Crucified Africa. Because, in fact, all is about knowing how to take away the sins of the world, and this essay becomes a pedagogy towards that. We shall ever be carrying the sins of one another;³⁹⁶ the mystery is how to take them away, how to avoid projecting them. Ultimately it is the projections we so readily make that become the sting of death. They keep us in the realm of darkness. They prevent us from entering into the realm of mystery, into the belly of the paradoxical world. Once we succeed to unnerve our projections all becomes eternal, paradoxical, mysterious and elusive; we have undergone the Sign of Jonah. Then all becomes an eternal “falling into the hands of the living God”.³⁹⁷ Then all becomes “through, with, and in” the living God. This essay has left me with a real taste of eternity because in fact all is eternal. We are eternal. And it is this radical Good News that God proclaims from eternity. We are resurrected people,³⁹⁸ called to carry our resurrection, God’s treasure, in earthen vessels, to the ends of the world. It is in this spirit that St. Paul, the model par excellence of every “mystic missionary,” said: “Listen, I will confide you a mystery: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?”³⁹⁹ Listen, Africa, listen Church, listen, Yago, I am confiding

³⁹⁶ “Suffering is part of your training. God is treating you as his sons and daughters” (Heb. 12:7)

³⁹⁷ Heb. 10:31

³⁹⁸ “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3:18)

³⁹⁹ 1 Cor. 15: 51a, 54b-55

you a mystery: You are not destined to death, but to life!!!⁴⁰⁰ You are destined for one another, to fullness of life from all eternity!!!

⁴⁰⁰ See *Ecclesia in Africa*, 57.

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Appendix 1: Quantum Theology

Quantum Vision of Reality

(DIARMUID O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 28)

A homely example of the quantum vision of reality is the wooden desk I use every day. Externally it seems to be a dead, inert material object, which I can dismantle into its constituent parts and destroy if I wish. But if I take any fragment of the desk and place it under a powerful microscope, I will notice that it is a sea-bed of minute, "moving" particles. In the quantum context, I am invited to view my desk as something that is *alive*. The "life" is crystallized in the timber, tightly packed and condensed, but comprising the same particles that make up my body and everything else in the universe.

Truly, my desk may be described as a pulsating conundrum of crystallized energy. Even the sweat, toil, devotion, and creativity of those who made my desk belong to its essential nature and may be having a minute but nonetheless real effect on my feelings and thinking as I write these words. My desk is a constellation of living energy which, at very fine and sensitive levels, is affecting my psyche, just as I am affecting it.

Principles of Quantum Theology

(DIARMUID O'MURCHÚ, *Quantum Theology*, 197-203)

Principle 1

Life is sustained by a creative energy, fundamentally benign in nature, with a tendency to manifest and express itself in movement, rhythm, and pattern. Creation is sustained by a superhuman, pulsating restlessness, a type of resonance vibrating throughout time and eternity.

New Elements:

- a. God and the divine are described as a creative energy, which is perceived to include, but also supersede, everything traditional theology attributes to God.
- b. The divine energy is not stable or unchanging, but works through movement, rhythm, pattern, and restlessness - within the evolving nature of life itself.
- c. The divine co-creativity operates within the evolutionary process rather than as an external agent based on a cause and effect relationship.
- d. Notions such as "God" and "divinity" are used sparingly, because these are human constructs (descriptions) that may limit rather than enhance our understanding of life's ultimate source and meaning.

Principle 2

Wholeness, which is largely unmanifest and dynamic (not static), is the wellspring of all possibility. In seeking to understand life, we begin with the whole which is always greater than the sum of the parts; paradoxically, the whole is contained in each part, yet no whole is complete in itself.

New Elements:

- a. No one source of knowledge, theological or otherwise, can provide a complete description of reality; the mystery of life is fundamentally open-ended.
- b. Theology is about opening up new horizons of possibility and ultimate meaning, and not about consigning truth to specific dogmas, creeds, or religions.
- c. Since the whole is understood to be contained in, but not by, each part, the dilemma of pantheism is resolved.

Principle 3

Evolution is underpinned by a deep unfolding structure, characterized by design and purpose, necessitating an unceasing interplay of order and disorder, randomness and creativity.

New Elements:

- a. Evolution is considered to be the primary context of divine-human creativity in the world.
- b. Life, in its basic meaning, is blessed and not flawed (as in the original sin approach).
- c. In the divine-human unfolding, light and shadow always intermingle; quantum theology, while acknowledging the paradox of polarity, seeks to outgrow all dualisms, especially that of good vs. evil.

Principle 4

The expanding horizon of divine belonging is the context in which revelation takes place; all creatures are invited to respond, to engage in the co-creative task of being and becoming. All life forms have unique roles in this process, the primary focus of which is creation itself rather than formal religion.

New Elements:

- a. The primary context of divine revelation is the unfolding process of creation and not formal religion. Each religion is a particular crystallization of divine revelation.

No one religion, not even all the religions together, could contain or explain the fulness of revelation.

b. All life forms, and not just humans, have a co-creative role in the divine plan for the world and in the responses it elicits and evokes.

c. Revelation is ongoing; it cannot be subsumed in any religion, creed, or cultural system.

Principle 5

Because the capacity to relate is itself the primary divine energy, impregnating creation, we humans need authentic ecclesial and sacramental experiences to explore and articulate our innate vocation to be people in relationship.

New Elements:

a. The doctrine of the Trinity is a human attempt to describe God's fundamental relational nature.

b. The divine interaction within creation is that of subject to subject rather than object.

c. The innate human desire and capacity for relationships is the experience in which we connect most authentically with the divine ambience of our existence.

d. Church and sacraments are key moments for exploring and articulating our relatedness, as a divine invitation to life and meaning, and not organizations and rituals commanding legal observance.

Principle 6

Ultimate meaning is embedded in story, not in facts. All particular religious stories belong to a larger story, which includes but also transcends the specific religious traditions of anyone historical or cultural epoch. All sacred texts are attempts at articulating ultimate truth and archetypal values, approximations that require fresh interpretation in each new cultural epoch.

New Elements:

a. Sacred story is our primary channel for accessing the divine source and ultimate meaning of life.

b. Sacred texts (e.g., the Bible) which seek to safeguard the story need to be interpreted afresh in each new age if they are to preserve the ever new challenge and inspiration of the sacred story.

- c. Creation itself, and not we humans, is the primary narrator of the sacred story; we humans should be the supreme listeners.
- d. Both the contemplation and narration of the sacred story require symbol and ritual if we are to engage meaningfully with its deep mythic and archetypal significance.

Principle 7

Redemption is planetary (and cosmic) as well as personal. Redemption is about reclaiming the darkness, the nothingness (void), and chaos of our world and celebrating the negative potential for new life and wholeness.

New Elements:

- a. Redemption is a divine-human process of befriending those elements of our experience which threaten our security and integrity, rather than an act of rescue by an external, divine agent.
- b. Redemption is a process of re-membering, highlighting the ultimate paradox of life that pain and extinction are prerequisites for fresh life and creativity.
- c. Redemption is not just about personal salvation; it also concerns the healing and reinvigoration of planetary and universal life; there can be no personal salvation apart from the latter.

Principle 8

Structural and systemic sin abound in our world, often provoking people to behave immorally. To integrate the global shadow, we need fresh moral and ethical guidelines to address the structural and systemic sinfulness of our time. The formulation of these guidelines is as much a political as a religious duty.

New Elements:

- a. Sin is a form of destructive collusion between people and systems. Consequently, systems, rather than individual people, become the instigators of immoral and irresponsible behavior.
- b. The major sin of our time is specieism, the human-structural assumption that humans are the ultimate life form under God and are entitled to lord it over the rest of creation.
- c. Morality is a universal, cultural requirement in the light of which the dualism between church and state becomes an anachronism.

Principle 9

Because we are primarily beneficiaries of light (and not of darkness), and our final destiny - both here and eternally - is that of enlightenment, we all need those sacred moments of ritualistic/sacramental space, serving as heightened encounters with the sustaining mystery that enfolds us.

New Elements:

- a. Life is inherently destined toward the ultimate triumph of goodness, and not the ultimate catastrophe predicted by the second law of thermodynamics.
- b. Humans are innately spiritual- so are all life forms - and if appropriate human and spiritual maturation takes place, humans feel a need to celebrate, in ritual and sacrament, their relationship with the ultimate mystery.

Principle 10

The concepts of beginning and end, along with the theological notions of resurrection and reincarnation, are invoked as dominant myths to help us humans make sense of our infinite destiny in an infinite universe.

New Elements:

- a. We live in a world without beginning or end.
- b. The "end of the world" is a human/theological myth whereby we humans tried to set boundaries on our infinite universe.
- c. There is one world enfolded in eternity; heaven, hell, and purgatory are states of being within the one world. Our dead ones are all around us, living within a different plane of existence.
- d. Resurrection and reincarnation are not facts, but mental/spiritual constructs that articulate both our paradoxical fear of, and yearning for, infinity.

Principle 11

Extinction and transformation, the evolutionary equivalents of Calvary and resurrection, are central coordinates of cosmic and planetary evolution. Their interplay at this historical moment - "our kairos" - provides the primary locus for the praxis of the quantum theologian.

New Elements:

- a. Theology no longer belongs to Christianity, not even to formal religion; it has become an agent for global transformation.

- b. We are invited to do theology at the heart of the world and not within the confines of church or formal religion.
- c. The theological encounter becomes most creative (and most perilous), when we engage with the pressing global issues of our time.
- d. In its global praxis, theology seeks to demolish all dualisms, outgrow all human constructs, and pursue ultimacy with the skills and discernments of a multidisciplinary imagination.
- e. Contemplation becomes the landmark of theology; the pursuit of justices becomes its dominant praxis. All the rest is windowdressing, useful, but not essential.

Principle 12

Love is an interdependent life force, a spectrum of possibility, ranging from its ultimate divine grandeur to its particularity in subatomic interaction. It is the origin and goal of our search for meaning.

New Elements

- a. God is not a passive, detached, external ruler, but a passionate, relational presence, embodied in the creative, evolutionary process itself.
- b. God's passionate embodiment demands a whole new way of relating to bodies, through sexual tenderness, compassionate justice, and altruistic befriending.
- c. Sexuality, and its erotic creativity, for long perceived to be a major source of temptation, is emerging as a key dimension of authentic spirituality.
- d. Our world will become a new place when we choose to take love seriously.

Appendix 2: Creative Vacuum

(BRIAN SWIMME, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, 91-93)

Discussions concerning the vacuum sometimes point to the regions between the superclusters as the best approximation to a pure vacuum, and this is a reasonable way to proceed. Certainly matter and energy are extremely rare in between clusters of galaxies. But the unfortunate consequence of speaking in these terms is to give the idea that the vacuum is far away, and this is simply not true. The vacuum is everywhere, and the place I want to refer to in discussing the vacuum is the space right in front of you.

In order to bring the idea home, cup your hands together, and reflect on what you are holding there. What are the contents cupped by your hand? First in quantitative terms would be the molecules of air - the molecules of nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, and other trace gases. There would be many more than a billion trillion. If we imagine removing every one of these atoms we would be left holding extremely small particles such as neutrinos from the Sun. In addition, there would be radiation energy in the form of invisible light, such as the photons from the original flaring forth of the universe, or from Andromeda Galaxy and other sources. In order to get down to nothingness we would have to remove not only all the subatomic particles; we would also have to remove each and every one of these-invisible particles of light.

But now imagine we have somehow done this, so that in your cupped hands there are no molecules left, and no particles, and no photons of light. All matter and radiation have been removed. No things would be left, no objects, no stuff, no items that could be counted or measured. What would remain would be what we modern peoples refer to as the "vacuum," or "emptiness," or "pure space."

Now for the news: careful investigation of this vacuum by quantum physicists reveals the strange appearance of elementary particles in this emptiness. Even where there are no atoms, and no elementary particles, and no protons, suddenly elementary particles will emerge. The particles simply foam into existence.

I understand how bizarre and far-fetched this might sound for anyone learning it for the first time. But there is simply no way to make this discovery "reasonable." Most of us have Newtonian minds with a built-in prejudice that thinks of the vacuum as dead. If we insist that only material is real and that the vacuum is dead and inert, we will have to find some way to keep ourselves ignorant of this deep discovery by the physicists: particles emerge from the "vacuum." They do not sneak in from some hiding place when we are not looking. Nor are they bits of light energy that have transformed into protons. These elementary particles crop up out of the vacuum itself - that is the simple and awesome discovery. I am asking you to contemplate a universe where, somehow, being itself arises out of a field of "fecund emptiness."

The more carefully we study the universe, the stranger it gets. This emergence of particles out of a nonvisible field is not some unusual event taking place off in the regions between the superclusters of galaxies. This radical

emergence takes place throughout the entire universe. The reason it took us so many millennia to discover this process is its subtlety. It takes place at a realm far more subtle than that which our eyes can detect. The usual process is for particles to erupt in pairs that will quickly interact and annihilate each other. Electrons and positrons, protons and anti-protons, all of these are flaring forth, and as quickly vanishing again. Such creative and destructive activity takes place everywhere and at all times throughout the universe.

The ground of the universe then is an empty fullness, a fecund nothingness. Even though this discovery may be difficult if not impossible to visualize, we can nevertheless speak a deeper truth regarding the ground state of the universe. First of all, it is not inert. The base of the universe is not a dead, bottom-of-the-barrel thing. The base of the universe seethes with creativity, so much so that physicists refer to the universe's ground state as "space-time foam."

Appendix 3: What is Missio Dei?

1. We are living in a universe fully alive: energy abounds everywhere.
2. Our universe is intelligent, has “information” to dispense. There is a universal will-to-meaning. The universe exists, expands, and evolves because of “Wisdom” embedded in it.
3. This “information” has its “logic”: Birth-Death-Rebirth.
4. This logic makes the universe radical and eternally dynamic and relational.
5. Evolution/Creation (the universe) can be conceived as happening within the inner life of the Trinity.
6. The inner life of the Trinity is eternal, so is Evolution/Creation.
7. The inner life of the Trinity is an eternal dramatic dialogue (story) between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.
8. This dramatic dialogue is one of Love. God is the Lover/Father, the Beloved/Son and the Love/Spirit herself.
9. Love is self-less, hence given in self-sacrifice.
10. Self-sacrifice involves pain, mercy, tragedy, anguish... Also joy, enthusiasm, radical generosity...
11. The Lover yearns for mutual relationship. The Lover desires the Beloved in Love so to reach bliss (eternal self-fulfilment). Love implies radical freedom. The Lover cannot force Love to come back on oneself. Love is an eternal letting be, letting go... This creates expectation, sorrow, joy...
12. The Trinitarian relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is so wide that the whole universe can find space, time and freedom in it. God created the world “in Him/herself”, giving it time in his eternity, finitude in his infinity, space in his omnipresence and freedom in his selfless love.
13. Hence, the entire universe, as contained within the Trinity, is dramatic. The universe is drama par excellence, being always on the move. The universe is on pilgrimage by itself in its conscious and unconscious manifestations. The universe proclaims its inner dramatic story to human beings who try to fathom its mysterious story. In this way, we are invited to say that the universe is missionary.

14. We, human beings, are part of this drama in a conscious way. This is our uniqueness, and also our joy and cross. Hence, we are an integral part of the inner life of the Trinity, of the dramatic story happening within the Trinity. Our existence finds its full meaning within this framework, within our full participation and integration in the Trinitarian drama. Trinity is in all, and all is in the Trinity. That makes us in the image and likeness of God in a very special way.
15. Drama has its own particular logic (Birth-Death-Rebirth). Drama is a constant struggle for meaning and fullness. A dramatic process is full of surprises, contradictions and leaps. Drama moves towards higher complexity and beauty. The end will be always successful for God (eternal loving embrace between the Father/Mother and the Son in the Holy Spirit... eternal con-penetration). The way to this end is unpredictable... and so are humans.
16. Evil becomes indispensable for Love to exist. Love exists because there is resistance. Love happens because it conquers God's original inner vacuum. God's inner vacuum is originated as God's first act of self-withdrawal into him/herself, so to create the evolving universe within Him/herself (doctrine of *zimusum*). This friction between Love, what is, and the empty space within God, what is left so for God to enjoy full bliss, provokes resistance and therefore this universal logic of "birth-death-rebirth." This makes of the evolutionary story a drama. Suffering and tragedy, joy and bliss, become essential elements of the universal matrix, God's matrix.
17. We are endowed with a great responsibility. God needs us. God will enjoy eternal bliss because of our participation and conscious contribution in conquering His/her very inner vacuum. The Son, Jesus Christ becomes our guide and light. Paradoxically, S/he, the one who needs us, also sustains us in His/her eternal Love. God loves us from eternity, S/he loved us first, loves us now, and will love us up to the end of time; our contribution is to become conscious of his/her first love and so to love him/her back. S/he longs for it, S/he desires it. In sum, our contribution is to become aware of our eternity, so as to anticipate already now God's eternal bliss in Him/herself.
18. Hence, *Missio Dei* integrates the following key points: eternal, gratuitous in self-sacrifice, being paschal, dramatic, sustained, wrapped, and Trinitarian.
19. Taken all the previous points into consideration we are invited to issue the following definition: *Missio Dei is God's eternal paschal (birth-death-rebirth) story of love, whereby the universe, sustained in the Spirit, becomes the self-expression of God's loving story between the Father/Mother and the Son.*
20. Consequently, in the context of *Missio Dei*, humanity's mission can be defined as the conscious participation in the eternal loving story of the inner life of the Trinity.

Appendix 4: Profiting from the Past

Profiting from the past...

- ...is to believe that all is a paradox
 - ...is wisdom
- ...is to be able to experience life from God's perspective
 - ...is reconciliation
 - ...is peace
- ...is yes to all what we have lived
 - ...is thanksgiving
 - ...is surrender to God's will
- ...is accepting the challenge of darkness
 - ...is no escaping but going through
 - ...is acceptance
 - ...is witness in endurance
 - ...is believing in providence
 - ...is humility and obedience
 - ...is bridging in love
 - ...is asking forgiveness
 - ...is being sorrowful
- ...is to say: "your will has been done"
 - ...is to trust you
 - ...is listening to God's action
- ...is being active instrument of God
 - ...is awareness of his presence
 - ...is to value tradition
- ...is walking hand in hand with our inner child
 - ...is believing in "do not be afraid"
- ...is admiring the miracle of our existence
 - ...is experiencing all as a gift
 - ...is transparency
- ...is having the courage to share it openly
 - ...is saying that it is me
 - ...is saying yes to your powerlessness
- ...is accepting his unconditional company
 - ...is surrendering to the mystery of life
 - ...is discovering strength in weaknesses
- ...is accepting humbly our human reality
 - ...is maturity
 - ...is encounter with history
 - ...is to experience to be chosen
 - ...is dismantling the evil one
- ...is yes to God's original blessing

...is to say today is the day
...is to acknowledge that the cross in our lives is already resurrection
...is avoiding to live in an illusion
...is grace
...is "I cannot by myself"
...is walking humbly with the Lord
...is discipline
...is prayer
...is courage to look backwards
...is overcoming frustration
...is "all may sense"
...is avoiding resignation
...is integrating my story in the great story of Salvation
...is Salvation
...is to be fully alive
...is saying "Lord, have mercy"
...is recognizing my lack of faithfulness
...is "yes" to life
...is "You were there"
...is to believe "it was your plan from eternity"
...is transformation
...is "life is rooted in the Paschal Mystery"
...is to say "yes" to the "Sign of Jonah"

Appendix 5: History of the Universe

(D. TOOLAN, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 140-44)

Consider, in any case, the way in which Carl Sagan, in *The Dragons of Eden*⁴⁰¹, tries to get across to us the history of our universe and our relative place in it. He asks us to imagine a "cosmic clock," the 15-billion-year lifetime of the cosmos compressed into the span of a single year. Within this compass, every billion years of earth history would correspond to about twenty-four days of this cosmic year. That would mean that the big bang would occur on January 1 and the whole of recorded history would fit into the last ten seconds of New Year's Eve, December 31. The moral lesson Sagan seeks to draw from all this is not dissimilar to the Yahwist's theology of humble service that we examined in the first chapter. Sagan wanted to remove us from pedestal, to put us in our humble place in the big scheme of things. The story also describes a process of complexification, diversification and the emergence of novelty. Nature, as the ancients had it, constantly gives birth to the new. The story goes something like this:

- January 1: Big Bang
- May 1: Origin of the Milky Way Galaxy
- September 9: Origin of the solar system
- September 14: Formation of the earth
- September 25: Origin of life on earth
- October 2: Formation of the oldest rocks on earth
- October 9: Date of oldest fossils (bacteria and blue-green algae)
- November 1: Invention of sex (by microorganisms)
- November 12: Oldest fossil photosynthetic plants
- November 15: Eukaryotes (first nucleated cells) flourish
- December 1: Oxygen atmosphere begins to develop on earth
- December 5: Extensive vulcanism and channel formation on Mars
- December 17: Precambrian ends. Paleozoic Era and Cambrian Period begin. Invertebrates flourish
- December 16: First worms
- December 18: First oceanic plankton. Trilobites flourish
- December 19: Ordovician Period. First fish and vertebrates
- December 20: Silurian Period. First vascular plants. Plants begin colonizing land
- December 21: Devonian Period begins. First insects. Animals begin colonizing land
- December 22: First amphibians. First winged insects
- December 23: Carboniferous Period. First trees. First reptiles
- December 24: Permian Period begins. First dinosaurs
- December 25: Paleozoic Era ends. Mesozoic Era begins
- December 26: Triassic Period. First mammals
- December 27: Jurassic Period. First birds
- December 28: Cretaceous Period. First flowers. Dinosaurs become extinct
- December 29: Mesozoic Era ends. Cenozoic Era and Tertiary Period begin. First cetaceans. First primates
- December 30: Early evolution of frontal lobes in brains of primates; First hominids. Giant

⁴⁰¹ Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York: Random House, 1977), 14-16.

mammals flourish

December 31: End of the Pliocene Period. Pleistocene and Holocene Period. First humans

Human beings, then, would not emerge until late in the last day of the year, and all recorded history would fit into the last ten seconds. As evolution proceeds, one of its most striking features is that at each stage of biotic development, the tempo accelerates. It took about 3.9 billion years, some eight-tenths of earth's history, to generate photosynthesizing bacteria. The entire development of plants and animals has occurred in the last one-ninth of the planet's history. And within that history of land animals, human beings occupy a mere fraction of the time, some 400,000 years, or less than one-tenth of 1 percent of earth's history. Our putative "control" or "dominion" over the creatures of earth began only with the development of agriculture some 12,000 years ago, and it was probably pioneered not by men but by women, since their plant-gathering activities would most likely have led them to observe the growth of plants from seeds, and hence to the idea of planting and tending plants themselves. Twelve thousand years is roughly 2 percent of human history. For some 4,599,600,000 years, then, the earth got along quite well without us. Thus put in our place, let us resume with the count-down on December 31.

- 1:30 P.M.: Origin of Proconsul and Ramapithecus, probable ancestors of apes and men
- 10:30 P.M.: First humans
- 11:00 P.M.: Widespread use of stone tools
- 11:46 P.M.: Domestication of fire by Peking man
- 11:56 P.M.: Beginning of most recent glacial period
- 11:58 P.M.: Seafarers settle Australia
- 11:59 P.M.: Extensive cave painting in Europe
- 11:59:20 P.M.: Invention of agriculture
- 11:59:35 P.M.: Neolithic civilization; first cities
- 11:59:50 P.M.: First dynasties in Sumer, Ebla, and Egypt; development of astronomy
- 11:59:51 P.M.: Invention of the alphabet; Akkadian Empire
- 11:59:52 P.M.: Hammurabic legal codes in Babylon; Middle Kingdom in Egypt
- 11:59:53 P.M.: Bronze metallurgy; Mycenaean culture; Trojan war; Olmec culture; invention of compass.
- 11:59:54 P.M.: Iron metallurgy; First Assyrian Empire; Kingdom of Israel; founding of Carthage
- 11:59:55 P.M.: Asokan India; Chin Dynasty China; Periclean Athens; birth of Buddha
- 11:59:56 P.M.: Euclidian geometry; Archimedean physics; Ptolemaic astronomy; Roman Empire; ~~Empire~~
- 11:59:57 P.M.: Zero and decimals invented in Indian arithmetic; Rome falls; Moslem conquests
- 11:59:58 P.M.: Mayan civilization; Sung Dynasty China; Byzantine empire; Mongol invasion; Crusades
- 11:59:59 P.M.: Renaissance in Europe; voyages of discovery; Ming Dynasty China; experimental method in science
- Now: Widespread development of science and technology; emergence of global culture; acquisition of the means of self-destruction of the human species; first search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

Appendix 6: Canticle of the Suffering Servant

Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

⁴ Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

⁸ By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.

⁹ They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

¹¹ Out of his anguish he shall see light;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

(ISAIAH, 53: 1-12)

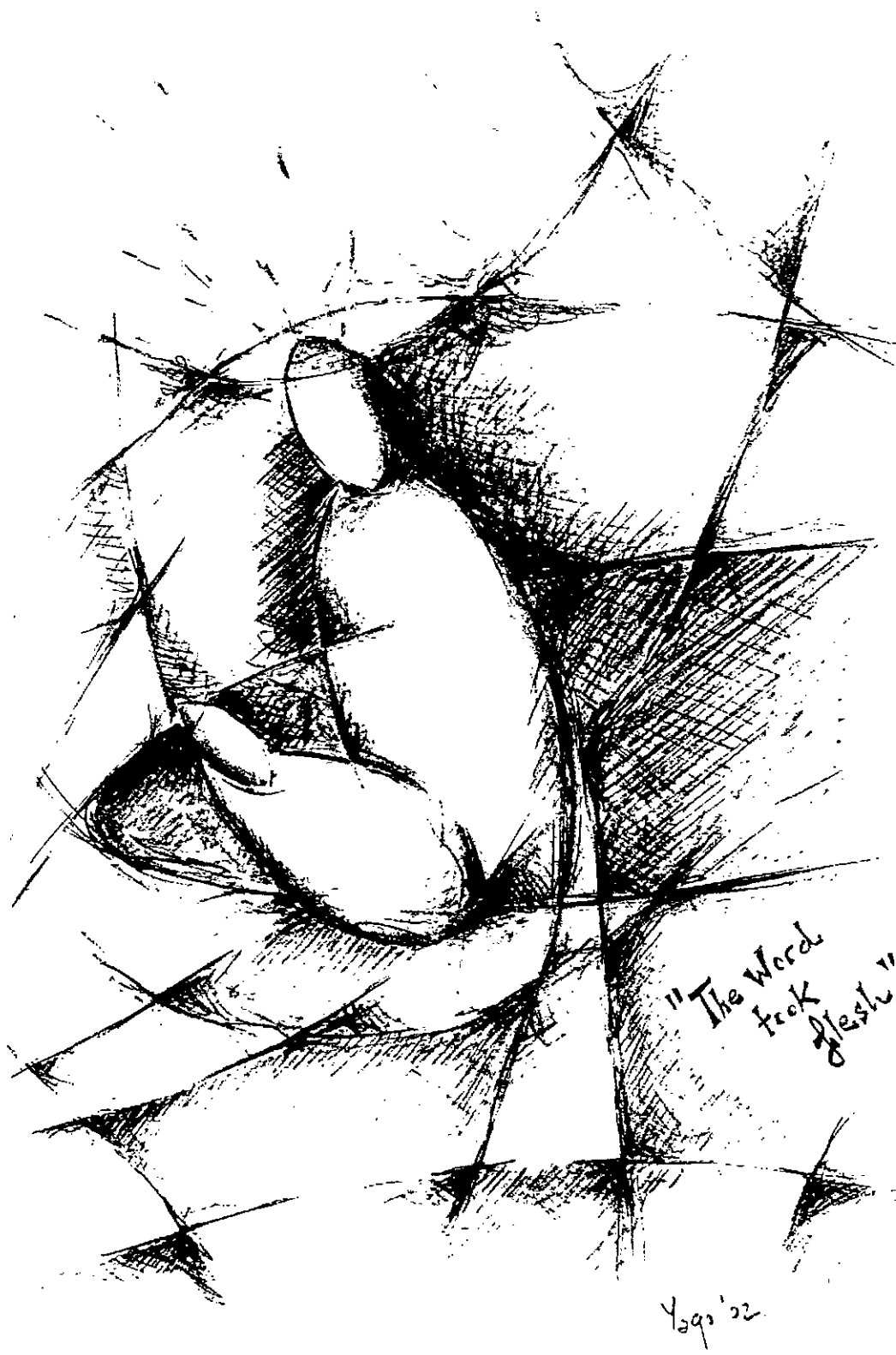
Appendix 7: The True Prodigal Son

(Quoted in: NOUWEN, H., *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 56-7)

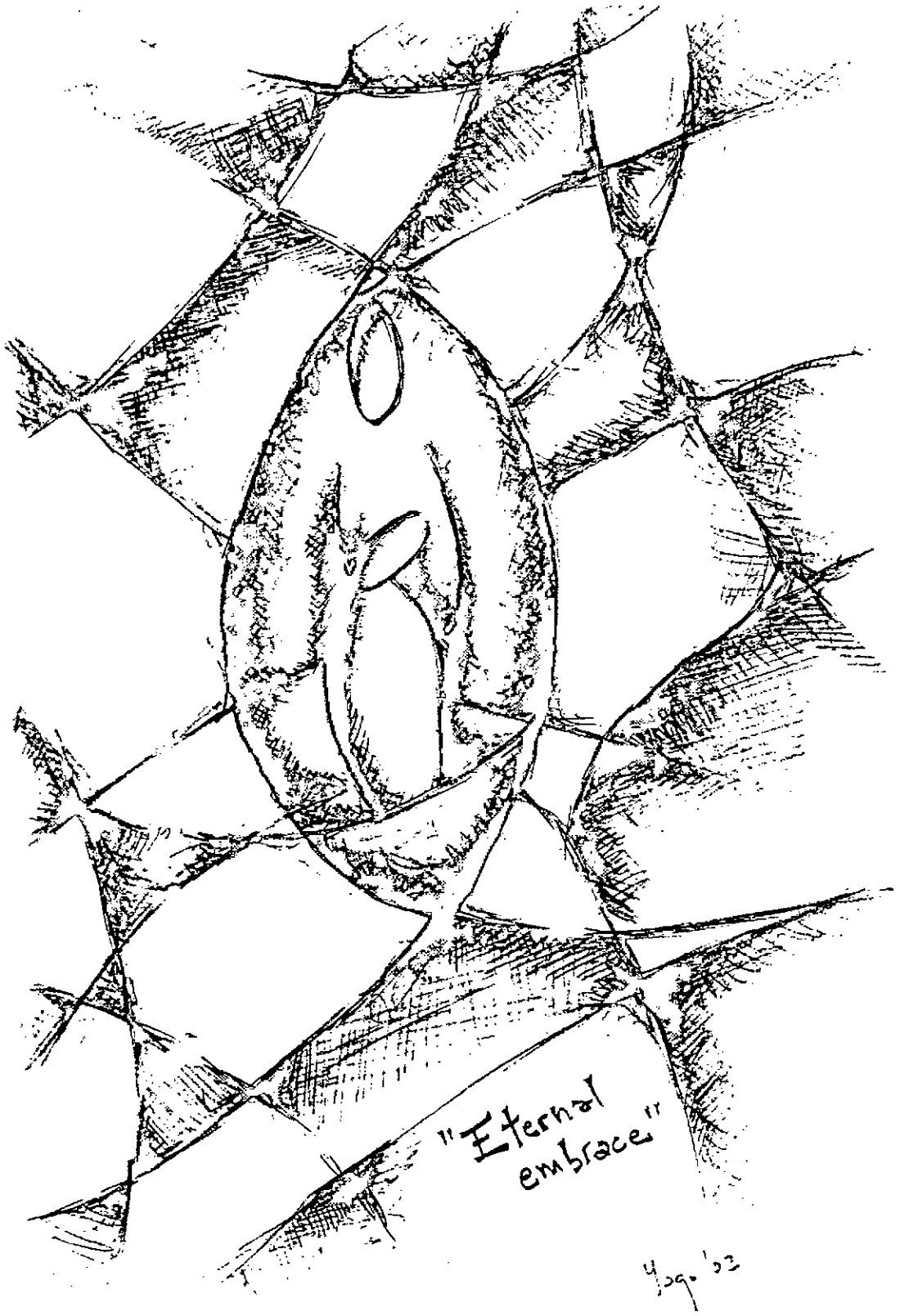
Frere Pierre Marie, the founder of the Fraternity of Jerusalem, a community of monks living in the city, reflects on Jesus as the prodigal son in a very poetic and biblical way. He writes:

He, who is born not from human stock, or human desire or human will, but from God himself, one day took to himself everything that was under his footstool and he left with his inheritance, his title of Son, and the whole ransom price. He left for a far country. . . the faraway land . . . where he became as human beings are and emptied himself. His own people did not accept him and his first bed was a bed of straw! Like a root in arid ground, he grew up before us, he was despised, the lowest of men, before whom one covers his face. Very soon, he came to know exile, hostility, loneliness. . . After having given away everything in a life of bounty, his worth, his peace, his light, his truth, his life. . . all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom and the hidden mystery kept secret for endless ages; after having lost himself among the lost children of the house of Israel, spending his time with the sick (and not with the well-to-do), with the sinners (and not with the just), and even with the prostitutes to whom he promised entrance into the Kingdom of his Father; after having been treated as a glutton and a drunkard, as a friend of tax collectors and sinners, as a Samaritan, a possessed, a blasphemer; after having offered everything, even his body and his blood; after having felt deeply in himself sadness, anguish, and a troubled soul; after having gone to the bottom of despair, with which he voluntarily dressed himself as being abandoned by his Father far away from the source of living water, he cried out from the cross on which he was nailed: "I am thirsty." He was laid to rest in the dust and the shadow of death. And there, on the third day, he rose up from the depths of hell to where he had descended, burdened with the crimes of us all, he bore our sins, our sorrows he carried. Standing straight, he cried out: "Yes, I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." And he reascended to heaven. Then in the silence, looking at his Son and all his children, since his Son had become all in all, the Father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet; let us eat and celebrate! Because my children who, as you know, were dead have returned to life; they were lost and have been found again! My prodigal Son has brought them all back." They all began to have a feast dressed in their long robes, washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

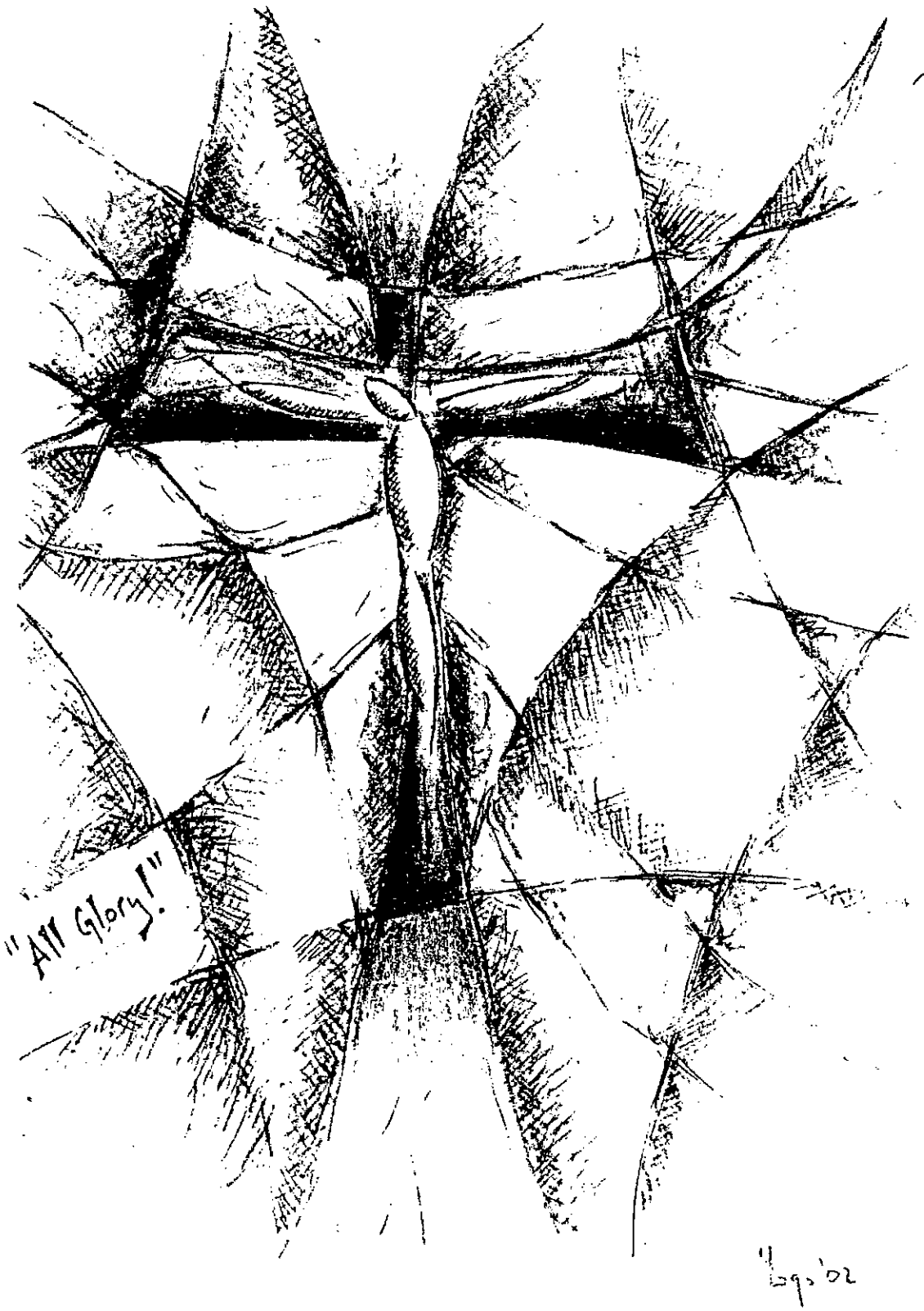
Appendix 8: Drawings



"Pangs of Birth"



"The Prodigal Son"



“The Sign of Jonah”

CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	1
EPIGRAPH.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	2
STUDENT'S DECLARATION.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
Chapter 1.....	7
The Church and Today's African Matrix.....	7
1. Introduction.....	7
2. Africa, A Paschal Continent.....	8
2.1. A Place of Joy.....	8
2.2. A Place of "Man's Inhumanity to Man".....	10
3. Africa, a Challenge to the Church.....	12
3.1. A Prophetic Church?.....	12
3.3. A Time for Critical Consciousness.....	15
4. Conclusion.....	17
Chapter 2.....	18
Elusive and Mysterious Universe.....	18
1. Introduction.....	18
2. The Subatomic World: Elusive and Mysterious.....	19
2.1. From Classical to Quantum Science.....	19
2.2. The Quantum World View.....	20
2.2.1. A World of Chance.....	21
2.2.2. A World of Communion.....	21
2.3. The Ground of the Universe.....	22
2.3.1. A Creative Vacuum.....	22
2.3.2. A Place of Creation and Destruction.....	23
3. Honouring the Story of Evolution.....	24
3.1. From Old to New Cosmology.....	24
3.2. Evolutionary Features: Diversity, Self-Organisation and Communion.....	25
3.3. Evolution as Rooted in Paradox.....	26
3.4. Violence and Destruction in the Universe.....	26
3.5. Chaos as the Gate to Beauty.....	27
3.6. Towards Universal Communion.....	28
4. Consciousness' Drama of Violence and Destruction.....	28
4.1. Humanity's Adolescence: our Refusal of the Evolutionary Logic.....	28
4.2. Human Beings, Creators of Meaningless Suffering.....	29
4.3. Africa, the Great Evolutionary Scapegoat of our Time.....	30
4.4. Embracing our Shadow: The Path Towards Oneness.....	32
4.4.1. Embracing our Feminine Consciousness.....	33
4.4.2. Embracing our "Collective Unconscious".....	35
5. Conclusion.....	36

Chapter 3.....	38
God's Eternal Drama	38
1. Introduction.....	38
2. Unveiling the Universal Paschal God	39
2.1. God as Powerless Love.....	40
2.2. God the Revolutionary	41
3. Jesus: Power Rendered Vulnerable.....	43
3.1. Jesus' Ministry: The Fearless Life of God Him/herself.....	43
3.1.1. His Compassion	43
3.1.2. Outcast by Choice.....	44
3.1.3. Being Fashioned by the Hidden Face of God	44
3.1.4. Jesus the Revolutionary	45
3.2. Jesus' Passion: The One Who Carries the Sins of the World.....	46
3.2.1. Being Drawn by the Powerlessness of God.....	46
3.2.2. Hanging Naked in Front of "Mystery"	47
3.2.3. The Ultimate Incarnation in History	48
3.2.4. Mediating Through Smallness	49
3.3. Resurrected, Yet Wounded	50
4. The Trinity: Entering into the Hidden Heart of God	51
4.1. The Eternal Merciful Pain of Giving Birth.....	52
4.2. The Universe as the Manifestation of the Inner Life of the Trinity.....	53
4.2.1. Unfolding Within the Trinity	53
4.2.2. The Manifestation of a Yearning for Relation and Mutuality	55
4.3. The Centre of God's Eternal Being	56
4.3.1. The Pathos of God	56
4.3.2. Tragedy in the Hidden Heart of God?.....	57
5. The Mystery of Evil and God's Suffering Love	59
6. Conclusion	61
Chapter 4.....	62
A People in "Pangs of Birth"	62
1. Introduction.....	62
2. Trinity as Source of Mission.....	63
3. What is Missio Dei?.....	64
4. Mission and the Fear of Death.....	66
5. Passion for Reality: Today's Missionary Spirituality	68
5.1. Being Honest with Reality	68
5.2. Being Faithful to Reality.....	69
5.3. Being Ready to Be Swept Along by the "More" of Reality	70
6. Mission as Re-Membering: Listening to God's Story	70
6.1. Missio ad Intra: Listening to God's Story within Ourselves	72
6.1.1. "Entering the Mystery"	72
6.1.2. Journeying Towards our Inmost Self.....	73
6.1.3. "Tender Care that Nothing Be Lost"	75
6.1.4. Experiencing Eternity Within Ourselves	77
6.2. Missio ad Altera: Listening to God's Story in our Neighbour.....	78
6.3. Missio ad Universa: Listening to God's Story in the Cosmos.....	79
7. Missio ad Gentes: Listening to God's Story in Today's Africa.....	81
7.1. Ad Gentes: the Last Stage of Mission.....	82

7.2. Mission in Today's Africa: Dialoguing with a Crucified People	84
7.2.1. The Crucified Africa: Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today	84
7.3. Mission in Today's Africa: Dialoguing with a People in "Pangs of Birth"	88
8. A "Living Mystery": The Missionary as Being "Hidden with Christ in God"	91
8.1. The Universe as our Context of Mission	92
8.1.1. Mission in an Infinite and Overflowing Universe	92
8.1.2. Mission in an Evolutionary Universe	94
8.2. The "Mystic Missionary" and the "Sign of Jonah"	96
8.2.1. The "Mystic Missionary" as the Father/Mother of the Prodigal Son	98
8.2.2. The "Mystic Missionary" as the Prodigal Son.....	100
8.2.3. The "Mystic Missionary" as the Revolutionary Prophet	102
9. Conclusion: Essay's Final Empowerment	104
CONCLUSION.....	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	112
Appendix 1: Quantum Theology	116
Appendix 2: Creative Vacuum.....	122
Appendix 3: What is Missio Dei?.....	124
Appendix 4: Profiting from the Past.....	126
Appendix 5: History of the Universe	128
Appendix 6: Canticle of the Suffering Servant.....	130
Appendix 7: The True Prodigal Son	135
Appendix 8: Drawings	136
CONTENTS.....	139

EPIGRAPH

“The sign Jesus promised to the generation that did not understand Him was the “sign of Jonas the prophet”, that is, the sign of His own resurrection. The life of every monk, of every priest, of every Christian is signed with the sign of Jonas, because we all live by the power of Christ’s resurrection. But I feel that my own life is especially sealed with this great sign, which baptism and monastic profession and priestly ordination have burned into the roots of my being, because like Jonas himself I find myself travelling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox”

Thomas Merton¹

¹ T. MERTON, *The Sign of Jonas. The Day by Day Experiences and Meditations of a Trappist Monk*. (Image Books: NY, 1953), 21.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION


I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay 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 Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: 

Name of Student: **Yago Abeledo Madueño, M. Afr.**

Date: 18/02/'04

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed: 

Name of Supervisor: **Fr. Luc Lefief, M. Afr.**

Date: 18/02/'04