

## VICTOR PEOPLE

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### 1. The battle and the flood

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. He planted his vineyard, making it the place in which his people could deal with each other with the generosity that they received from him. He gave them a share in this work of exercising all the care of the shepherd for his sheep, setting the older over the younger, giving those with more the task of providing for those with less.<sup>1</sup> What more could have been done for this vineyard than he did for it? To find out how things stood and to give them his assistance and direction he sent his servants to them, one after another.<sup>2</sup> But the tenants did not care to govern the vineyard under their direction, and yet without receiving the generosity of God, they had no resources from which to exercise generosity towards those set under them. God heard the pleas of those who received nothing, and had been seized for repayment of debt.<sup>3</sup> He sent one more servant, but the reply was: This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

In the face of this refusal the master came to replace the tenants and give that role to others.<sup>4</sup> Our rebellion, and God's compassion for those we have been consuming, has turned God into a warrior. The complaints of all those who have been left out have been heard. He no longer holds back to see if we will act on them. He lets us have the consequences of all our acts. The violence we released into the world returns to us. The God of Israel acts to crush this rebellion, and he does so in the event of the cross. Here we have two opposing armies. They descend from opposite hillsides to meet in battle. One army is composed of all the kings of earth and the people they lead, freely or by compulsion. But the other army is composed of a single servant of God, one unaccompanied warrior. This single Israelite suffers alone the contradiction and resistance of the whole world. Their enmity is the cup he drinks out and the baptism he undergoes. In this battle the single warrior tears through the middle of the enemy, breaking it, and putting its forces to flight.

We can distinguish five moments to this event:

**1. God initiates.** The Son of God comes to man, and comes unaccompanied, without glory, as servant. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* The Father gave himself to us in the person of the Son. His gift to us is that he stand at our head and lead us. But we interpreted this not as aid, but as attack. This Servant, though commander of the king's forces, charges alone into the line of the enemy. He is the gift of God, given to the enemy. He is the missile hurled and the magic bullet discharged into them, to kill or cure. The gift is good. Our reception of it gets us killed.

**2. The cross is the act of man.** The wicked tenants do not want any relationship with God. They attack and seize this Servant and destroy him publicly, intending to dispose of the claim of the God who sent him.<sup>5</sup>

**3. The cross is the act of God** against these leaders who exercise no leadership of his people and who will accept no leadership for themselves. The disappointment of God turns to anger. The Son comes in war to throw the irresponsible tenants out.

**4. The resurrection as God's rejection of the act of man.**

God raises the one we rejected. He shakes off the grip his enemies have on his Servant, raises him from all his rivals and appoints him Son.

**5. God lays hands on them.** We laid hands on the servant of God. The Servant can endure and survive the opposition of man.<sup>6</sup> But having laid hands on the one God sent, it is man who is gripped and held. He stole us back out of the house of the strong man and he carries us off as his plunder.<sup>7</sup>

So first we must say that God has not caused devastation by coming all at once at the head of his entire army. He has come, gently and mercifully and therefore stage by stage, first as servant. Of course this Servant is not alone, for he is servant of the Father, always accompanied by the Spirit. But first he is the warrior who opposes the world alone, and who starts by seizing not all, but some, to turn them into his own troops. The warrior king accepts company *after* the battle in which he takes this company for himself, for it is their defeat at his hands that makes them his. Though the battle is then won, resistance continues wherever knots of rebels turn and make a stand. They must be confronted and commanded to throw over their old leaders and change sides. The continuing trial of strength takes place in every public assembly. Here the king's new troops are to confront every leader in the hearing of his own people. The Christian witnesses are to read out the accusation of God against each leader who lays hands on them, and give him one chance to confess the God of Israel.<sup>8</sup> Thus the No of God to man starts as battle, one-time past event, but continues as the present work he shares with his community. His servants demolish all opposition by this proclamation of their own defeat. That was the battle. Now the flood.

The anger of God was first the anger of man. It was composed of the unheard complaints and protests of all those who did not receive any good thing from those set over them. The anger of all those who have never been given a hearing became a single storm-cloud of distress. After enduring for a long time the nagging of the poor of the earth, this world of distress becomes the fury of God in action. His anger surges against all those leaders who failed to give the poor what they begged for. This storm of trouble was about to catch all of us who failed to see it coming and to sweep away the whole assembly of the feckless rich.<sup>9</sup> But the Son steps in the way. He summons all this trouble, distress and fury to a single point, and it crashes down on precisely on him. He is the rock that stands, and the flood breaks on it and its shock is dissipated away.<sup>10</sup> He summons all the violence of Rahab, and stills it by a word. It is the protest and distress of the world, taken up by God, that this servant directs to himself. He can give it its answer. So the No of God is a flood, in which all our failure receives its response from him.

But why choose these accounts of the battle and the flood, to describe the coming of God to man? Christus Victor takes us into the event of God coming to man, as God *against man*. Man is

the antagonist of God, an agent in this drama. But the problem is not only that man is against God, but that as yet there is no man. There is no agent. It is God's intention to make a new creature, who will derive all his agency from God and exercise it under God, but this agent is nowhere in evidence yet. So we need to give an account that does not presuppose that we are already agents. It is the failure of anyone on earth to hear and answer these cries and to intercede for these who cannot speak for themselves, that requires that God take action. So the flood described in this second account reflects that myriad speech-acts which as yet correspond to no particular individual agent, and so have no home to go to. These cries and protests are homeless spirits, looking for a place to perch. As yet mankind is a thing without definition, a single cloud of misery made of many unheard cries. But these appeals reach God and move him to action. I shall come back to this anti-anthropology, and link the storm and flood to a pneumatology. So *Christus Victor* works on the logic that many men in opposing one another, oppose God, but the flood works on the basis, that not only are there no plurality of persons, there is not even one single person, there is less than one unit of agency.

## 2. Defeat and capture

The world had been divided and held down by the rival gods. God set himself against all of them equally. Having defeated them all, he is able to recover all parts of this divided world and re-integrate them into a single kingdom. But it was us who held the world divided. We were gods, but we have been humiliated and thrown out. So this gospel is hardly good news for us. We enjoyed our parasitic existence, and resisted when the poor were prised out of our grasp. We interpreted the generous gift of God as aggression and threw a blow at the Servant of God. The Servant took it, but all our forces failed to hold him down. He could take it from us, but we could not take it from him. We would not survive if his blow – the violence we have used against the poor – was struck against us. So he played both his violence against us (deposing us) and our violence against him (in usurping and resisting him). He would play us, and we would play him. He let us play out on him a controlled version of our own destruction, a miniature version of the whole action we inflict on one another, along with its outcome. We put all our resources into putting him down and throwing him out, but the death we imposed on him could not hold him. He has more resources than we do, so our acts fail to hold against his; the resurrection is his overthrow of the crucifixion, the bond we intended to hold him by. He is now free and we are now the bound – bound by him with the bonds we had imposed on him as on one another.

So this *Christus victor* approach must be kept complex. It must show that we are: (1) those who attacked God, and were defeated and deposed by God; (2) those seized, held by God as captive slaves in his train, now displaying our defeat to the world; (3) those who have become his troops, the host of the Spirit. Then we can go on to say that we are (4) those who have become his officers and servant members of his household, and even (5) his brothers and friends. As there are a number of descriptions that must be given of the Son's act in cross and resurrection, there are a corresponding number of things that must be said about the community gathered by this event, and

about the work given this community. Inasmuch as the gospel is the Yes of God to us, it is a Yes with definition, which requires that it be defined by a No, and the veto of God to us is not word only but event, thus it is this defeat of ours and this victory of his. It is one moment, but it is an unavoidable moment.

### **3. The Son sketches two ways for us.**

The Son comes to throw the irresponsible tenants out. But instead of annihilating them, he plays out their annihilation himself. On the cross the Son plays both armies. He plays the righteous Servant of God. And he plays the unrighteous rulers who unwisely lay hands on this servant. He displays these two roles and outcomes. He shows us our death, but no longer rushing towards us, but halted and suspended. Now we can see that it is now no longer ours by necessity. It is not inevitable. But that corpse is our future unless something else happens.

Let me say that 'dying' summarises the whole act of man. It describes all that takes place between any and all men, their long term effect on each other. They cannot sustain one another but wear each other out until there is nothing left of them. All their acts amount to separation, individuation and isolation until they are wasted, scattered and lost. The limits imposed on man he has swallowed and internalised until he has become a creature of barriers and gaps, comprehensively balkanised and able to produce only the same divisions. Dying is therefore also what man does before God. Man fails to sustain the relationship, but God sustains the relationship. Man is imposing death, and himself dying. But God is life and brings to life. He replaces the dying action of man with the living and life-renewing action of God.

Man extends to God his product of refusal of relationship, rebellion and separation. But God has defeated the act of man and removed it from him. His intention is to replace it with a quite different act and action. But first the world must know that it has been defeated, body and head, on the ground and in their own minds. The kings have been defeated and so have their people, and now the one is to be removed from the other. The act of forcing this knowledge and admission onto them is an intrinsic part of this defeat of theirs. He has announced and displayed this news publicly, to defeated kings and to the world now released from them. He has published it in the exposed body of his Servant.<sup>11</sup> The body on the cross displays the exposure and defeat of the gentile rebel leaders. The Son shows us the kings of the earth dangling up there isolated, deserted by their men and helpless. This is what their rebellion has brought them. All who followed them can see that their power is broken, that they are without resource or support. Who will remain loyal to the old rulers with this evidence of their powerlessness?<sup>12</sup> The Son displays the outcome of the act of our kings until our nerve fails and we desert them, and until the reality of surrender and capture fills every last hideout, and there are no more rebellious corners, no more unwillingness. The Son has closed down our local headquarters, ending our autonomy and replacing it with his direct rule. We have suffered a collapse of mind and leadership. Now our bodies will receive their orders not from our mind, but from outside, from the Spirit. A temporary Apollinarianism is in force. I'll come back to this.

The Son plays us. He is publicly raised to play this role, and is displayed so he is visible, the cross as stage as it were. He plays out two versions of us. His performance asks us which of them we will become. How shall we respond? Shall we confess he has indeed sufficiently and satisfactorily represented us to ourselves, imitating all action and all its predictable outcome. By what right, Kant asked, can one man represent another?<sup>13</sup> The answer is by the right we give him in recognising our action in his action. This recognition is seen in our act of deserting our leaders and surrendering to this leader. He is representing us – *to us*, first dramaturgically, then constitutively. He is ridiculing our action by pointing to its inevitable self-defeat. He taunts us, and points to his own perfecting human performance as the escape route out of our failing human performance. He sounds an alarm, that unnerves us and when we are properly frightened we will stampede away from the danger he points to and through the gate he opens to us. The cross is then two things. It is notice of a closing, and it is an opening.

I have said that God displays two outcomes before us, and this display dissuades us from continuing towards one and turns towards the other. He goes on showing us these two outcomes until we are convinced, and he is satisfied that we are convinced and have no more fight in us. I think we might use the concept of satisfaction here. He has done enough to quell us and it is our stillness that tells him this. The idea that *showing* us something makes *doing* something impossible is implausible for modern ontology so we must look for another ontology that does allow us to link *being* to *act* and to *speech-act*. Perhaps this is not an ontology at all, but a praxeology. This could employ the two neglected concepts of *satisfaction* and *substitution*. We *substitute* one performance for another, his perfecting performance for our failing performance, and do so by an act of panicked desertion – *metanoia*. And he performs these two performances with their two outcomes until he is *satisfied* that we have given up the fight for ours and have succumbed to his. For this performative-persuasive account we want an ontology of perichoretic participation, that understands that becoming a person involves living in multiple overlapping roles or person-drafts experimented with in many nested conversations and encounters. Allowing this conceptuality of complex representation that starts dramaturgical, becomes first praxis and then constitutive, enables us to accept that we are not (yet) persons, but that we are *being made* persons. Our personhood exists ahead of us in the act of the God-man, an act and relationship the Spirit extends to include us.

So the gospel of the cross is not simply information which an autonomous mind may then process to accept or refuse. It is the act of the bailiffs evicting that autonomous mind and sealing the door so it can gain no re-admission to us. It is warning and encouraging (*protrepsis*) in a process by which we are shooed away from one direction into another. It is the closing of one space, and opening of another, a binding and a loosing. We are being re-engineered with and against our will. And the Son opens another way, into the procession of his captives.

#### **4. The world as prize**

Next we need to say something about how this work of the Son is received. It is received by the Father with an approval made public by the resurrection. But how is it received by the whole

people of God? Israel was the people conscripted to the army of the God of hosts. It was all Israel's job to do what only this one Israelite has done. But the Son acted alone. Now it is the job of the Spirit to reconcile the Son to his people, and to make them see that in him all Israel has triumphed. The defeat of the gentile world that opposed her is Israel's vindication, but to receive it Israel must accept the victory handed to her by accepting these children.<sup>14</sup> The gospel is the gospel of Israel's vindication and she must pass this news on to the Gentiles. The news is that they are her prize.<sup>15</sup> The world must come to Israel as the loser to winner. This must be accepted by both parties. The Church is the form in which the gentile world is bundled up by the Son, receives the approval of the Father, and is now presented to Israel, as her own. It is the inheritance promised. The prize of the Son is the world, first in the form of his own people, the people of Israel, and then in the form of the people presented to Israel, the world of the gentiles, in the form of the Church.

### **5. Ransom and the logic of reciprocity**

Now back for a moment to that earlier theme, the cloud that is composed of the mass of things we started but couldn't finish. We released this excess of speech-acts over finished-acts, that turned into this trouble massing over our heads, and then into the flood that overwhelmed us.<sup>16</sup>

The logic of primitive reciprocity is the logic of the predator. It is the logic by which men bite into each other and suborn one another to their own projects. Each is biter and each bitten, all under the same logic and thus vulnerable to one another. But this is not the case with the righteous one. He does not need to grasp or consume. His resource is the Spirit the Father puts at his disposal without limit, and who makes him inviolable. What he has from us he refused entirely. He returned to Caesar what was Caesar's and to Pharaoh all that was his too. The righteous was handed over to us the unrighteous. But who is able to hold down and consume whom? Evil men laid hands upon him according to their predatory gentile reason, but they did not know the indivisibility and strength of the Spirit at work in the Servant's bearing and enduring. Intending to chomp him up and swallow him down, the unrighteous bit into the righteous, and was caught. Leviathan bit but could not swallow and could not let go. The biter was bit, the eater eaten. The act of man bounced and man was caught by the rebound. What he couldn't finish, came back to finish him. The primitive reciprocity of man, God could do too.<sup>17</sup> God can return. God did return what didn't belong to him. But the other reciprocity, the reciprocity of God, in turning unfinished acts into finished ones, bad reciprocity into good reciprocity, man couldn't do, and so God sent his Servant to do it for him.

### **6. The Son provides the missing reciprocity and action**

The Son has taken us over and bought us out. He *died for our sins* and he came *to give his life as a ransom for many*. In battle he broke our rebellion, separating us from it, putting himself between us and it, and like a pack animal carried its consequences to a place from which they could not reach us. He came to *give his life as a ransom for many*. We die 'for', that is to say *as a result of* our sins. Our deficiencies catch up with us eventually. But not being under the same logic, he is

impervious to our deficiencies. He can be overwhelmed by nothing. He gave his life, that is to say, he gave himself entirely, to the labour of extricating people from the consequences of their actions. He finished those actions for them, supplying endings to these actions that no one else could. What we promised but could not deliver, he delivered. We have taken one another's lives and frittered them by making huge unsustainable claims in a pyramid selling of promises that cannot possibly be made good on. But the Son can call down the funds with pay people off and bail people out. He could placate all the others, to whom much or everything had been left unpaid. He can release me from all the promises I have made to you but been unable to deliver on. He can release me from you, and you from me.

*Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.*<sup>18</sup> The righteous did this for the unrighteous, the valuable for the worthless, the functioning for defunct, the active for the passive. He bought us up, out, he bought us up, our worthless shares for his good stock, at par. He bought them *with his blood.*<sup>19</sup> He can extend his stock without diluting because the Spirit can extend himself without being divided. He bought all the smaller firms out with his own stock issue, making their shareholders holders of his stock. They now hold their wealth in him. Those who took the deal hold everything they had in this new stock, while those who held out against the deal are left with nothing.

The Son performs a complete act of reciprocity. He supplies the work and effort that it costs.

**1. He bears the cost in terms of the debt of being** that others have not paid and supplied us. He hears our prayers and comes to bail us out and takes us out of their power. He pays them off to release us, and he pays us off to release them from us. He pays both parties in his own stock, the only hard currency.

**2. He pays it in terms of the destruction** (battle) of the predatory logic of the enemy economy by which the unrighteous exercise a parasitic power over us. The enemy, his rationality and currency is scattered and never spoken of again.

**3. He pays the price in terms of the honour** that must be done to all sides in the court of the public assembly. He has done so publicly, to the satisfaction of all. All voices now praise his act of reciprocity, justice and generosity. All those held captive in his train must confess themselves satisfied. He either closes their mouths (binding them) or leaving them full of praise (loosed).

He bails us out. But more than that, he gives us his own proper action, the action of bailing one another out and covering for one another. He gave them the outcome of his action, and finally he gave them the action itself, transforming them from victims to subjects with a proper subordinate creaturely, priestly and redemptive action.

## **7. The work of the Christian phalanx**

He has snatched us from all corners of the world, and collected us to form his assembly, the ecclesia.<sup>20</sup> We have been *called* out of the people of the world, and *gathered* together to make a new and distinct people, the beginning of the regeneration of the old creation, and the first batch of the new. In this gathering God is creating a new species, the holy species, made out of everything the

world held to be incompatible, now made compatible within a single body. As such this whole people, taken together as a single unit, is priestly. The freedom exercised by the Son has become an imperative for his community. The phalanx forms behind the Son, the new body growing from its head. Its task is to portray to the world to world the victory and invincibility of the God of Israel, and the new world that is forming up before him as a result of this victory.

Those pressed into this force have been given a work. They must hold the line. Each must grasp those on either side of him in the line. They must not let the buffeting of the forces coming against them loosen their grasp of one another. No member can oppose the forces tugging against him without every other. The other members are the gift given to each, and the responsibility each must bear. Each member has been seized, and must seize and hold in their turn so that the whole defence stays intact. They must also grasp whoever they can reach, and pull them out of the world and into the Christian body. They may no longer treat anyone as a strangers, but as gift and responsibility.

In this body there is order and therefore hierarchy. *There must be differences among you.*<sup>21</sup> For the body as a whole there are two modes of duty, whole-body duty and domestic duty. There are those who are in holy war mode, man the perimeter walls and watch for enemy and the returning master. And there are those off-duty, who must take care of their households, and of the weaker and vulnerable. For each member there are two simultaneous modes of interaction with the body. The body is present to me as those who are more experienced than I am, the Christian on my right in the line of battle, my servant because my teacher and protector. And the Christian body is present to me as all those who are even less experienced than I am, and to whom I am to be the servant and head.

The Christian community is a single loaf.<sup>22</sup> This community must also eat from this single loaf. The loaf is pure, so it is too hard to break open unaided. The community must look back at its giver and ask him to open it. Then they may break it open and eat it, and its strength will flood into the Christian body, and after many meals, into the Christian mind too. Then this body will become aware of all those around it, floundering and exhausted, that it can feed from the same loaf. In breaking this loaf open for others the Christian body learns the action of the Son. It learns first to *take*, then to *thank*, then to *open*, then to *give*, and by this four-fold action of his, to pass on what they received from him.

When the inexperienced Christian is left too near to the perimeter the whole body is threatened. The inexperienced member wants to drink from the cup of the Lord, but doesn't know how to wait, so takes a sip out of the first cup he is offered.<sup>23</sup> Not yet single-minded, he will drink from any cup; if he does he will be slowly poisoning himself on all the various incompatible drinks. He is the weak point through which all these mixtures find their way in to Israel's body. Israel must try to spot him before the outside forces do. When first encouragement, and then warnings have not succeeded, it must throw him out and fill his place, so no gap is opened by which the enemy can come in.<sup>24</sup> If the enemy sword finds an Israelite in the rank who is contaminated with gentleness, who has internalised the food, teaching and practices of the Gentiles, the Gentiles can touch him. Their blows will not bounce off the Christian body, but bite into the whole body through him. He



will be subject to that same decay that the gentiles intrinsically are. By his death he will have joined them, and finally have become one of them. They will claim him and that Israelite will fall.

### **8. Covering for one another**

Standing in for one another is the Christian task. Discerning the body means knowing when every member of the body is present.<sup>25</sup> This means recollecting the last and least, and not beginning to celebrate until they arrive. When they do not arrive, it means going to find the individual who has been separated from the troop and bringing him back. This involves taking the census, counting the sheep and going after the one missing. And it means covering for him, doing what he cannot do for himself. The community may not start celebrating the feast without last member brought to safely. To start before the last arrives would indicate that such a member, who comes after everyone else, and is lowest on the social ladder, is not a vital part of the body. It would be to claim that the body is whole without him. But every last member must be brought in before the body is whole and present. The body that eats before this moment, swallows division and weakness and condemnation. Until we bring him in, Christ is absent because he is precisely that member who is in debt, sick, cannot afford clothes (Matthew 25.42-3) and so unable to appear in the assembly.

From the outside the Christian (eschatological) economy looks smaller than the economy of this world. But the economy of God is not only larger, but much larger, than the whole economy of all the predators. The priestly work given to the Christian community is to swallow the trouble dished out by the predatory economy. The Christians are involved in this work of currency conversion. They take in abuse and they issue kind words, good news, gifts of insight and instruction.<sup>26</sup> They buy up notices of redundancy and closure and issue notices of new employment. The Christian community has to buy up all the poor out of the exploitative relationships in which they are held. Once the very poor are released from their creditors, these creditors may be held from their own creditors, but the further up the pyramid, the more reluctant they are to release those they hold, and to be released themselves from the unjust relationships they enforce on each other.

### **9. The body re-united with its head**

Back to the narrative. The Son sits with the Father at the feast. The whole company of their people sits beneath them, at tables in rows that stretch away down the hall. But those at the tables mid-way down have started eating too early. They have not passed on what they have received, or exercised the act of hospitality that God has given them to exercise.<sup>27</sup> No one below them has received anything to eat and so cannot celebrate.<sup>28</sup> At the bottom of the hall fighting has broken out. The Son leaves the Father's side, goes down the length of the hall and into the melee at the bottom. When he does not reappear, his men follow him down to reinforce him. The Father waits. After a long time he sends the Spirit to bring the Son back. In their company Son re-establishes order and hospitality at every level and the proper flow of gifts from one end to the other. But how is the unity of the top and the bottom to be maintained? How is the body to be re-united to the head?

The modern understanding is that the head is not the body. Modernity separates the cerebral from the tactile, the reason from the memory and imagination, pure knowledge from tacit knowledge, and knowledge from responsive bodily movement. It believes it is possible to know something, and *then* to decide whether or not to put it into practice. It is hung up on the fiction of the mind's eye, that must first be addressed, and engaged, and persuaded. There is also of course an expressivist counter-tradition understands that the cerebral need not be placed before the tactile, and that our whole bodies are relating devices and therefore thinking devices. Our bodies relate, or relating is what my body is, and therefore our bodies think, or thinking is what my whole body is. Thinking is not what it *does*, thinking is what it *is*.<sup>29</sup> We think with the whole body of the tradition, or the body of the tradition thinks, and we are one of the things it thinks.

Following what I have said about the defeated autonomous powers we can say something new about the mind. Now we are not the mind. The Son of God is the mind. The Cartesian mind's eye tradition is idolatrous, and insofar as modern theology is in hock to this concept of mind, it is radically mistaken. We need no longer make the modern assumption that the word of God must first halt before the mind to seek its permission before proceeding to address the whole person. We must say instead that the Word of God blasts across every synapse and propels every limb, so the Word of God extends himself through the movement of these members of the body, every limb possessed and driven by the speech-act of God. In this Spiritual body every word is an act, every act is accompanied by its rationale and the dichotomy of word and act (and of word and sacrament) is overcome.

The Son is not simply leader, but also servant. He is not simply head. He is the body. He is the whole act, body and force of God for us. With his company the Spirit he is unity of the head and the body, the mind and the members, the brains and the labour and labourer. Under Christ, the whole body is head. The Church is the head of the body of the world. It must feed it and lead it until it is filled and directed by Christ. This head is not simply at the top, but at both top and bottom. The Son considers the bottom of the hall no more strange to him than the high table. By starting at bottom and establishing the proper differentiation between all places and ranks he has opened all the room, creating a circulation and an economy. All the disordered forces of the world will take their lead from the Church gathered around its head, from whom all order and peace expand. Then the disordered forces of the body without the head, the modern mind, now all turn to this single centre. They who had no orientation, now take their orientation from him. The gospel act unites the head to the body. God is the head, the Church is the body. Heaven is the head, earth the body. Doctrine the head, the Christian community the body, theology is the head, ecclesiology the body.

The body grows from the head and is replenished from it. The body is now no autonomous packet, but joined by the Spirit to the source of the fullness of being. Each is a headless corpse, brain signals to which are fed into to it from an external headquarters. The head of the body stands over it supervising the work of resuscitation that proceeds by Spirit's provision of a dosed supply of new being. The body is not a whole, but a part of the whole, but wholeness is piped into its every part, so in every part the whole is fully present.

## 10. The harvest of the Spirit

The Son is the glory of Israel, and Israel is the glory of the Son. Israel made him and handed him on to us. He does not found a community on the Gentiles. He opens the existing community, of Israel, to let the Gentiles in. We are not a new community. We are the arrival of the missing second half that completes the existing community of Israel. All earlier members of this community of God planted us, so we are their harvest.<sup>30</sup> Others have done the hard work; we are the result of their labour. Those who have died before us will go before us in the procession and will take a higher place, because they are of greater honour.<sup>31</sup> They worked but have not yet seen their reward. They have died, but in the assault of all the disordered gentile forces.<sup>32</sup> We came later, have not borne the heat of the day, and will take a lower place. Righteous Israel has sowed and the Gentiles are the reaping. It is our belated arrival that completes Israel and makes Israel comprehend the world in a single community.

The Son is raised by the whole company of heaven. He is accompanied by the whole company of patriarchs, prophets and people of righteous Israel.<sup>33</sup> The Lord is the Spirit. In the train of this great company are the shambling figures of all the vanquished overlords, and the demolished ideological constructions built against, and conceptual forces once used against, the Son.<sup>34</sup> God makes us a spiritual body which cannot be penetrated or split up by such forces.<sup>35</sup> The Spirit is one, and can hold together and keep as one this community against all attempts to isolate and pick off its members. All the gifts of the Spirit serve to make his community impregnable. He gives the instruction and insight that allows the body to identify the threats, and maintain the discipline that will keep the ranks of the troop unbroken against the threats of dilution and division by other spirits from outside.

Now we must say something in more biological idiom about the adjustment made to the whole organism of human being that brings him to completion as the creature of God. Poor circulation between the two halves of man have meant that his body receives hardly anything of the breath that God first breathed into the world. He is two insufficiently connected systems, top and bottom, intellectual and animal, under law and lawless. Circumcision was once an operation on the skin that was intended to work its way in to open up the divided metabolism and make one economy of flow from head to body. Now circumcision is the total immersion of the world. But the flood of the Spirit breaches the dividing wall, uniting the two systems into one, filling and irrigating the whole lower body by the spiritual supply that runs into it from the headwaters. God has seized the act of man to make it the act of God, to turn the ('human') act of opposing God into God's act of coming to man. Circumcision is now double – it is baptism of the whole world by the cross, and of each individual by the act of baptism.<sup>36</sup> The interior and exterior world are immersed and united by this flood to become one world.

Flooded by the Holy Spirit the world has become a single life-support system that delivers the indivisible Spirit of God to each body at once externally and internally. No flesh is a barrier to the Spirit. We can no longer breathe unaided, and are no longer allowed to do so. Now we can only breathe the mixture piped directly into us, and at the concentration at which it gives itself – weaker

for the weaker, stronger for the stronger – re-engineering our metabolism to take an increased dosage. His Spirit delivers himself to every part of us, this slow flood slowly entering through every pore to soak all parts of every body. Each body can pick up this nourishment-and-direction (headship) from any point of the baptised world. Each single drop of this moisture is indivisibly head and body, command-and-power, information and energy, direction and movement, intellect-and-nourishment, power-and-signals. The Spirit is a flow of indivisible units that are at once head-and-body. The head becomes spread through the body, his character and attributes shared across all parts, his functions devolved to all parts. Then whatever part we pick, if we break it open, there is the head and the body in obedient mutual service, all in all and indivisible.

*Epilogue: Theology in service to ecclesiology.*

Lastly a couple of words about some of the moves I have made here. I have said something about the warrior and victor, ransom and redemption, substitution and satisfaction, advocacy and mediation. I believe it is a mistake to refer to these as metaphors or models.<sup>37</sup> Let us call them doctrines. They all belong to the account, none can be excluded. The trick is only to bring each into play at the right moment in theological diagnosis of the world. Each has its particular work to do in first refuting and then commandeering for another use our familiar modern conceptuality. The Word of God breaks into the house of the strong man and robs him of every concept that the strong man had taken for himself. Theological statement also must take away from the world what the world thinks it knows, and demonstrate a better use for it.

I have said that relationship requires differentiation and this requires an account of hierarchy. If there is to be order, there must be hierarchy.<sup>38</sup> Secondly there must also be a praxeological ontology, which allows that action and exchange are not subsequent to being, but all being is acting and being acted on. We live by buying in and out of each other. I offered you the logic of refusal and ricochet by which I argued that God is impregnable to all the action of man, and refuses to take anything man offers him other than surrender. Ontology also requires accounts of possession, participation and interpenetration, and of action, dramaturgical representation, of the relationship of one and many, and of time. All these must be derived from and tested against the comings and goings of the Son and the Spirit in the evangelical narrative. A relational ontology that is thoroughly trinitarian will not need to be patched up by hermeneutics and epistemology bought in from outside.

For example, the ransom theme. I said the Son of God pays us off by issuing his stock. Sounds bizarre? It must be a metaphor. If you insist that we are offering metaphors you are buying into a hermeneutic and epistemology not disciplined by theology. We must say instead that it is a relational ontology. Of course it sounds odd because we moderns are entirely reliant on a substance ontology, or we divide ourselves between two accounts of being, a timeless ontology on one hand, and belief in the absolute nature of time on the other. I have simply made ransom and redemption intrinsic to the ontology in which I discussed human being. In other words I have given you an anthropology, an anthropology which understands that human being is nothing but selling and being

sold. So ransom and redemption are anthropological models. They are ways of analysing what humans do in the course of being human. If we make them anthropological models we avoid all issues created by the assumption that redemption and ransom are religious terms that make sense only in a religious sphere that then has to be separately brought into conversation with a self-professedly secular sphere of meaning.

Non-relational pneumatologyless theology might work if we were teaching children, but if we persevere at it we are teaching religion, not gospel. As soon as we ask about *how* God does this or that, and ask about the *medium* of his work, we have to say that God is the medium of his work. It is not some abstraction, but a person, he himself. The Holy Spirit is the person of God's working. Only such statement will rescue us from the otherwise inevitable assumption that what God does he does on some basis or other, that he relies on something. Then we have to say that God brings to nothing every foundation and basis, attacks the other lordships, their constructions and all that they have managed to produce, that he does not build on any thing or any principle. He builds only on his own. He is his only resource. He does not buy anything in. He is the foundation and basement level of all his work, but he has scattered the bodies of his opponents. They do not continue in any parallel kingdom. Pneumatology is the conceptuality that enables us to argue that the gospel attacks lordships and all concepts that do not serve the evangelical history, abstractions become conceptual idols. The gospel is *news* of their defeat after it is the *act* of destruction that topples them. This pneumatology is then a relational trinitarian ontology that understands our being as the act of the Son and the Father together. The logic, ontology and hermeneutics have to serve the theology, not the other way around. Only the whole conceptuality of the whole Christian tradition entrusted to us is rich enough to describe human being, human being that can be adequately described only in relationship to God who has ambitions for him. All the language and all the conceptuality in our possession, we have from God. All we have to do is be its good custodians. Cheap gospels withhold from the poor the news of their release. But this is the one thing that we will not be allowed to get away with, for this is to start our rebellion all over again. What we want is not modern but ecclesiological theology. Only ecclesiological theology is *theological* theology.

## Note

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<sup>1</sup> **Matthew 18.23** *The kingdom of heaven is a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.*

**Mark 12.2** *At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.*

Isaiah 5.1-7 *Judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?*

<sup>2</sup> Mark 13.34 *He put his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and told the one at the door to keep watch.*

Matthew 24.48 *But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself 'My master has been away a long time' and he then begins to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.*

<sup>3</sup> **Isaiah 3.13** *The Lord entered into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: 'It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?'*

Mark 12.6 *He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying They will respect my son. But the tenants said to one another This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours...*

Mark 12.9 *He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.*

<sup>4</sup> **Isaiah 63.5** *I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me and my own wrath sustained me.*

<sup>5</sup> In doing this they set out to wage a campaign without considering whether he can win it Luke 14.31.

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<sup>6</sup> **Isaiah 53.4-12** *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep is silent .... Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors.*

<sup>7</sup> **Mark 3.27** *No one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man.*

<sup>8</sup> **Mark 13.9-11** *You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking but the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>9</sup> **Psalm 76.1** *In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place is in Zion. There he broke the flashing arrows, the shields, the swords, the weapons of war... At your rebuke of God of Jacob both horse and chariot lie still. You alone are to be feared. Who can stand you when you are angry... bring gifts to the One to be feared. He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth.*

<sup>10</sup> **Matthew 7.25** *The rain came down, the wind blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. **Isaiah 8.14** *The Lord Almighty... will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall (Luke 18.28).**

<sup>11</sup> **Joshua 8.29** *He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening. At sunset Joshua ordered them to take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate (and 10.26).*

<sup>12</sup> **2 Kings 18.26** *Eliakim...said to the field commander 'Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.' But the commander replied 'Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the men sitting on the wall – who like you will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine?'...This is what the king says: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. he cannot deliver you from my hand.'*

<sup>13</sup> **Kant Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason 6.72** *'This original debt...cannot be erased by somebody else'.*

<sup>14</sup> **Isaiah 49.21** *I was bereaved and barren, I was exiled and rejected. But now she acquired many new children her question is 'Who bore me these? Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these – where have they come from?'*

<sup>15</sup> **Isaiah 61.7** *Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance and so they will inherit a double portion.*

<sup>16</sup> **Romans 6.3** *We were baptised into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.*

<sup>17</sup> **Isaiah 65.6-7** *I will pay back in full into their laps.*

<sup>18</sup> **1 Corinthians 15.3** *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. **1 Peter 3.18** *For Christ died for our sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**

<sup>19</sup> **Acts 20.28** *Be shepherds of the Church of God which he bought with his blood.*

<sup>20</sup> **Psalm 2.8** *Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the world your possession.*

<sup>21</sup> **1 Corinthians 11.19** *There must be differences among you to show which of you have the Lord's approval. Christians are not all the same. Some have more advantages and responsibilities. They have been given more and from them is expected more. What is this more that they have been given? They have been the younger ones. They are trust, job, gift, treasure - and will become their reward. The big ones are heads of households, and the younger ones are members of the household headed by the bigger ones. But head of household is not a permanent position. There is the possibility of promotion or relegation, of having one of your position taken away from you, of being returned to the ranks, your own juniors promoted into your position, so you have to serve him as he served you.*

<sup>22</sup> **1 Corinthians 10.17** *Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body, because we all partake of the one loaf.*

<sup>23</sup> **James 1.8** *He is a double-minded man. **1 Corinthians 10.21** *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too.**

<sup>24</sup> **Psalm 109.8** *Let another take his place.*

<sup>25</sup> **1 Corinthians 11.29** *For anyone who eats or drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

<sup>26</sup> **1 Corinthians 4.12** *When we are cursed, we bless.. when we are slandered we answer kindly... **Romans 12.14** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...Do not repay anyone evil for evil...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. This is 15.16 the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God.**

<sup>27</sup> **1 Corinthians 12.23** *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.*

<sup>28</sup> **1 Corinthians 11.20-1.** *For when you come together it is not the Lord's supper you eat, for as you eat each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else.*

<sup>29</sup> **Damasio Descartes Error** shows that the mind is comprised of the whole body, the whole undulating emotional landscape of associations (memories and draft scenarios) spread across the whole body.

<sup>30</sup> **John 4.36** *The sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for.*

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<sup>31</sup> 1 Thess 4.15 4.13-18 *According to the Lord's own word we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

<sup>32</sup> The accusation made against the master in Matthew 25.24 is that the master is a hard man, taking what he has not worked for. He is not the master who sowed the Old Testament. So now we have to show that the Old Testament prophets planted and the New Testament Church is gathering in. The Old Testament prophets are the righteous men, they built with stone and gold (hard won materials) and their work survives and is raised with them (1 Corinthians 3.14). The new children of God now appearing all over the world are the fruit. They are the children of the prophets, and thus the demonstration that the prophets built truly and were thus righteous men.

<sup>33</sup> The heavenly assembly is seen in Isaiah 6 and 1 Kings 22.20. The massed troops of God are seen in 2 Kings 6.17 *Elisha prayed oh Lord open his eyes so that he may see. Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha.*

<sup>34</sup> **Psalm 149.8** *to bind their kings with fetters their nobles with shackles of iron.*

**Isaiah 60.10** *Foreigners will rebuild your walls and their kings will serve you... their kings led in triumphal procession for the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish, it will be utterly ruined.*

**2 Corinthians 10.5** *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive to every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 2.10 *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep the things of God...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* The Spirit penetrates but is not penetrated, so he knows us but we do not know him. So now in the Spirit the Christian community no longer knows Christ in the way he was received by the world (2 Corinthians 5.16) because it knows him through the resurrection, by which we now know his crucifixion to be the crucifixion of the powers of this world.

<sup>36</sup> **Philippians 3.3** *We are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God.*

<sup>37</sup> **Different disciplines of the humanities call them tropes, or paradigms.**

<sup>38</sup> **In the theology-free world of contemporary institutional ecclesiology, the absence of pneumatology is patched over by the two mistaken concepts of consecration and ordination which assert that properties, sanctity, are conferred on individuals or individual eucharistic elements. The secret here is to fill out pneumatology with a discussion of gifts and roles that subordinate all to the unity of the Christian phalanx. This would allow us to talk about persons and things been given specific purposes or specific places – but this purpose is external to them. It is their purpose only because it is the purpose God puts them too.**