

What GOOD is RESURRECTION to US? EASTER TRIDUUM SERMONS 2008

Once again this year there's been debate in the media during Holy Week and Easter Week about what's somewhat ironically called 'Easter trading hours'. (Easter has nothing whatsoever to do with 'trading'!) I must say that I find such public debate somewhat inane. Anyone who prays the liturgies of the Great Holy Week of the Christian year knows that they have been held by the most momentous and moving of sacramental vessels, which speaks for itself. Debate about 'Easter trading' is simply irrelevant. Of course, defence of the 'right' to trade without the church's interference appeals to the spirit of the 'market-forces' age, and is thus unassailable 'logic' in our self-centred and consumption-obsessed times. However, attempts (well-intentioned, I suppose) to defend Easter from commercialism have the inevitable effect of sounding like the imposition of an unnecessary restriction from an interfering institution. While it is true that self-centredness and gluttony dressed up in the language of 'rights' is morally bankrupt, nevertheless it is both unreasonable and futile for Christians to attempt to impose our ritual or cultural practices upon others – no matter how well intentioned.

Crucifixion-Resurrection is the good news that God-in-Christ is bringing to birth a new humanity, a new creation, and that we can share in this new humanity. But can it be that Christian good news, and especially Resurrection good news, is most threatened not by Easter traders, but by being represented and promoted as an external idea, an imposition from 'above', a reality which is not natural to humans?

At Easter we boldly declare 'Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!' What does this mean? Is this risen Christ simply an alien figure who, coming from 'heaven', who accomplishes what I cannot? Is Christ's work on the cross only something that happened once, long ago, and which I am required to believe in as mere historical data? Is Christ's salvation merely a theory which I must accept? Is resurrection a phenomenon utterly outside and beyond my actual experience? My sense is that the church's insistence on 'simple' answers to such questions is directly proportional to the incomprehensibility and irrelevance of Resurrection good news for many ordinary and decent people. What good is it for us for Jesus to be risen Lord and Saviour? That's the question I have been pondering these sermons preached at St Luke's in the City during the Easter Triduum. I hope these Easter homilies stimulate your ponderings also.

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Fr David Moore
PARISH PRIEST

Whose Procession? PASSION SUNDAY OF PALMS i

"Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30CE. It was the beginning of the week of Passover, the most sacred week in the Jewish year. One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mount of Olives, cheered by his followers. Jesus was from the peasant village of Nazareth, his message was about the kingdom of God,

and his followers came from the peasant class. On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial cavalry and soldiers. Jesus's procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate's proclaimed the power of empire. The two processions embody the central conflict of the week that led to Jesus's crucifixion." ⁱⁱ So the people of Jerusalem in the first century of the Common Era were confronted with a tough question – it's the same question which confronts us 2000 years later: Which procession are we in? Perhaps more crucially, which procession do we *want* to be in? ⁱⁱⁱ

The question presumes, of course, that we do have a choice. Furthermore, the question assumes that we *will* be in one procession or the other – for not being in a procession is not an option. So that is Holy Week's question to us. Will we choose the powerful procession of empire, or the peasant procession of Jesus? Which procession do we *want* to be in?

The Passion Narrative plunges us at the start of this most sacred and holy week into the milieu of the final showdown between Jesus and the powers of the world. It is helpful to read the whole of the story of this week in one uninterrupted instalment. By so doing one thing becomes startlingly evident, through a succession of teachings and encounters – the man who leads the peasant procession from the east has come to challenge the powers that rule and dominate the Temple. This is the meaning and fulfilment of his baptism. It is these powers which we need to understand if we are to appreciate just what it is that Jesus actually does in Holy Week, and why Jesus ends up being crucified.

The scene for Holy Week's showdown was bound to be Jerusalem, because this is the epicentre for both Roman imperial and Jewish religious exploitation. Jerusalem, and in particular the Temple, by the time of Jesus had become the stronghold of political oppression, economic exploitation, and, worst of all, religious legitimation. The high-Priestly families which rule in Jewish Palestine are in bed with the Roman masters. The Temple authorities – generally designated in the gospels as “the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes” – came from wealthy families, men in whom the Roman imperial authorities had placed their confidence as the favoured local collectors of extortionate imperial taxes. The Temple was the centre of both a local and a Roman tax system, which benefited the wealthy at the expense of a vast and increasingly-poor peasant class. In order to accumulate lands necessary to the growth of wealth, the wealthy had to be willing to subvert the laws about land in the Jewish Bible. This is what the 6th and 7th century prophets had railed against.

The prophetic condemnation is exceedingly uncomfortable, not least because: “As individuals, the wealthy and powerful can be good people – responsible, honest, hard-working, faithful to family and friends, interesting, charming, and good-hearted. The issue is not their individual virtue of wickedness, but the role they played in the domination system. They shaped it, enforced it, and benefited from it.” ^{iv} It may be argued that there is nothing unusual about this form of society. Domination systems are normal, have been the ‘normal’ mode of civilisation for millennia – and, it can be added that in spite of all our modern sophistication and democratic pride would appear to remain so. Furthermore, the wealthy controllers of the Jerusalem Temple tax and power system, who benefited while the poor became landless and poorer, justified their position by saying, ‘This is the way it is.’ ^v This was the Jerusalem that Jesus entered on Palm Sunday.

Thus, the peasant who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey from the east came to proclaim good news: ‘No! That is the way of power and domination, but it is not the way of God's kingdom.’ The “kingdom of God”, in the mouth and hands of Jesus, is as much a political as a spiritual metaphor. Jerusalem is the necessary place of confrontation with the authorities of political power, religious and secular – and because of that, it will be the place of death and resurrection.

Two processions entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The same question which faced those who were there that day remains our question: Which procession are we in? Which procession do we *want* to be in?

Participation

MAUNDY THURSDAY ^{vi}

In the midst of unrest and violence, of wars and rumours of wars, in so many places on the planet; in the midst of uncertainty, fear and anxiety which makes the church so defensive; in the midst of storms in the local Christchurch and New Zealand tea cups; in the midst of the turmoil we may know within our own souls – in the midst of all this ordinary, perplexing and glorious reality, we enter into the

Sacred Triduum. The Paschal Mystery is celebrated in the midst of all these realities, not as a way of fleeing from them. The Paschal Mystery does not lead to another world – as if there were one – but to a fuller, more real, more true engagement with this world.

The events of Holy Thursday begin, according to the three synoptic gospels, with very deliberate, practical, in-this-world action. Jesus gives the disciples explicit instructions regarding location and arrangements, clearly having pre-planned very carefully how the Thursday night meal with his companions is to be undertaken.^{vii} Here, mirroring his carefully-planned entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of the week,^{viii} is a this-worldly dinner host. This meal is no after-thought, last-minute affair. As the events which have unfolded in Jerusalem during the week make clear, when Jesus celebrates the feast of liberation with his companions he is abundantly aware of the political realities. Real unrest and violence, real anxiety and fear, real local political intrigues, and very real individuals wrestling with very real souls. Likewise, we celebrate the Sacred Easter Triduum in the midst of such realities, not as a way of fleeing from them. We come here tonight knowing, to consider but one reality, that our penchant for cheap consumer goods finances the Chinese tanks and armies pouring into Tibet right now.

It is this being in the midst of the realities of the world that this great liturgical action begins tonight. Water, bowls, feet, hands, towels, oils, bread and wine – practical and ordinary realities without which religion flies off into the outer space of dis-embodied propositions to be subscribed to at pain of hell-fire. In washing his disciples' feet Jesus does not ask them to subscribe to a theory. Instead, according to John, he invites them to bodily touch, to this-worldly servanthood. In the midst of all the political, religious and social realities the Lord of Life is on his knees before them, towel around waist, pouring water over and caressing weary and despised feet and tells them: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."^{ix} According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, on this final night Jesus invites them to eat and drink with him, in an extraordinarily-intimate manner: "This is my body. This is my blood."^x John's take on this is perhaps the most staggeringly-intimate expression of participation possible: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me."^{xi} The Paschal Mystery is not about fleeing from the bodiliness of the world, but a matter of thorough-going, real-flesh-and-blood participation in it.

Now it is commonly thought that Christian faith has something to do with believing *in Jesus*, in the sense of merely believing certain statements about his life, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. Sometimes Christians place undue emphasis on *believing in* such statements. But this kind of belief in fact makes of Jesus a substitute. Whatever it is that is required for salvation, it is Jesus who does it, and the follower gets a share of that salvation simply by believing in Jesus-the-substitute. Put simply, and rather crudely: Jesus does it all for me! This is actually a calamitous distortion of Christian faith, making for psychologically-infantile passive spectators.

By contrast, in the story of Jesus' last night with his followers, the evangelists proclaim not Jesus the substitute, but Jesus who calls others to participate. Just as all these things are taking place in the midst of very real and practical political and social circumstances, so Jesus expects his followers to share, to participate likewise. On the road to Jerusalem it was made abundantly clear to them that the call to follow did not mean believing in Jesus *per se*, but in participating with him, in sharing with him, by entering into the messy and painful midst of things as they are.^{xii} Those who have been with him on the way should not be surprised, then, that on Sunday, at the triumphal palm procession entry into Jerusalem, the stark and awkward choice is presented once again – whose procession will we be in? The Paschal Mystery is not about Jesus doing something *instead of us* – it's about *our conscious and willing participation* in the death and resurrection he embodies as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.^{xiii}

This real participation in the life-death-resurrection of Jesus is what John the evangelist famously calls 'abiding'. In 'commentary' on the footwashing liturgy John employs this word repeatedly. Identifying himself as the true vine, Jesus tells them: "Abide in me as I abide in you... Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit."^{xiv} Claiming to love them as the Father loves him, he tells them: "So I have loved you; abide in my love."^{xv} This abiding "is the nature of things because it is the nature of God as Trinity, as Love: the Self-Giver, the Self-Given and the in-othered Spirit. Since this is the mystery of God's own being it has been also the means whereby God saves the world."^{xvi} Whatever 'saving' means, it takes place not by believing an idea, but by abiding, him in us and us in him, that we may become completely one.^{xvii} After he has washed their feet Jesus asks the disciples: "Do you know what I have done to you?"^{xviii} He is speaking, of course, about this real and tangible abiding, this astonishing partnership and mutuality, and his invitation to participate in the real life which is his. In washing their feet he does not ask them to believe in a *statement* about servanthood – rather, he asks them to *participate* in it. Likewise, in the synoptic gospels, Jesus does not ask the disciples to believe in a theory about his Body and Blood, Bread and Wine, instead he commands them to consume it – the

ultimate symbol of participation. The significance of that was obviously grasped by Augustine when, regarding the Eucharist, he declared: “Become what you eat.”

So the Sacred Easter Triduum is celebrated not as a grand set of ideas in a book, not even the Bible, but by participation in the servant-hood of the Lord who handles feet, by becoming ourselves what we eat in this great Eucharistic feast. The Paschal Mystery is not about Jesus doing something *instead of us* – it’s about *our participation* in the death and resurrection he embodies as the pioneer and perfecter of our true humanity. Thus, the Paschal Mystery does not free us from this world’s joys and sufferings – rather, it’s a call to become more fully human *by being participants in Christ’s saving action in the world*. We are not here to escape the world, but to participate more fully and deeply in it with Christ. ‘Unless I wash you, you have no share in me.’ ‘Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me.’

Are You Here?

GOOD FRIDAY ^{xix}

God created the universe, including humanity, and it was good. But humankind ‘fell’, which was a sin against God’s infinite goodness and justice. The consequence is that all of us are sinners. Because God was merciful he could forgive. But because God was the Infinite Judge he would also have been in his rights to destroy the whole of humanity. In order for God to forgive sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, or just payment, had to be offered. But only an infinite payment would do, and since an ordinary human being would be a sinner, and would only be dying for his or her sins, no human could meet the just God’s demand for payment. The sacrifice must not be a sinner, but a perfect human being. God came up with the idea of sending his own Son into the world as a human. Because of being God’s Son he was perfect, spotless, and without blemish. Because of being human he could pay the price as a human. Because he was God’s Son his payment would be infinite, and thus effect the necessary satisfaction. And because of all this, Good Friday is the day that makes our forgiveness possible. ^{xx}

The chances are that this is the ‘default setting’ of Christian salvation which most of us bring to Holy Week, and specifically to the cross. This is the picture from childhood. And like all those confounded default settings which come with Mr Gates’ software on our computers, they can be nigh-on impossible to override! The default setting is so pervasive that many people think this is the ‘real’ reason for Jesus’ death, that this is the ‘orthodox’ or ‘official’ understanding. Some of those are church members who feel the need to defend this idea as the only idea – and, like everything else that can be ‘proved’ from Biblical texts, it is perfectly possible to find Scriptural justification for the default setting. Others have left the church because this default setting is abhorrent, or because its defenders behave abhorrently.

This default setting explanation for Good Friday was peddled all over the world with box office success by Mel Gibson’s splatter-flick ‘The Passion of the Christ’ in 2004. Worse in a way than Mr Gibson’s film, the default setting is reinforced by so many well-known hymns – and like Christmas carols, many people think they’re not getting a ‘real Easter’ unless they sing the mostly-19th-century hymns of childhood. No, we will not be singing ‘There is a green hill far away’ today! Neither will we be singing the US-south, cotton-fields, black-slave-spiritual ‘Were you there when they crucified my Lord?’ The purpose of the question in that song, of course, was to elicit from its emotionally-massaged singers the confession: “Yes, I was there – my sins were part of the reason Jesus had to die!” ^{xxi}

Now I want to suggest that the question ‘Were you there’ is unhelpful to say the least, arguably, downright irresponsible. Never mind whether you *were* somewhere, someplace, 2000 years ago. The question that really matters is this: Are you *here*?

The Palm Gospel on Passion Sunday alerted us to the two processions which entered Jerusalem on that spring day in the year 30CE, one from the east led by a peasant from Galilee, the other from the west led by a mighty Roman Governor with his armies. The question posed to those present in Jerusalem then was ‘Which procession would they be in?’ But the liturgy of the church does not invite us to speculate about where we might have been in that first Palm Sunday procession. Rather, it calls us to make a decision about which procession we want to be in here and now, in this time and this place, in our world. Last night’s Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper alerted us to the fact that the Paschal Mystery is not about Jesus doing something *instead of us*. Rather, it’s about *our participation* in the death and resurrection that Jesus embodies as the pioneer and perfecter of our true humanity. So the question that matters is not ‘Were you there?’, but ‘Are you here?’

That former question goes hand in hand with the old default setting of salvation theory, the explanation of Good Friday in which Jesus *did* something instead of us. But Jesus having *done it for us*

effectively lets us off the hook. All we have to do, in order to share in the salvation he wins, according to the default setting, is *believe is piece of historical date and a theory*. Because this theory is an attempt to explain more than is in fact possible, humanly-speaking, then defence of it as *the* orthodox Christian position is actually idolatry.

The default setting also depends upon a brutal image of God which fails to accord with the image of God portrayed by Jesus. The default setting makes sin the central character in the entire Christian story, whereas it is actually God's loving and extravagant creation which is the hub around which everything revolves. The default setting reduces the entire Christian proclamation to being a subset of morals – usually narrowed down to sexual morals. Insidiously, the default setting enables a person, or group of persons, to believe in a theory without actually undergoing it – it makes it possible for a person to be 'right' without also becoming someone different. Furthermore, this encourages group identity to be formed around 'being right' – and thus paves the way for an abusive power which determines who is 'in' and who is 'out'.

Perhaps most unexpected, the default setting severs the cross from the resurrection. That is why it has never been dogmatic – that is to say, the church has never adopted this default setting theory as normative to Christian belief. ^{xxii} Perhaps most seriously, the default setting makes the means of salvation an entirely alien thing, extrinsic to our native humanity, and thus not natural to us – not part of our souls, but something imposed from outside, from 'above'. The default setting ultimately lets us off the hook, leaving all the work to Jesus the historical substitute, and thus absolves us from participation ourselves.

Well, we would have to admit that default settings have a habit of enduring, by the principle of inertia. There is a telling exchange between Jesus and the Temple authorities during his Festival of Booths visit to Jerusalem which reveals the appeal of inertia. In response to his speaking about Abraham as his Father they remind him that he's not yet 50 years old, and thus cannot have seen Abraham. ^{xxiii} This is a variant on the inertia-driven question 'Were you there?' - a regressive question intended to bolster their rightness, and therefore defend their power. In today's heart-wrenching Passion Narrative John the Evangelist testifies to the frightening consequences of the power of inertia and its perpetuation of default settings in the hands of religious and political elites.

On Good Friday we are invited not to believe in a mere proposition; nor give allegiance to a brutal God in the sky; nor believe in a gospel which is little more than morals; nor be right about the theories we subscribe to; nor feel comforted by being in the right crowd; nor feel satisfied because we are 'in' while others are 'out'; nor adore a cross for its own sake; nor to ponder the question, 'Was I there?'

In kneeling before the cross on this day, in touching wood, in handling bread, in tasting bread and wine, in the close company of the Body of Christ which is God's people, in the midst of the real joy and suffering of the world in which we live – the question which matters is 'Are we *here*?'

Are we spectators, or are we participants in God's extraordinary work of creation-redemption? Are we participants with Christ? Are we in Christ's procession, the procession of the humble peasant proclaiming a kingdom not like the kingdoms of power, property, possessions? "Atonement does not really need a theory," Peter Carnley wrote; what it needs is a liturgy." ^{xxiv} *Laos plus ergon*: the work of the people, the liturgy. ^{xxv} Just as Christ's work of redemption didn't need a grand idea, but needed a body and an action.

The Paschal Mystery is not about Jesus doing something instead of us – it's about our willing, conscious, and hope-filled *participation* in the death and resurrection he embodies as the pioneer and perfecter of our true humanity. Whose procession are we in? Are we willing to become what we eat at this Holy Table, as participants with Christ? Are we *here*?

Collaborators with the Lord

EASTER DAY ^{xxvi}

Resurrection confirms the intuition the disciples had glimpsed through their experience of living with Jesus, through his teaching and healing. This intuition is summed up in that explosive declaration: "Jesus is Lord!" Explosive because this outrageously declares that *Caesar cannot be Lord* – uncomfortably, that far-reaching **εὐαγγέλιον** *evangelion*, good news, has rarely been truly honoured by Western Christians hooked on power and 'market economics'. The intuition that 'Jesus is Lord'

seemed to have been shattered by his horrific death. But in the first light of the eighth day of the week, the first day of the new creation, the angel declared to the guilty, fearful & defeated followers that all was not as it seemed: “He is not here [in the tomb]; for he has been raised, as he said.” And when Jesus met the disciples, they took hold of his feet and worshipped him. ^{xxvii} John’s account makes the case more explicitly: Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, “I have seen the *Lord*,” and Thomas bluntly declares, “My *Lord*, and my God.” ^{xxviii} And the Church very soon connected the ideas of crucifixion, resurrection, Lord-ship and salvation, coming to regard Jesus Christ as “our Lord and Saviour”. ^{xxix}

It is worth bearing in mind in these dark hours of Easter Day that some have concluded that Lord-ship is a hopelessly patriarchal and imperialist term. Others have concluded that the world does not need a ‘saviour’, but that it does need men and women of goodwill who will work for justice, peace and the benefit of all. So what does it mean to be Easter people, declaring that Jesus is *Lord* and *Saviour*?

Honesty compels us to admit that - notwithstanding legitimate feminist and liberation theology critiques of Lord-ship - it is most likely that for many there is a ‘default setting’ on Lord-ship, just as on Good Friday we considered the default setting on ‘salvation’. The ‘default setting’ regarding Jesus’ Lordship goes something like this: Jesus comes from another world, sent by God the Father, to take on human form in order to accomplish what we humans could not. Because he is able to accomplish this - and particularly because he performed miracles and willingly endured the most horrific suffering, as a completely sinless person - thus he deserves our total allegiance. In the cool light of Easter dawn, the blood and guts behind us, our response to this Jesus is an amplified adoration of our response to other, lesser, human heroes. In Jesus’ case, of course, having paid an infinite price of suffering as substitute for us, allegiance also ought to be infinite.

This kind of infinite Lordship is the preserve of the completely Other, which is why (issues with patriarchy aside) Jesus’ Lordship when regarded this way inevitably makes him utterly unlike us, a foreigner, and the ultimate potentate before whom we must bow down. The price of this kind of Lordship is that *the Divinity which he embodies remains alien to us*, not at all native to our humanity. *This* Lord is extrinsic, outside our natural, native reality. *This* Lord comes to us from outer space. And there are only two possible responses to this idea of Lordship – either total acceptance and allegiance, or resistance and denouncement.

Well, an immediate implication of this kind of Jesus-lordship is bound to be the division of humankind into those who can accept it and those who can’t. And we would have to admit that there are a number of well-worn Scriptural texts which might seem to justify such an interpretation. Without making any attempt to solve that matter now, suffice to say that there are just as many texts which contradict that stance. But the implication I have been reflecting upon during this Easter Triduum is that this idea of Lordship ultimately lets us off the hook. Lordship of this kind is something that Jesus *does for us*, and therefore something we do not need to get involved in ourselves – indeed, we can’t! Jesus the substitute-Saviour, the one who renders to God-the-judge the infinite price which no human can pay, has no need of me apart from my intellectual assent. He is like the alien in all those movies, who comes to take over our minds and bodies – or, like an Arnold Schwarzenegger character, to blow us way!

This is the Lord who is behind the very modern question: ‘Do you accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour?’ Ironically, this personal Lordship ultimately severs me from the rest of humanity, by endowing me with the capacity to choose allegiance to this personal Lord *without any reference to you*. So it lets me off the hook, for instance, of having to consider myself in the light of the world’s shameful economic realities of which I am a beneficiary as one of the world’s wealthy. As I noted on Thursday night, this personal Lord and Saviour allows me to sever the connection between my religion and my indirect financing of the artillery rolling into Tibet at this very time as a consequence of my voracious appetite for cheap consumer goods of every kind. And many other hooks besides! This personal Lord and Saviour can allow me to not actually *be here*, in the present reality.

A corrective to the question, which goes some way to redressing its imbalance, might be: ‘Do you accept Jesus as your *political* Lord and Saviour?’ ^{xxx} That question at least recalls us to the dilemma facing us on Palm Sunday – do we want to be in the procession of empires, powers, market forces, political expediency, cheap consumer goods, and endless, unchecked consumer growth - or do we want to be in the peasant procession of Jesus who challenges all that and who stands poor and naked before the rulers of the world? Honesty constrains us to admit that there’s a wide gulf between the procession we’re actually in, and the one we may desire to be in! (Even supposing we do desire it.) Such a question obviously lets no one, except the world’s abject poor, off the hook!

Whatever Lordship might mean – and it needs to be admitted that the content of Jesus’ Lordship exceeds by degrees whatever I or anyone else might say – then *it has to involve us somehow*. Otherwise, all we have is the Lordship of an alien coming to invade and colonise us. The evangelists tell

us that this kind is Lord and Saviour is not here! That being so, are we willing to be *collaborators with Jesus* in the salvation of the world, what he calls the “completion of the age”?^{xxxix} Will we accept having a share with him, *will we participate, will we be here*, rather than desire to be someplace else?

The question is obviously meant to hang unanswered in the cool, dim, yet hope-filled light of Easter dawn. The question is always before us, never fully resolved – though by the Easter-day re-affirmation of our baptismal promises we pray our willingness. Perhaps we feel alarmed by such a question? The risen Christ’s greeting to the anxious and fearful repeats what he has been saying all along: “Do not be afraid!”^{xxxix}

The question also invites us to ponder, what might ‘participation with Christ the Lord and Saviour’ look like? What does it mean to ‘choose’ to participate with Christ in the fulfilment of redemption? What does it mean to share in his cup, to ‘become what we eat’? Well, to speak about ‘choice’, and ‘participation’, and ‘willingness to share in the cup’, and so on, is to risk giving the impression that this is yet another idea, coming down from on high, from outside ourselves, yet another extrinsic proposition to be heroically accepted or shamefully rejected. And if that were so, the last state would be worse than the first!^{xxxix}

If the Paschal Mystery is not merely a piece of 2000 year old history, and salvation not just something which we receive passively, and atonement not simply a rational theory, a blood-less proposition alien to ourselves, extrinsic to our native humanity; then *can it be that Lord-ship and salvation are natural realities which God endowed us with from the beginning?* ‘Choice’, ‘participation’, ‘willingness’, might then mean not swallowing an alien, imposed, religious idea. Rather, it might mean turning aside from all the games and cover-ups and pretences we are so good at; instead consenting to become that which we truly are by virtue of being those made in the image and likeness of God.^{xxxix} To borrow from Meister Eckhart: ‘What good is it to me for Jesus to be Lord and Saviour, if I do not also collaborate with Jesus in his Lord-ship and salvation?’

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NOTES

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- i The Lections: Matthew 21:1-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66
- ii Borg M J, Crossan J D, *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem*, New York: HarperCollins, 2006, p2.
- iii Borg M J, Crossan J D, p30. *emphasis added*
- iv Borg M J, Crossan J D, p19.
- v Borg M J, Crossan J D, p20.
- vi The The Lections: Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35
- vii Mark 14:12-17
- viii Mark 11:2-6
- ix John 13:8
- x Mark 14:22,24
- xi John 6:56
- xii Mark 10:32-34
- xiii Hebrews 12:2
- xiv John 15:4,5
- xv John 15:9
- xvi Taylor J V, *The Christlike God*, London: SCM, 1992, p250.
- xvii John 17:23
- xviii John 13:12
- xix The Lection: John 18:1-19:42
- xx This summary of ‘penal substitutionary atonement’ theory is drawn from Borg M J, Crossan J D, p138, and Alison J, *On Being Liked*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003, pp18-19.
- xxi Borg M J, Crossan J D, p138.
- xxii See Carnley P F, *Reflections on Glass: Trends and Tensions in the Contemporary Anglican Church*, Sydney: HarperCollins, 2004, pp143-155.
- xxiii John 8:58
- xxiv Carnley P F, p150.
- xxv **λαος** laos + **εργον** ergon = **λειτουγια** liturgy
- xxvi The Lections: Vigil readings + Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10
- xxvii Matthew 28:6
- xxviii John 20:18,28
- xxix 2 Peter 1:1; 2:20; 3:2,18, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3
- xxx Borg M J, Crossan J D, p215.
- xxxi Matthew 28:20 The Greek word translated in English Bibles as “end” is **συντελειαις** *sunteleias*, from the verb whose range of meaning literally means “to fulfill”, “to execute”, “to accomplish”, “to finish”.
- xxxii Matthew 28:10
- xxxiii Matthew 12:45
- xxxiv Genesis 1:26,27