

Life of the World?

By
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An analytic critique questioning the fundamental assumptions of the WCC Vancouver Assembly 'Jesus Christ: The Life of the World' (as presented in John Poulton's preparatory text 'The Feast of Life' {WCC, 1983}). If the church reinforces the social defences of scapegoating, projection, denial, displacement and splitting, then it fosters abdication from dealing with the source of the world's soreness and salves the world's conscience while sustaining its psychosis. In so doing, it bears responsibility for the perseveration and dominance of death in a world desperately in need of new life. [1983]

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[Some notes in response to "The Feast of Life" by John Poulton which was "A Theological Reflection on the theme 'Jesus Christ The Life of the World" in preparation for the WCC Congress in Vancouver in the summer of 1983]

When a representative group of people are gathered from the global matrix, the dominant theme that emerges is that of conflict, death, oppression, starvation, exploitation, debt, arms race compounded by the historic retaliation of race against race. It is this background that made Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the WCC ask in the foreword :

"But how dare we affirm and celebrate life in a world haunted by the spectre of death in all its frightening forms?"

It is a neo-deuteronomic task, a theodicy of grand magnitude. The inarticulate global hysteria in the light of the reality of world suffering seeks from the World Council some sign of hope which can sustain its life in the sea of death. That is the task and to that task John Poulton addresses this book. Potter comments,

"It tells us how we may, looking forward in faith to the feast that is promised to us, partake of the feast of life that is offered to us here and now".

John Poulton opens his exposition with the dominical offer of "an inner spring always welling up for eternal life" and "bread that brings life to the world" but set in the point of crisis, the point of decision, the *chairos* of choice between life and death. The choice is evidenced in coming, in drinking, in eating, in believing and these verbal statements are interchangeable. The promise to which the world in its experience of death is pointed is precisely to that offer of inner life which is not subjected to the cutting off of its life-sustaining satisfaction by the on-set of hunger or thirst. These are inner resources which come in at the level of the belly rather than through the mouth.

Right in this opening section, I suggest, is the crux of the whole exposition. Two grand themes emerge on the surface which are then followed through in page after page, example after example, story after story from context after context in the rest of the volume. Put very baldly and bluntly they are these :

Firstly, the religious response to the cry of a world in desperate need of sedation is the invitation to regress into placental dependency, mediated through the sacrament of the umbilical. The call of the church to the world is that of psychic regression into an idealised womb world of eternal placental resource. It is a matrix in which the nutrient is imbibed without work and from which the waste products are removed without responsibility.

The second great theme that emerges in these opening paragraphs is that of the dialectic, the split, the fundamental cleavage between light and darkness, life and death, good and evil. This great dichotomy in the human heart, projected onto the cosmos, is symbolised by the elevation of the Christ figure to being the "Lord of Life"

held in victorious antithesis to the realm of death, affirmed ever more loudly, ever more stridently, ever more actively as the experience of death becomes more dominant. So the meaning of life itself is distorted and the symbol becomes an icon of one half of the split. It stands for that idealised form of life which is antithetical to the field of death. So the Christ-figure is elevated as Lord of one element of the schizoid split and precisely not as the source of life. He is here presented as the enforcer of psychotic defence against ultimate anxiety to reify which is to collude with the fundamental defences of humanity in its flight from wholeness. In so far as the Christ is absolutised and held up as the answer to the realm of death, just so far is the field of death also reified and absolutised in the experience of man. The two sides of the split walk hand in hand and the intensification of idealisation represented by the agenda of the WCC is precisely not the answer to the problems of the death-dealing principalities and powers being experienced in the realities of this world.

The splitting is epitomised in various ways, for instance on page two it is affirmed that :

"Decisions are to be made for or against life, between creation and destruction... There must either be a major change to life or an overwhelming in death ." (page 2)

The time in which these decisions are to be faced is described as apocalyptic. It is an era in which there is the anticipation of fundamental collapse in the political and economic systems and the ecosystem of the world, the resource system of life itself, let alone the psycho-social system structured as it is into fundamental splitting, alienation, armament and the threat of the nuclear holocaust.

At the bottom of page two the author exposes what I would suggest is one of the fundamental false assumptions of the whole work:

"If change is chosen it will be by identifying and diminishing the points of death-dealing effect in our structures It will be by identifying and developing the points of positive creativity and hope within those same structures ." (page 2)

The recipe for the management of death is the intensification of life. The threat of being overwhelmed by the idealised dark field is met by the attempt to reify and overwhelm darkness by the intensification of the field of light. The result is an intensification of splitting and a reification of the good/bad fields on opposite sides of boundaries, with each side perceiving itself as good and the other as bad. These fundamentally psychotic processes within human behaviour are precisely not resolved by the intensification of splitting, the purification and idealisation of one side of the dialectic and the attempt then to overwhelm the other wing of the split and annihilate and deny the negativities. That is not the way forward, though it is precisely the core of the religious response enshrined in the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In so far as the world turns to religion at this crisis in its history and receives this recipe for its dilemma, just in so far is the catastrophe enhanced and made a hundred times more difficult to resolve. The fundamental resolution of splitting in social systems requires the de-energising of each side of the split, the bleeding across boundaries of the energy of divergence, the resolving of the ideals of light and darkness into the grey realities of the world in which we live. It needs nothing short of the emergence from placental dependency within Mother Earth, whose womb can no longer sustain him in foetal dependency, into the

interdependency of man come of age. Humanity has always been dependent upon its geo-matrix. Now Mother Earth is also dependent upon humanity for the maintenance of those very systems upon which the life of man itself depends. This represents a massive shift in our relationship with the environment. One which cannot, I suggest, be managed by the ancient fertility cultus of the agricultural world with its seed-time and harvest, however sublimated that may be, nor by the fertility cultus of the animal kingdom with its copulation, birth and death symbols, its sacrificial appeasement of the gods and its use of magic, projection, and manipulation to salve the consciences of its devotees.

The processes of idealisation, projection and introjection underlie the simple clarity of Christian statement in page after page. Even the prologue to John's Gospel indicates a certain amount of ambivalence at this point. The light shines in the darkness, as a model of the incarnation, and yet it is the life that enlightens every man that is coming into the world. There is here this uneasy balance between seeing all life, all light, as focused into the logos becoming flesh and yet also saying that within the world to which he came there is also life. Not so in this exposition. Here as Poulton turns to deal with the incarnation and speaks of :

"God the Creator and Sustainer of all life and of the whole world, entering into our creatureliness. The Eternal steps into time. The Uncreated becomes part of the created universe. Life itself invades the realm of death." (page 3)

So all life is vested in the deity and all death is vested in humanity. It is these subtle redactions of the biblical material which indicate the direction of polarisation in the contemporary stream of world theology.

Turning from incarnation to the point of redemption or salvation, Poulton notes:

"In Jesus Christ we confess at the same time that God is the Redeemer and Restorer of all life and of the whole world, taking upon himself the effects of our sinfulness and our mismanagement of the created order." (page 3)

In the face of the fundamental anxieties emerging within world consciousness, not only are the idealisation processes of the ancient religions having to be reinforced but the projection processes used to handle intolerable parts of the psychic material are also reified. The scapegoat in Jewish religion of which the role of Jesus Christ is a human example, represents precisely that object onto which the human group projects its negativities, often through representative figures. The terror of talion, the sense of guilt, the negativities involved in inner psychic process are projected onto the carrier which is then alienated, annihilated and banished from the social space of the group concerned. It is a common magical process by which it is believed that the group is cleansed from the negativities which plague it, a myth which is only sustained by the use of enormous amounts of psychic energy in the process of projection and subsequent denial of negativity within the group concerned. The negativities, of course, do not move, they are simply projected and denied and repressed in the process. They emerge at the boundaries. They emerge in other transactions. They emerge in all kinds of neurotic ways within the community that uses this kind of primitive mechanism to deal with its problems. The fundamental institution at the heart of western society is one of the most deeply psychotic foci of its life. Fascinatingly here, Poulton takes the traditional Christian exposition of the Christ figure taking upon himself the guilt and punishment and retribution due to man for his rejection and rebellion against the Almighty and expands, however unconsciously, into not only dealing with the guilt of the negativities but also the

effects of sinfulness and mismanagement of the creative order. What relief. What an unmitigated area of good news that statement is to humanity in its pollution of the ecological system upon which it depends for survival; in its use of sustained terror of the mass population as a means of political control; in its mismanagement by the rich of the resources of the earth so that the poor become poorer and the rich become richer and the poor become so poor that they die of hunger, starvation, malnutrition and disease, alienated, mutilated and annihilated by the greed of the powerful. What good news it is that these effects also are to be taken upon himself by Jesus Christ the life of the world. Herein is a new brand of opium, far more potent in its sedating effect than the evangelicalism of the Victorian era.

Moreover in speaking of the Christ as "taking upon himself" these effects, we are also subtly absolved from all the guilt of our projection onto him of precisely that material, so the crucifixion becomes not a judgement upon the character of man in his inhumanity to man, but the wonderful statement of the mercy of God acting as the umbilical bearer of the waste products of the foetal life of the species. Issues of responsibility and motivation here are fundamental and it is hardly surprising that on the next page Poulton is caught in the paradox of asserting the responsibility of God being absolute and yet also in the very next sentence acting as if God were not responsible:

"Because God is in control, there is no room for despair or nervousness. Because he has called us to work with him, there is no room for withdrawal or resignation. The biblical truth is that human responsibility and choice are awesomely real." (page 5)

There is a fundamental paradox, oscillation and ambivalence about responsibility within religion. Poulton seeks some alternative to the two forms of fatalism which he describes as 'optimistic fatalism' and 'pessimistic fatalism' but his proffered recipe can be described, surely, as 'irresponsible fatalism'. We are delivered from the despair of feeling that we can do nothing and also from the megalomania of feeling that we can do everything by the assertion that God is responsible, God is in control. We can continue to do our little bit in the sure and certain knowledge that Mother Julian of Norwich is correct in her assertion that "all things shall be well, and all things shall be well and all manner of things shall be well". God is in his heaven, therefore whatever happens is OK even if all is not actually right with the world (pace, Robert Browning).

Poulton then introduces one of the key themes of his text, that of springtime:

"That season of the year when in temperate climates the cold deadness of winter gives place to the early flowers and buds and all the promise of returning life". (page 5)

That ancient festival of the fertility cultus raises its head. The myth of the dying and rising gods and goddesses of the earth, which notes Poulton:

"Is linked with Easter and the message of resurrection. It is the yearly parable of rebirth." (page 5)

Any critique of this material will be deemed taboo and yet clarity at precisely this crucial heart of religion is essential if it is to be seen through. We shall obviously have to return to the issue again and again but at this stage let us note first of all the confusion of symbolism.

The breakthrough into newness of life after the death of winter is something to do with the vegetable kingdom. Here plants which, maybe as perennials, have died back to their roots in the cold winter, throw up from their living roots new shoots of life above the ground. They did not die. They became dormant, with death of the above-ground life-form through the cold phase. This is not resurrection. It is the budding forth of sustained life in response to a changing weather pattern in the environment.

Secondly, for the plant life that is not perennial, we have the seeds of the previous harvest lying buried in the ground, germinating in response to sunlight, warmth and warmer rain, after the cold frozenness and harshness of the winter months. Here is not resurrection, though it may be new life. It is not the resurrection of the old. The old died. Its seed lived on and the seed stayed alive through the winter in a protected form. It emerges in response to solar energy in the spring. It is quite inexcusable to use this pattern of the agricultural year as a symbol of resurrection. Renewal, yes; life after death, no. This link between the ancient fertility cultic festival and Easter with its theme of death and resurrection was made at the time of the mystery religions as the old myths of the dying and rising gods were transferred to the displaced deities of fringe classical religion.

Another problem with which we have to deal at precisely this point in theology which is linked very deeply with the above is the transference of symbolism appropriate in the vegetable world to that of the mammalian birth cycle. The springing up of new life from a seed which has survived the death of its parent plant (that is the image, though many seeds are actually put out by a plant that goes on living quite happily after giving out seed) is not an applicable symbol when we are looking at death and birth of homo sapiens. For the birth of the human is from the womb of the mother. It does not come after the death of the mother. Human conception comes from the seeds of the parents, but does not follow the death of the parents. The parents are not resurrected in the new-born. The father goes on living after copulation. Similarly the mother does not die in giving birth. The new-born is not a sign of resurrection but of the continuity of the species in the next generation. The individual dies and beyond that death, birth is an inappropriate symbol.

So we have enormous confusion. Confusion between the agricultural and the animal, confusion between birth and death, confusion between the perseveration of life under adverse conditions and resurrection after the discontinuity of termination. These are all myths of hope and reassurance and sedation in response to man's innate fears of death, but they have little contact with reality, even in their symbol ground. So the new birth may be the sign of hope for the continuity of the species but it is precisely not the symbol of resurrection when applied to the individual. When we tease apart the images of Easter and spring-time, birth and death, seed-time and harvest, resurrection and renewal, the poverty and paradox of the symbol web as a defence against fundamental anxiety is self-evident.

The material is subjected to a re-run from a slightly different angle on pages 6 and 7. The elements of projection are relaid as Poulton speaks of the insight from African and Asian churches into:

"God's solidarity with the oppressed and alienated, the poor and the starving, all those whose elementary right to life is denied. His self-sacrifice on the cross has come particularly to be seen as his identifying with the powerless and the forsaken." (page 6)

Let us for a moment stand that material on its head and affirm that in these last decades and in particular in response to the needs, the deep religious needs of the peoples of South America, of Africa and of Asia that God has increasingly been identified (in His symbolic carrying of projection) with those parts of the world which have become oppressed and alienated, poor and starving, powerless and forsaken, exploited and sinned against. The figure of the impotent babe at Bethlehem and the alienated, oppressed, victimised scapegoat on the cross have served as the symbolic figure attracting the projection of those alienated, cut-off, oppressed, starving, mutilated parts of humanity with which we cannot cope. So the Christian church, in her collusion with the social process, relieves society of the need to deal with the casualties of its inhuman process. Similarly, at an individual level, the Incarnation and Crucifixion serve as figures to carry by projection the foetal crushing of birth and the terror of death, those deeply alienated, helpless and dependent victimised parts of the inner self, whose perseveration, buried deep in the unconscious, is compensated for by repression, denial, splitting off and projection of the material onto the cosmic boundaries of world religions. At this distance and in common ritual, the intolerable elements of both individual and society are manipulated in such a way as to lessen the threat of psychotic anxiety associated with them. However the process sustains and indeed reinforces the fundamental defences used to prevent the resurgence into individual and corporate consciousness of the repressed material. In other words, the world religions in their core dynamic represent common psychotic defences against the depths of alienated, traumatised areas of common human experience. In that sense religion represents a sustained psychosis of humanity which is fundamentally dysfunctional in the sense that it completely blocks the possibility of catharsis, of recovery from the material. It maintains the illness, the sickness in the heart of man. It prevents his wholeness, it sustains his fragmentation. It requires enormous amounts of psychic energy, both individual and corporate to sustain the defences involved. That in itself drains resources from the much needed reality-handling of the species. Worse than that, the perseverating traumatised parts remain unhealed in the unconscious of individual and social systems and dominate the dynamic while being denied in the intellect. So it is that sustaining the symbol of light, leads to the perseveration of the experience of darkness in the life of the world.

We have seen the dynamics of regression and the dynamics of splitting. We now also have to see the dynamics of repression and denial in action within the religious matrix.

"The cross and resurrection are seen as the sign of God's struggle and victory over the forces of evil and division, the power of love over the will to dominate, the abolition of the fatal law of the strong and of the inevitability of the status quo. The cross and resurrection are thus the source of liberation for life, and of hope under adversity." (page 6 ff.)

With the human field polarised into idealised life and overwhelming death and the incarnate logos identified with the idealised life field, the field of idealised death is then projected onto this source of life, which absorbs it, overcomes it, suffers it and wins. In that mechanism death is swallowed up in victory, loses its sting and life triumphs. So the negativities are overwhelmed and the positives are retained. It is this sense, therefore of splitting, projection and denial - common mechanisms in psychotic defence - which are acted out at the heart of the so-called "gospel".

Poulton intuitively and accurately describes the process as "dialectic" for Hegel reified within his own construct precisely the same dynamic which perseverates under other clothes in Feuerbach, Marx, et al.

"The same dialectic spells out the possibility of change and of new beginnings. In overcoming death Jesus Christ has brought new life to light. He is its spring, its renewal, and his resurrection inaugurates a new world. God creates again and again, not merely once-f or-all, but as a sign and promise of constantly renewing life. Thus Christ, in New Testament understanding, becomes the source of life for the world, by the Spirit of God." (page 7)

Tragically, the dialectic spells nothing of the kind. The process of the dialectic offered in Christ is intensification of the thesis over against the antithesis, the projection of the antithesis onto the thesis, and the overwhelming of antithesis leaving only thesis. That is not really dialectic. But more than that. The process does not in fact offer new life. It sustains the little death which has led to the dichotomy, the idealisation, the splitting, the projection and the denial in the first place. So in this systematic reification of psychotic defence, the sickness is sustained and exacerbated. Here Jesus Christ is not the Life of the World but a symbol of its death.

We must note again in passing the fundamental confusion between death and birth, spring, renewal and resurrection which has already been treated in an earlier section.

At the end of the particular paragraph just quoted, Poulton notes:

"Demons within structures or demons within human personality, both are evil. Both are subject to the ultimate victory of Christ on the cross ." (page 7)

So the intrapersonal and the social are subject to the same fundamental dynamic of idealisation, splitting, projection, denial, repression. The management of the conscious life is at the expense of acting out unconsciously, uncontrollably, the dynamics of death. The antithesis of Christ rules in the world in so far as the imago of the deity rules in the church.

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The second chapter "Eating and Drinking" brings to the surface some of the most profound elements of human dependency focused into the heart of the eucharist. The symbolism of eating and drinking presents precisely those elements of interaction with the environment that sustain life in the midst of potential death. The sacramental symbolism brings assurance of the sustaining of life in the midst of a reality which is more or less threatening. The effect is an unrealistic sedating of the anxieties of life which makes the worshippers feel much more comfortable. Here we are able to see the effect of opium in action :

"Now the elders come to break bread for the communion. There is an awed hush. A moment of peace and assurance for many who lack work or home or prospects. Here they belong. Here is their life's spring. Here they discover Christ in his people's joy and caring week by week." (page 11)

Eucharist is the parable of the incorporation of the fruits of the earth, mirroring in religious ritual the process whereby man in his post-natal state replaces his placental and umbilical dependency of the womb-world. Sensitively Poulton remarks :

"In bringing food and drink as an offering to God we are enacting the deepest facts of human experience. We are acknowledging our dependence upon the Creator and Sustainer of all things." (page 14)

Within the dynamic of the eucharist there is indeed a corporate foetality, as if the Body of Christ, intrauterine within the great cavernous womb of Mother Church does indeed enact and recall at some deeply pre-verbal level its deepest experience of dependency. Dependency upon that ground of being, that matrix of life, that proto-conscious womb-world within which we lived and moved and had our being. This source, creator, sustainer of our being is, however, in a world apart, split off from our post-natal consciousness, remaining only in the cellular memories on the other side of the caesura, the crucifixion of birth. So the corporate psycho-drama remains fundamentally unconscious, the priestly placenta unrecognised. It is a process of incorporation of that which becomes in the belly a river or spring of living water, welling up into some kind of timelessness of life. The food that is incorporated becomes a source of satisfaction in which the stomach knows no hunger, the mouth no feeding. In this process the by-products, the waste products, the negativities of being, the sin, the guilt are confessed, projected into the Godhead and washed away, absolved in some kind of umbilical cleansing of the foetal blood-stream of the congregation. Safe within these walls, cared for within this nurturing context the regressed community backs away from the realities of its traumatised parts, recovers deep in its unconsciousness the experience of the idealised womb before the destruction of the waters and the fall from Eden, with its crushing eviction into the world of work. Here in safety is space to play, and place to pray, recovering once again the foetal position.

Later in the same chapter there is the fascinating paragraph:

"Life is inherited by all creation. It is God's gift to all humankind through Christ and it is good. All share in responsibility for its nurture. Each living person is unique, precious, and to be cared for by all. Each one comes from God. Human life comes into existence, grows and develops, through the love of a woman and a man and a supportive community. Christians call the process pro-creation, something people do for God, and with his blessing." (page 19)

Here, starkly, is the idealisation of the arche of life, read back from the post-traumatised split field of anxiety defence into the pre-impingement womb-world, with its sufficient nurturing (for those that survive), its good and bad welded together in the reality of living, but here the negativities are separated, buried, denied, annihilated. "En arche" is the goodness. The origin of each person is seen as God. Perhaps in analysis we may be permitted to reverse that comment and say that God is the word used to name the namelessness of the source from which each life unconsciously knows itself to spring, be it the womb-life of the omega or the phallic life of the alpha, the beginning and the end, which in becoming one, become also the source and sustainer of existence. For all conception begins in the conjunction of alpha and omega. Human life does indeed come into existence, grows and develops through the love of a woman and a man, and yet precisely not in the context of a supportive community, except in so far as that community is the matrix of the womb world... this living, holding, environment, which protects, surrounds and nurtures the foetal embryo in its time of ultimate dependency. This cross-imaging of womb and community follows the treatment of the church as a regressive institution, enacting some kind of foetal life and yet also becoming the womb within which such regression can occur. Such was precisely the dynamic which was superbly and supremely acted out at Grandchamps for the group of 25 disparate persons, out of whose experience the theology of the theme of the World Council of Churches congress was forged.

Christians may call the process pro-creation, so clothing in magic the majesty of sexuality with its incredible density of data transmission in the genetic material formed and forged in interactive symbiosis with the maternal environment. The womb-world is by no means ideal and certainly in the process of birth lays down the archetype of death from which religious man is constantly in flight. If human dependency is grounded in the womb and in successions of wombs of wombs, the regression is not infinite and Poulton is correct to comment in his next paragraph:

"Human life also depends on the sun and the earth and water and the whole ecological environment." (page 19)

So right in the heart of eucharist, at the focus of the altar of Mother Church, solar symbolism emerges again and again and again. The corona, the solar flare, the interchangeability of the Godhead and the solar disc, publicly symbolised within the Christian faith from Constantine to Koyama, portrayed in the reredos of St. Peter' s and the cupola of St. Paul' s - here is the source of life.

In man' s desperate current need to engage in reality with the world in which he lives, with its limited resources, its limited ability to absorb pollution, these religious myths of the infinite dependency resources, infinite pollution-cleansing of the holding environment, need to be named as fallacies. They render man's passing through this crisis in human history extraordinarily difficult. If not overcome adequately and in time they lead to the perseveration of foetal dependency on the womb of mother earth which can no longer sustain such irresponsible exploitation. Man does not, any longer, live and move and have his being in an infinite, caring, resourceful, cornucopia.

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In the chapter on "Living Death" Poulton provides us with a very deep and incisive exposition of the process at the heart of the eucharist, albeit still within the unconsciously metaphysical construct employed throughout the book.

"... he puts himself into our hands. This is my body. This is my blood. We take him in his total vulnerability and break him. We pour out his blood, for we are one in the sin which nailed Jesus to a cross outside Jerusalem long ago.

"We rejected the Creator then, when we had our hands upon him. We reject and crucify our Creator still. With smiling or ugly faces, in cathedral pomp or village simplicity, in riches or poverty, in pride or in despair, we take our share in the crucifying. Each of us brings our own involvement with death to hang him with." (page 29)

Here supremely is the displacement in common ritual of that deep crucified intrapersonal core of alienated, crushed foetal unconsciousness, displaced and projected onto the crucified, whose death is always confused with birth, whose crucifixion is symbolised in the breaking of the waters of baptism, whose emergence through the tunnel of ' thlipsis' and the crushing of the crucifix is described as resurrection as if our post-natal life was an existence after death. In every person is a buried foetus, screaming to be delivered from the pangs of birth, alienated, cut-off, buried and yet crying out for the sedation of salvation, for the passage of a new birth without pain, a passage which must nevertheless be so transacted that it does not

raise to consciousness the fundamental trauma which gave rise to the need for the drama of displacement.

At that point in being there is indeed a rejection of the creator, for the matrix appears to have rejected that which it has moulded. The guiltless victim is crucified in the crushing of the cervix. Injustice, inexplicable injustice rules in the heart of man. Any symbol which stands in for the ground of being serves as the target of projected talion. The crucified part is projected onto the crucified person and in the process the crucified part of the person acts out in talion its rage against the matrix, against the womb-world, against its God, its living container in which it has moved and lived and had its being. Here at the point of birth is the crux of each intrapersonal involvement with death, which in projection and displacement is precisely hung upon the Christ.

So Poulton powerfully comments:

"In the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine we re-enact what we are doing to God in one another... As we break bread and pour out wine, we do it as a sign, for the whole world in its alienation and rebellion against God. It is still the world which does him to death."
(page 31)

So in the heart of the eucharist we do indeed act out what that foetal self is seeking to do in talion to the womb-world of its existence, projected to the cosmic boundaries of the universe, symbolised in the crucified. Conversely in identifying with the crucified we bear in him and with him precisely that which the world did to that foetal being in the beginning of our time. There is an ambivalence, an oscillation, a paradox between the contained and the container as to whether it is indeed the arms of God which hold the church, or whether it is Mother Church which holds the crucifix. So traditionally in symbol form, that point of crux is enshrined in the Eastern Window behind the altar. The congregation lives in the safety of the regressive womb, forever enfoetalised and sustained in the safety of the cave whose mouth is guarded by the whirling sword, the flesh piecing nails, the side-gash of the Roman spear and the crushing cervical crown of thorns, symbolic presentation of the vaginal dentata.

Truly it is the world which does him to death for in the experience of every person it was the womb which did us to birth.

But the church does not simply enact eucharist, it is eucharist. What Christ is to the church, so the church is to the world. In eucharist we respond to the words "this is my body" so of the church we claim this is His Body. On another level therefore the incorporation of the sacramental element within the church is represented in the life of the church within the world.

"For the death which Christ died, he died for all. The many-faced deaths which he took upon himself, absorbing them and enduring once for all their bitterness and complexity, and the unwitting pain of mankind's alienation and hatred, will not leave us untouched. It is with this kind of death, this death because of others and on behalf of other, that we identify ourselves in eating and drinking the bread and wine. We say quite simply as we open our hands to receive, Crucify if you must..."
(page 34)

"But in the eucharist ... we are nailed to the cross. We unite ourselves in a death like Christ's.

"And because it is really like his, and with him, what we do, we do for the world. We are saying publicly, I am ready to absorb the wrongs others do to me, to suffer, to let the effect of others' sins end with me, so far as I can. In Christ to do my share in overcoming, bringing to nothing, the sins of the world. So far as I personally am concerned, and for my own self, I offer no resistance, effect no revenge, mouth no defiance. For the sake of others, though, I stretch myself in defiance before the principalities and powers of evil. Such as I am, for them, I offer to Christ in resistance, in action, if need be in martyrdom." (page 37)

So the priestly role of the church perpetuates in the world the dynamic of the eucharist in the church. Christ crucified represented in the eucharist as broken bread and poured out wine is used as an object of displacement onto which we project and under the form of which we distance ourselves from the deeply hurt parts of ourselves. The symptoms are salved and the causes left undisturbed, the defences are deepened, the repression, the splitting, the projection and the denial are enforced. The dynamics of death which permeate our culture are rendered even more inaccessible. Similarly in its wider aspect of an enacted role within the world, the church reinforces the social defences of scapegoating, projection, denial, displacement and splitting. It fosters that abdication from dealing with the source of the world's soreness, salving the world's conscience while sustaining its psychosis, and in so doing bears responsibility for the perseveration and dominance of death in a world desperately in need of new life. To parade Christ as the Life of the World and to do it effectively is to pronounce the sentence of death upon humanity as we know it.

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