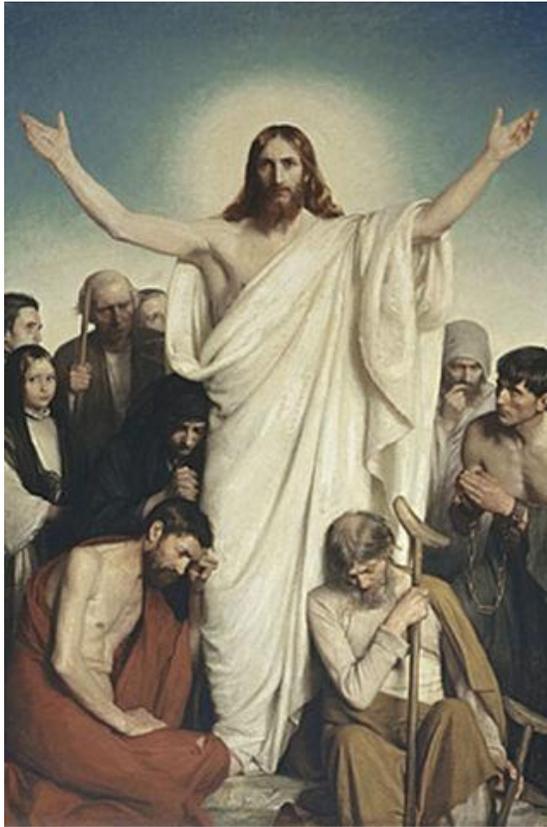


## Human Suffering and the Wisdom of the Cross:



## The Healing Wounds of Jesus Christ – Hope for the Afflicted

[cf. Is 53:5; 1 P 2:4]

[Acts of the II<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of *La Sapienza della Croce oggi*.

Torino: LDC 1985, pp 1-22.

Italian Translation by Fr. Lodovico Nicolodi, CSS]

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS

1985

**Human Suffering and the Wisdom of the Cross:  
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**Introduction**

Human suffering has been taken on by Jesus Christ through His Incarnation - and all that Jesus has “assumed”, has been redeemed. From the point of view of faith, suffering remains a “mystery” - in that through it, we have an extraordinary “expression” of the love of the Trinity - as we; as a “paradigm” for some understanding of the Christian life. The *kenosis* [cf. Ph 2:5-11] “explains”, in some way, the inner life of the Most Blessed Trinity, and offers the Father’s “plan” for redemption, in the life of those who will strive to follow “the Way, the Truth and the Life” [cf. Jn 14:16].

Paradoxically, with the passage of time, the ways of suffering have also intensified: with the invention of atomic weapons, humanity has ushered in an era of “slaughter of unheard of dimensions”, a threat aimed at human existence.<sup>1</sup>

A modern theologian has looked at the present moment and notes a kind of “stigmata” afflicting our society:

- the vicious circle of poverty;
- the vicious circle of power;
- the vicious circle of racial and cultural alienation;
- the vicious circle of the industrial pollution of nature;
- the vicious circle of senselessness and god-forsakenness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Documento dell’Episcopato Americano, 10 maggio 1983, : “La sfida della pace. La promessa di Dio e la nostra risposta” in: *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, 7-8/1983.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Jurgen Moltmann, *Il Dio crocifisso*. Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea. 17. Brescia: Queriniana 1973, pp. 376,ff.

The modern era has been described as arrogant power in places of authority, terrorism among the masses, the oppression of the powerless poor, and frustrated rebellion in the face of an economic machine that crushes life.<sup>3</sup>

The frightening panorama of new and sophisticated forms of human agony are treated in a series of studies presented to the English-speaking world, offering bibliographies, as well as a survey of the attempts through the centuries to resolve the mystery.<sup>4</sup>

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Still another very terrible form of human pain seems to be on the rise in both the poor and developing nations, as well as those that are most wealthy: the forcible seizing of human beings for political reasons - the phenomenon of concentration camps, generalized de-humanization for reasons of state.

In recent years, the news accounts have spoken at great length of the terrible phenomena of the *desparecidos*, those imprisoned indefinitely for political motives; hostages that are taken and forced to live in daily fear, totally cut off; the many political exile who cannot go home; and many others, not able to leave oppressive regimes.

There is the tragic reality of the "boat" people: entire families facing the terror of the sea, storms, pirates, in a frantic search for someone to receive them. There are countless families who are indeed "people without a country", the many refugees with no fixed dwelling.

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Added to this political misery, in the wealthier nations there is the phenomenon of kidnapping human beings for exorbitant ransoms. Age, physical condition or sex are no barrier for the human lives involved; the ordeal has been known to last for months, often beginning with days and weeks of anguished silence. Appeals are made by heads of nations, and the Holy Fathers of recent decades have been outstanding in their compassion for the families involved. At the moment, there seems to be little defense, or remedy for this ordeal.

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<sup>3</sup> Bonaventura Rinalidi, "Sofferenza umana e amore di Dio nell'AT", in *Sofferenza e Salvezza*, Roma: Editrice Rogate 1981, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> cf. P.T. Geach, *Providence and Evil*. The Stanton Lectures 1971-2. Cambridge University Press 1977, 153, pp.; Brian Hebbethwaite, *Evil, Suffering and Religion*. New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc. 1976, 115, pp.; John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*. Great Britain: Collins, Fount Paperbacks 1979, 404 pp.

Looking back through history, we are warned laconically by the Book of Qohelet: there is nothing new under the sun [cf. Qo 1:10]! Both the Old Testament, as well as the New, have known times of exile, harsh captivity and slavery. From such a background, biblical scholarship has discerned “creeds”, or “hymns” that were intended to offer some hope. These might still be pondered today, by suffering humanity. These “cultic creeds” were also inspired by the faith within the community and were often shaped by the historical or personal situation of believers.

The immediate reason behind these expressions varied: some formulation became necessary for the expression of the faith; other forms, for its celebration; and still others were needed for catechesis, to hand on the same tradition through successive generations, and the spread of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

To such cultic expressions can well be considered in today’s context: the Fourth Cantic of the Suffering Servant [cf. Is 52:13-53:12] - and, what is perhaps a fragment, or part, of a baptismal hymn in Peter [cf. 1 P 2:21-25]. These two passages come together in that they address a similar sociological situation, either exiles, or the enslaved. Furthermore, Peter explicitly quotes Isaiah, but with a slight change:

“... through his wounds **we** are healed ... [cf. Is 53:5];

: ... through his wounds, **you** have been healed... [cf. 1 P 2:24].<sup>6</sup>

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#### A. A CANTICLE FOR EXILES [cf. Is 52:13-53:12]

Any reflection on the “Book of Consolation” will necessarily encounter a most sophisticated bibliography. For the interests of the present study, the reflection will center on the Fourth Cantic of the Suffering Servant, in general - and, in particular, on verse 5.

##### 1. A Cultic Setting:

There is no small difficulty when one tries to determine the *Sitz im Leben* of the various passages of Deutero-Isaiah. It has been said that the unknown author has

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<sup>5</sup> cf. J.N.D. Kelley, *Early Christian Creeds*. New York: Longman & Co., 3rd edition, Paperback 1981.

<sup>6</sup> cf. *La Bibbia di Gerusalemme*. Bologna: EDM-Borla 1974.

composed this work "with masterly freedom." There is noted "a fusion of literary types", dove-tailing one into the other, making a clear identification most difficult.<sup>7</sup>

In recent times, it has been theorized that in the formative tradition behind Is 40-55, there are some elements that might be called "festal drama". Scholars have been able to individuate hymns, canticles, lamentations and certain oracles, whose main intent was to give encouragement, "instill fresh heart into believers".<sup>8</sup>

In the background of this view, there is the hypothesis that there must have been an annual autumn festival for the renewal of the Covenant and the kingship.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the merits of this possibility of an autumnal covenant renewal, there is no doubt that Israel celebrated joyously the Festival of the Ingathering ["Tabernacles"], the central feature being a celebration of the harvest, while looking forward to a renewed cycle of life. It may be that just in such a context, the Servant Hymns developed. The most that we can safely claim here is that the Servant poems do offer a realistic hope to anyone suffering a situation of sadness, or anguish.

## 2. The Text and Context:

"... Through his wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep..." [cf. Is 53:5, ff.].

The precise interpretation of these "wounds" of the Servant is not offered. What is clear is that the reason for them is **our** sins: which may be an indication of a cultic setting for this Poem. While the servant would be destroyed by this suffering, its precise nature is not known. The cause is very clear: the Servant takes on himself the burdens of the assembly, the people.

The Servant is "struck by God" - seen in the Wisdom tradition as "salutary punishment" - Jeremiah also speaks of the people being "wounded" to be corrected [cf. Jr 30:14]: "...I have struck you as an enemy strikes..." However, the mysterious Pierced One of Zechariah is presented as a shepherd struck by the personified sword [cf. Zc 12:10; 13:7]. Those who look on the piercing will come to admit their

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<sup>7</sup> Carrol Stuhlmuller, CP, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isiah*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press 1970, pp. 16, ff.

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that cometh. the Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*. Translated by G. W. Anderson. New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press 1954 - cf. particularly, pp. 187-257. cf. also John Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah*. London: SPCK, pp. 33, ff.

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Translated by D.R.A.-P. Thomas, in two volumes. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1967; cf. also John Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*. Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, 32. London: SCM Press 1976.

responsibility. The “healing” that the Servant will bring will come in the form of “peace”, deliverance, redemption.

The “sin” of Israel is presented as a “flock” that has wandered, one of the common images of infidelity, either on the part of the People, or their leaders [cf. Jr 10:21; 23:1, ff.; Ezk 34: Zc 11:16]. The symbolism here, in having the people’s sin fall on the Servant, is not unlike that of the offering of “the great day of expiation” [cf. Lv 16]. The emphasis on the first person plural is brought out by its repetition: the prophet includes himself, the assembly, and the “many”.<sup>10</sup>

The Servant offers himself as the **ASHAM**, the priestly holocaust of **Yom Kippur**. Throughout, the Servant offers the great “witness” of fidelity and perseverance, in the midst of a crushing burden. In the place of animal victims [cf. Is 1:11] - and far better than the routinely celebrated holocausts that for so many had lost their real meaning [cf. Ps 40: 7, ff.] - the Servant offers the acceptable gift, described in the Psalms: a contrite spirit, a humbled and broken heart [cf. Ps 51:19].

The Servant himself becomes the holocaust of expiation. While there were so many cold and cruel sins that came from hardened hearts, the People of God were repeatedly encouraged to trust in the mercy of God: ‘Console My People... speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and tell her that her slavery has ended!’ [cf. Is 40:1, ff.]. Even if your sins were like scarlet... crimson, they will become white as snow, wool [cf. Is 1:18; cf. also Mi 7:18, ff.; Ps 103]. The gift of the Servant is most acceptable to all.

“By his sufferings, My Servant shall justify many, taking their faults on himself” [cf. Is 52:11]. There is great insistence in the text on the “just” Servant and his cause - and the “justice” that he will bring. This “service of justice” can also be read in the light of the later “teachers of wisdom” of Daniel: “The learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue [justice], will shine as bright as stars for all eternity” [cf. Dn 12:3]. The king was called to be its defender [cf. Is 11:1, ff.] - and the priesthood of the new times will be the order of Melchisedek [cf. Gn 14:17, ff.; Ps 110:4; Heb 5-7].

Because he has “carried” the sins of “many”, interceding all the while for sinners, he is promised the “multitudes” as his reward [cf. Is 53:12]. Once more, the Lord is keeping the promise made long ago to Abraham: that he would be a “great people” [cf. Gn 12:2, ff.], as numerous as the stars of the sky [cf. Gn 15:5; 18:18]. Moses was also promised a powerful nation [cf. Nb 14:12; 18:18] , as would David

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<sup>10</sup> P.-M. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaie. Son disciple et leurs editeurs. Isaie 40-66. Etudes Bibliques.* Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 273, ff.

[cf. Ps 89]. The Servant is heir to all of these promises, and he will know a descendency of universal dimensions.<sup>11</sup>

A series of readings of this text:<sup>12</sup>

In the course of the centuries, the poems of Second Isaiah have been contemplated, translated and applied to changing historical circumstances:

**a. The Ancient Israelites:** for them, “the ordeal” of the Servant, and the various terms used to describe it: humiliation, sufferings, wounds, piercing, the unjust sentence handed down to him - could not all have been simple metaphors. Some have seen in the description of the sufferings of the Servant a certain connection with “leprosy” - the term, in fact, used to translate these words: he was “punished”. Struck by God”, “brought low” [cf. Is 53:4 - the Latin Vulgate translates: ***et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum***]. Leprosy is indeed an image of sinfulness [cf. Is 1:5, ff.]. The “expiation” for leprosy was the choice of two birds, the immolation of the one and the setting of the other free [cf. Lv 14:1, ff.] - not unlike the ritual for the “great day of expiation”, and the choice of the two scape-goats [cf. Lv 16:7, ff.]. This view of sin being like leprosy appeal particularly to those who would read the Servant “collectively”.<sup>13</sup>

The posthumous victory of the Servant, for some, prepares the way for the revelation of the Resurrection. There is greater agreement, though, on the nature of the self-offering of the Servant. His was a sacrifice of reparation. The voluntary offering of his lie enters within the mystery of “redemption.”

**b. The Septuagint:**<sup>14</sup>

The Greek translation [LXX] seems to accentuate the continuity of the suffering of the Servant “because of us.” The solidarity that the “just Servant” has with those who are blameworthy remains shrouded in mystery. There is emphasis in the Septuagint on “sins”, over “sickness.” A “lesson” is given in the sense of “punishment” [cf. Heb 12:5, ff.], a “correction” administered to a people that is not docile.

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<sup>11</sup> cf. P.-E. Bonnard, *ib.*, pp. 276-284, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Perre Grelot, *I Canti del Servo del Signore. Dalla lettura critica all'ermeneutica*. tr. it., da Paola Florioli, di: *Des Poemes du Serviteur*. Paris: du Cerf. “Lectio Divina” 105, 1982. Bologna: Centro editoriale Dehoniano 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Grelot, *ib.*, pp. 59, ff.

<sup>14</sup> *ib.*, pp. 102-114, *passim*.

There may be a marked change of interpretation in the offering of the sacrifices of v. 10. It no longer seems to be the Servant who offers the holocaust of reparation, but rather his “instruction” is stressed the more. The listeners are invited to take the offering. The Septuagint assumes great liberty in the rendering of the text; as a result, the Septuagint is more an “adaptation” than a “translation.” Yet, there is emphasized a perspective of hope for a changed situation being addressed by the unknown Greek translators. This hope, though, is a realistic one: the trials of the People of God will continue for a long time.

Therefore, the Septuagint translation of this passage is the result of a concerted effort to read an ancient passage in response to a contemporary reality. The Septuagint represents an autonomous announcement of a message which goes back into Israel’s tradition for its point of departure: but, which is new in its content and manner of expression. It can be said that this Greek translation is indeed the “creator of a meaning”, which does depend somewhat on the book originally written in Hebrew - but one that is “original” in announcing its own thought.

**c. The New Testament Interpretation:**

Our main interest here is 1 Peter, and two passages are suggested for our reflection:

1 P 3:18: this “soteriological formula”, very close to Paul’s thought, is likewise a reading of the Servant through the medium of the Septuagint. There are so many variants that it is difficult to reconstruct the original reading. This verse brings to light the number of times that 1 P uses the verb “to suffer” [cf. 1 P 2:19-20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 15, 19].

1 P 2:21-25: this passage is the object of the second part of the present study. Perhaps with a view to transform the hymn into a homily, the pronoun is changed to the second person plural. The metaphorical “healing” presented by Isaiah, can even be seen as a reference to the healing of the slaves’ physical hurts, received from unjust masters. The title “servant” does not appear here, nor anywhere else in the letter, except once in the plural [cf. 1 P 2:16]. This reading bears some affinity with later rabbinic interpretations of the text of the Servant.

Therefore, through the centuries of interpretation of the Servant Canticle, there is evident a shift in reading, tailored to changing circumstances.

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### 3. The Identity of the Servant:

Here one is confronted with a wide variety of possibilities:

- collective interpretation: all of Israel;
- selective interpretation: a pious "elite":
  - some minority within Israel [e.g., the **Anawim**];<sup>15</sup> the "remnant"
  - the holy prophets;
  - the priestly order;
  - faithful kings;
- individual interpretation:
  - historical
    - the distant past [Abraham, Moses, David];
    - the immediate past [Jeremiah; an unknown martyr];
  - present: autobiographical;
  - future: the messianic interpretation - a future mediator, prophet, priest, king, sage.

The New Testament has given the definitive answer for its interpretation concerning the identity of the Servant, but the discussion goes on among Old Testament scholars. The arguments in favor of a collective interpretation have been presented, beginning with Second Isaiah, referring to "Israel as the Servant."

The interpretation of the Servant more "selectively" is the effort to see in his traits some of the representatives of ancient Israel; the prophets themselves are prime candidates, in that they are repeatedly called "servants" of God [cf. I 44:26; Am 3:7; Jr 7:25]. The Levites have a special claim to divine favor, in that they "substituted" for every first-born son of Israel [cf. Nb 3: 12, ff., 41, 44]. The Servant offers a priestly holocaust [cf. Is 53:10], a cultic sacrifice, comparable to the offering of expiation. The "Remnant" and the **Anawim** remained faithful and just in their long and difficult service of God. And the Servant is read by many as future. In this mysterious personality of the "Suffering Servant of God", the Old Testament theology of "mediation" reached its highest level. He will be a Prince of Peace, who will enter in victory [cf. Zc 9: 9. ff.].

In many ways, the Servant is a synthesis of Old Testament personalities: he is seen to be the Royal Messiah, the "Pierced One" [cf. Zc 12:10] - through him, there will be a remission of sin, a stream of purification for the sins of Israel [cf. Zc 13:1]. e

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<sup>15</sup> cf. Albert Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh*. Translated by Mother Kathryn Sullivan, RSCJ. [In French: *Les pauvres que Dieu aime*. Foi Vivante. Paris: du Cerf 1968.] Colledgeville: The Liturgical Press 1964.

is identified with the “Teachers of Wisdom” [cf. Dn 12:3], a wisdom teacher [cf. Ws 5:1q, ff.]. The Servant serves as a kind of “predecessor” of the Wisdom Tradition, and also of the spirituality of martyrdom, which developed in the later writings of the Old Testament. Azariah, in his Canticle, speaks of finding mercy; may the contrite, the humble in spirit, be as acceptable as the holocausts [cf. Dn 3:38, ff.]. The Maccabees hope in the mercy of God, in reconciliation, thinking that their suffering could be offered for sin [cf. 2 M 7:32, ff.]. There is noted here an intimate tie between suffering and expiation.

For some, the Servant of God is the “Son of Man”, the only-awaited Messiah.<sup>16</sup>

As is evident, the identity of the Servant is not an easy matter to decide: there are some characteristics that the Servant indeed has in common with others:

- he is “formed” by Yahweh;
- called personally by Him from his mother’s womb;
- he is one of the ‘elect’, and receives the homage of kings;
- he will have a lengthy posterity.

Yet, this Servant is unique: he is THE Servant, “par excellence”: many of his traits would contrast him with Israel. The sufferings of Israel, such as the exile, were “merited”; the Servant has a mission to the “distant isles”; he is a deal, manifesting heroic docility, innocence and martyrdom.<sup>17</sup>

More than half a century ago, it was suggested that this question of the identity of the Servant might be greatly assisted with the theory of corporate personality.<sup>18</sup> With a basis in history and also in prophetic messianism, “the Cross of the Servant”<sup>19</sup> has come to be more deeply understood.

Theologians speak of a certain “progressive reduction”: in time, there is a trajectory from the whole of creation toward humanity; from humanity in general,

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<sup>16</sup> Nokter Fuglster, “Fondamenti veterotestamentari della cristologia del NT”, in: *Mysterium Salutis. Nuovo Corso di dogmatica come teologia. della storia di salvezza.* Vol. 5. *L’evento Cristo.* Brescia: Queriniana 1971, pp. 197, 201, ff, 212-214, 219-222, 263-265, passim.

<sup>17</sup> A. Feuillet, “Les poemes du Serviteur” in *Etudes d’exegese et de theologie biblique. Ancien Testament.* Paris: Gabalda 1975, pp. 119, ff.

<sup>18</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel.* [1924]. re-printed by the Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1980.

<sup>19</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Cross in the Old Testament.* London: SCM Press 1955; Philadelphia: Westminster 1956. A re-print of “The Cross of Job”, 1916; “The Cross of Jeremiah”. 1925’ “The Cross of the Servant”, 1926.

toward Israel in particular; and within all of Israel, there would be a “remnant”. Of this remnant of the People of God, from Gethsemani, it would be reduced to one: Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

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#### 4. **The Suffering of the Servant:**

The torrent that the Servant experiences is presented as being “for our sins”, with emphasis on the first person plural. Some interpreters see a variety of expressions of that suffering:

- sickness [vv. 3, 4];
- being “struck”, some kind of divine punishment [vv. 4, 8];
- a piercing and a crushing [v. 5];
- a torture, an execution [vv. 7, ff.].

It is very difficult to put all of this together to determine the precise nature of the pain. Often, one quotes Psalm 22 with its interior moral sufferings and physical pain.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars show that the suffering is total by this emphasis:

- interior suffering: the Servant will experience fear, discouragement, that his mission apparently has not succeeded. He experiences what seems to be some kind of abandonment by Go, noted in the “confessions” of other great servants of God:

- Moses [cf. Nb 11:10, ff.];
- Elijah [cf. I K 19:4, ff.];
- Jeremiah [cf. II:18, ff.; 12:1, ff.; 15:10, ff.; 17:14, ff.; 18:18, f.; 20:7, ff.].

- suffering influenced from the outside: it is this aspect that is the one difficult to clarify. Scholars point out the “condemnation, humiliation, torture, and being struck”, as noted in the lines of the poem. Other prophets and servants have suffered physical pain for their mission: Elijah was “persecuted” [cf. I K 18:10]; the Prophet Micah is struck on the jaw [cf. I K 22:24]; Isaiah is insulted [cf. Is 28:7, ff.]; Uriah, who prophesied in the name of the Lord, was put to death by the sword and buried in common ground [cf. Jr 26:23].

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<sup>20</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Cristologia nel Nuovo Testamento*. Bologna: Societa editrice il Mulino 1970, p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> Louis Jacquet, *Le Psaumes et le coeur de l’homme. Etude textuelle. Litterature et doctrinale*. Belgique: Duculot 1975, Vol. I, pp. 512-550, especially pp. 528-542.

Whatever it is that the Servant endures in Isaiah, he dies a violent death, and is buried with malefactors. This is a most unusual passage from a theoretical point of view: the Servant does not have his own interests in mind, but those of God and “the many”.<sup>22</sup>

This suffering is all the more poignant, because of the innocence of the Servant:

- he opens not his mouth before those who malign him [v. 7];
- he is not violent, nor deceitful;
- he is righteous [v. 11];
- he offers his life as a sacrifice [v. 12]. which is a sin-offering;
- he prays all the while for sinners.

Nonetheless, there is indeed a festal note to all of this:<sup>23</sup> the Servant intercedes; he is indeed a priest, prophet, sage and king.

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## 5. **The Mission of the Servant:**

From the considerable data the few biblical passages offer, a sublime development may be seen:

**a. The Destinataries of His Mission:** as the over-all context of this writing is the Babylonian Captivity, the immediate beneficiaries seem to be the captives sharing the ordeal. But, the whole tendency is more universalized in dimension. A variety of words is used:

- the “weary” [cf. Is 50:4; Mt 11:28];
- the imprisoned [cf. Is 42:7; 49:9; 50:10];
- the poor and the desolate.

In the Fourth Cantic, the destinataries are called the “many” - “us”; one may see where the vision includes Israel, and far beyond, to the “distant isles”. The Servant is the “Light of the Nations”, the “New Covenant” [cf. Is 42:7; 48:8]. While history afforded the background for these poems, the mission of the Servant goes far beyond his own time and place. Other references are far more generalized:

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<sup>22</sup> Nokter Fuglister, “Fondamenti veterotestamentari della cristologia del NT”, n: *Mysterium Salutis*. Vol. 5, pp. 200, ff.

<sup>23</sup> John Eaton, *Festal Drama in Duutero-Isiah*. ib., pp 79, ff..

- the peoples [cf. Is 42:1; 49:6' 52:15];
- the nations [cf. Is 49:1];
- the distant islands [cf. Is 42:4; 49:1];
- the earth [cf. Is 42:4; 49:6 - all humanity.

**b. The Form the Mission will take:** the suffering will be part of the mediation, which will be varied:

- a prophetic Mission: the Servant is called to “go and tell” the word; he is provided with a tongue, and is called to hear the Word of God [cf. Is 49:2; 50:5];
- a royal mission: the Servant will be raised up, and will have multitudes as his reward. The imagery here is almost military [cf. Is 53:12];
- a priestly mission: the Servant is called primarily to sacrifice and intercession in behalf of sinners. “To bear the sins” of someone else can be a mere euphemism for “putting up with” someone; or, even a way of expressing a cultic role of priests, in offering sacrifice. The meaning here, though, is more profound; the Servant bears the sins of the “many”, and offers the ritual of sacrifice for them;
- a mission of wisdom the TORAH will be taught unto justice and those who do teach wisdom, will shine like the stars [cf. Dn 12:3]. The Servant is the Light of the Nations;
- a redemptive mission: his suffering is “vicarious”, for “our sins”, for “us.” His suffering is also for the consequences of sin, as expiation. This is the heart of the mystery, and often it is easier to say what it is “not”, than to say what it really is.

In brief, the role of the Servant will be a healing mission, one of the “mediations” for he “many”, through his intercession, through the offering of himself, through the power of leadership that he will exercise.<sup>24</sup>

There may be a distant parallel for this healing mission in the unusual story of the “bronze serpent” in the desert [cf. Nb 21:4-9]. This account seems to be a compilation of various sources, historical as well as cultic. Serpents, generally associated with evil, were remembered in ancient Israel: from the original temptation story [cf. Gn 3:1, ff.], to their ever-threatening presence in the desert [cf. Dt 8:15]. A sting, without a remedy, meant pain and often death. The bronze serpent that heals

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<sup>24</sup>A Robert, “Mediation”, in : *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplement*. Paris: Vol. 5, col. 997-1020.

is not an amulet, but a standard, whose efficacy is attributed to God through Moses' mediation.<sup>25</sup> The episode, then, is the story of sin and redemption.

### SUMMARY

In some manner, shrouded still in mystery, the passion and death of the Servant will bring healing, "salvation", reconciliation, expressed by the word "peace". This will be all-pervasive, involving every aspect of the life of the People God has chosen. This extraordinary "Peace" will be the conquering of the powers of sin, a victorious rehabilitation - a true reconciliation, between God and His People - and this People among themselves.<sup>26</sup>

The Servant's ordeal and redemption come together in a mysterious manner, the nature of which is difficult to discern. Suffering is intimately associated with love, because of the great demands it makes on the human intelligence and will.

The final "exaltation" of the Servant has been read differently depending upon the manner of interpreting the Servant: collectively, selectively or individually. Those who would seek the "source" for the Servant in the vegetative cycle of life celebrated in the Babylonian myth, Tammuz, sees the Servant referred to as "root" [cf. Is 53:2]. This god comes to life in the spring of each year. The Israelites, though, would hardly have used such mythology [cf. Ezk 8:14, ff.] - and furthermore, for Tammuz, "death" and "resurrection" are merely metaphorical.<sup>27</sup>

"Exaltation" in Isaiah is described in rather unique terms. For most interpreters, the discussion concerning the resurrection in the Old Testament would be restricted more to the eve of the New Testament [cf. Dn 12:2; 2 M 7:9, ff.; 12:44; cf. however, 1 S 2:6; 1 K 17:17-24].<sup>28</sup> At most, the exaltation of the Servant would be a very distant and totally enigmatic hint. What is clear, though, is hope for the suffering, in the final victory of the Servant. The NT will give the fullest meaning to the exaltation of the Servant.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> J. deVaulx, *Les Nombres*. Sources Bibliques, Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 235-238.

<sup>26</sup> Nokter Fuglister, "Fondamenti veterotestamentari della cristologia del NT", pp. 197 ff.

<sup>27</sup> A. Feuillet, *Ancien Testament*. ib., pp. 171-179, passim.

<sup>28</sup> Nokter Fuglister, o.c., pp. 208, f.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Il cammino verso il Padre [Pasqua]", in: *Mysterium Salutis. Nuovo Corso dogmatico come teologia della storia*. Brescia: Queriniana, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 336, ff.

And, the First Letter of Peter, like the “Book of Consolation” of Second Isaiah, was written for the homeless.<sup>30</sup>

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## B. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE ENSLAVED

“... through His wounds, you have been healed...! [cf. 1 P 2:24]

### Presentation:

The theme of the Servant of Yahweh, in all its mystery and beauty, made its way into the New Testament. However, this title seems to have described more the earthy sojourn of Jesus - while for His exaltation in the Resurrection, He is called the “Lord”.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the New Testament presence of the Servant is of great importance, and the fundamental idea behind the theme seems to have been his “vicarious” function. The “exemplary incarnation” of the Suffering Servant is Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

This use of the “Servant” to represent Jesus may be traceable to His own interpretation of His Mission. The heavenly voice at Baptism [cf. Mk 1:11, par.] used the Servant Canticles to present Jesus and His mission. In this way, revelation implies that from the beginning, Jesus is called to fulfill the role of Servant, to be its “fuller and complete” sense.<sup>33</sup> His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension are “for the many.”

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1 Peter is an eminent representative of the tradition referring to Jesus as “Servant.” It does not seem to be an accident, for example, that in the Acts of the Apostles, there are four times that Jesus is called the “Servant” [cf. Ac 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30] - and two of these are found in discourses attributed to Peter; the other two cases are prayers offered with Peter present.

Furthermore, Mark presents Peter as not understanding the “necessity” for Jesus’ suffering, to fulfill the plan of the Father [cf. Mk 8:32]. The ancient tradition joined Mark Peter.

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<sup>30</sup> John H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter. Its Situation and Strategy*. London: SCM Press 1981, pp. 306, ff.

<sup>31</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *La Cristologia del NT*, ib., p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> ib., p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> ib., pp. 120, f.

So, it is - of all the NT writings - Peter accentuates the Servant of Yahweh as an apt figure for Jesus Christ. It is Peter's "Christology" that is most dominated by the Servant. Jesus Himself seems to have been cognizant of the fact that He had been called to carry out the Servant's mission.<sup>34</sup>

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The Servant references are used often in the NT to present the various phases of the earthy sojourn of Jesus:

Is 52:13-15: Jesus indeed will be raised on high [cf. Ac 3:13; Ph 2:9]; He was looked upon in horror [cf. Ga 3:13] - yet, this frightful abasement will lead all to honor [cf. Rm 15:21].

Is 53:1-6: it is most difficult to believe [cf. Jn 12:38; Rm 10:16] - He will be rejected [cf. Mk 8:31; Lk 9:32], ridiculed, taken for no worth [cf. Mk 9:22]. His wounds heal those of others [cf. 1 P 2:24].

Is 53:7-10: humiliated beyond endurance, he does not open his mouth: this scene is recorded in the Passion accounts [cf. Mk 14:61; 15:4, f., Mt 26:62, f.; 27:12, f.; Lk 23:9; Jn 19:9]. He is like the Lamb [cf. Jn 1:29, 36; 19:36]. These verses are also the ones Philip explained to the Ethiopian [cf. Ac 8:32, f.]. His death was "for our sins" [cf. 1 Co 15:3; 2 Co 5:21; Ga 3:13; Rm 4:25; 8:3]. He is taken for a malefactor, but never was deceit on his lips [cf. Jn 8:46; Lk 23:41; 1 P 2:22]. His death was presented as a sacrifice of expiation [cf. 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; Rm 3:25; Heb 2:17]

Is 53:11-12: He is seen as "Just" [cf. Ac 2:13, ff.; 7:52; 22:14; 1 P 3:18; 1 Jn 2:21].

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Jesus really fulfills the Servant theme: He has come "to serve" and not "to be served." His death was for the redemption of the "multitudes", His blood was shed for the remission of sin [cf. Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20; Jn 6:51; 10:11, 16, f.; 11:50; 1 Co 11:24, f.]. His "precious blood" is the ransom price [cf. 1 P 1:18, ff.].

Thus, on close reading, there would seem to be many reminiscences of Isaiah 53 in the New Testament. While none of them are put explicitly on the lips of Jesus, this overwhelming tradition must have stemmed from His own words. So often, He uses the "Scriptures" as His explanation of what was happening [cf. Mk 9:12; Mt 26:53; Lk 18:31].<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ib., pp.130, ff; 137, ff.

<sup>35</sup> P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaie. Son disciple et leurs editeurs.* ib., pp. 281-284, passim.

The interest in this study is the document attributed to Peter in the New Testament: and specifically, the line quoted in this writing from Is 53:5, with slight shift from the first person plural [our] to the second person plural [you]: "... through His wounds, you have been healed..." [cf. 1 P 2:24] - the shift being explained, perhaps, for parenthetic reasons.

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### 1. **A Cultic Setting:**

There is much discussion about these verses in question [cf. 1 P 2:21-25]. As a kind of general introduction to the possibilities, scholars distinguish:

- the liturgical - cultic tradition: there are various references to Baptism in the course of this writing. One hypothesis is that this whole composition is of this type;\- the catechetical-parenthetic tradition: 1 P seems to be instruction, as well as encouragement. In this document, there can be noted a number of possible connections:

- Jesus' death is seen as redemptive suffering [compare 1 P 2:24 and Rm 3:24, ff.];
- to suffer with Jesus is a guarantee to share in His glory [compare 1 P 5:1 and Rm 8:17];
- through Jesus, new life has been communicated [compare 1 P 1:23, ff. and Jas 1:18, ff.].<sup>36</sup>

Other scholars are more broad in their interpretations:

- the form-analytical approach: sees 1 P as a Letter written by a single individual to various communities of the early Church. The passage under discussion here [cf. 1 P 2:21-25] is seen as "the second Christological Hymn" [cf. also 1:18-21], may be only a fragment, and not even a hymn!
- 1 P is simple a baptismal document: the composition seems to lack epistolary characteristics. It seems to be an address given to newly baptized. There is an emphasis on "now", a kind of response given to develop a teaching n Baptism;
- a baptismal liturgy: some have seen this composition as a description of an ancient Baptism in progress in the early Church.

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Hermann Schelkle, *La Lettera di Pietro, la Lettera di Giuda. Testo greco e traduzione. Comentario teologico del NT. Traduzione italiana di Roberto Favero. Edizione italiana a cura di Omero Soffriti. Brescia: Editrice Paideia 1981, pp. 39, ff.*

None of these views has totally satisfied the scholars, and it might still be suggested that it remains an open question whether this 1 P is indeed a genuine epistle; or, whether it is a liturgy, or whether it contains liturgical elements, as part of a letter.<sup>37</sup>

At the very least, it might be said that the document attributed to Peter is the single biblical writing that seems to have been the most marked by baptismal liturgy and catechesis, as well as by the “Servant” theme. Some years ago, an important study on 1 P appeared, in which the author suggested that the writing contains four baptismal hymns:

1 P 1:3-5: this passage is similar to one of Paul’s writings [cf. Tt 3:4, ff.] - its hymn-like character seems clear;

1 P 1:20; 3:18, 22; 4:1: because of their similarity in literary form, these dispersed verses have been brought together as a unit;

1 P 2:22-25: one of the verses of this passage is the object of this present study;

-1 P 5:5-9: this may be a “parallel place” with James [cf. 4:6, ff.].

One of the characteristics of the text of Peter is that one might discern in it the very words of Christ. It is said that along with the Epistles of James, 1 P is the most endowed with Gospel expressions - even though scholars are divided concerning this presence into groups referred to as “maximalists” [e.g., Spicq, OP, Feuillet], and “minimalists.”

The careful reader will find some expressions from Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, also in 1 P [cf. 2:19, f.; 3: 9, 14]. The thought that good Christian “witness” offers the best presentation of the faith may be noted [compare Mt 5:16 and 1 P 2:12].

Some expressions underlying Lk 12 are similar to a number of exhortations found in 1 P: the emphasis given to humility and spiritual childhood seem to stand out [cf. 1 P 2:2, 17; 3:2, 8; 5:3, 5, etc.]. The manner of quoting these passages by the author of 1 P is quite “free regarding form, but faithful regarding the spirit” - and it seems to indicate that 1 P may have been inspired by the Palestine tradition.

There are possible also some parallel ideas that are present in John:

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<sup>37</sup>Ralph P. Martin, *Nt Foundations. A Guide for Christian Students*. Vol. 2. *Acts-Revelation*. Exeter: The Pater Noster Press Ltd. 1976, pp. 336, ff.

- the “One Who loves us” - we believe, without having seen [compare Jn 20:29 and 1 P 1:8];
- certain exhortations: be true shepherds [compare Jn 20:29 and 1 P 5:2];
- exhortation for humble service of the flock [compare Jn 13:15, ff. and 1 P 5:3].<sup>38</sup>

The dependence on Paul’s writings and theology is the more studied. The passage under consideration [cf. 1 P 2:21-25] is “more Isaian” and “more Pauline”: more “Isaian” because of its three references to Is 53 [vv. 5-6, 9, 12]; and “Pauline” because it is strewn with allusions to Christ having died “for others”: “us”, “our sins”, “you” - these are all emphases that Paul teaches.<sup>39</sup>

This dependence shows the importance given to parenesis and catechesis throughout 1 P. To realize this scope of encouragement and instruction, there is a good number of Christological formulations in 1 P. Along with the hymns, scholars see these as Christological expressions [cf. 1: 18-21; 2:21-25 3:18-22]. What ties these passages together is their Christological kerygma. In brief, their doctrine is:

1 P 1:18-21: this segment calls to mind the salvific efficacy of Jesus’ death. A careful reading shows that He was pre-destined from the foundation of the world; this, and the last, are more “confessional”;

1 P 2:21-25: this is the parenesis, proposing as a model, the patient Christ, the Suffering Servant. To lead us to God, Jesus has died for sins; this is characterized by being more developed, a kind of hymn;

3:18-22: again, there is proposed the example of the suffering Christ, He has risen, and sits at the right hand of the Father.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Edouard Cothenet, “Les orientations actuelles de l’exegese de la premiere lettre di Pierre”, in: *Etudes sur la premiere lettre de Pierre*. Association catholque francaise pour l’etude de la Bible. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp, 299, ff.

<sup>39</sup> Gaetan Bourbonnais, SSS, *Behold My Servant. A Study in Reading the Bible Thematically*. English translation by John A. Otto. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1974, pp. 129, ff.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Hermann Schelkle, *La lettera di Pietro*. ib., pp. 189, ff.

## 2. **The Text and Context: 1 P 2:21--25:**

The exhortation is based on remembering the Lord Jesus, and from the outset, the insistence is on His vicarious suffering as expiation. In suffering “for others”, He has taken away sin - and the example of Jesus is the “way” for those in confinement to follow. The slave, and all Christians, are called to follow the passion of Christ.

There is offered almost a “mystical theology of the Passion” in these lines. The suffering of Jesus is presented in OT language. 1 P is seen to enter into the tradition that has been preserved especially by Mark. The expressions found in 1 P seem to reflect the meditation of the early Church in general, and not just the ideas of the one author.

The “healing” of the Servant is seen in connection with the miracles Jesus performed in His ministry [cf. Mt 8:17; 12:17, 21; Ac 8:32, f.]. The NT does not make broad use of the Suffering Servant theme in its documents, but 1 P is a notable exception. As the NT progressed, the emphasis was more on the ultimate victory - but, the “Suffering Servant” motif is ancient and well founded.

The innocence of Jesus is brought out on a number of occasions:

- when He was accused of being totally given to eating and drinking [cf. Mt 11:19];
- in the Passion, when He was outraged [cf. Mt 26:27; 27:30];
- on the Cross, particularly by the priests, He endured ridicule [cf. Mt 27:39, ff.].

Such suffering is taken by Jesus without lament, without rebuttal. One of the very admirable features of the passion in the minds of so many who have reflected on it through the centuries, is the sovereign silence Jesus maintained.

The sufferings that Jesus bore are described in terms reminiscent of the scape-goat of Yom Kippur [cf. Lv 16:21, ff.]. He makes a cultic offering, a holocaust, in behalf of sinners. 1 P slightly modifies the original text to the second person plural, so that the example might serve in the exhortation addressed to those suffering slavery.

The sheep wandered, and Jesus has come as the Good Shepherd, imagery found in the NT as well [cf. MK 6:34; 14:27; Mt 10:16; 25:32; Lk 15:4, ff.; Jn 10: 1, ff.]. The desired return of the sheep is the awaited conversion. A reference to the leaders of the community invites them to know, to guide, and to protect their flocks.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> ib. pp. 147-155, passim.

This great message of hope is based on the healing power of Christ's mercy. the main interest of the author of 1 P is the eternal welfare of the Christian slaves. There is, in the views of some, implicit here an example of the extraordinary optimism of the NT concerning the effects of non - resistance [cf. also 1 P 3:1, ff.].<sup>42</sup>

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### 3. Christology

While the OT Servant theme did inspire the author of 1 P, this surely was not his only source. Paul's insistence on Jesus' "dying, suffering, offering Himself" FOR others, certainly had its impact [cf. Rm 5:6, ff.; 14:15; 2 Co 5:14, f.]. It is said that the Synoptics stressed more the "following" of Christ, and Paul the "imitation". In this, 1 P seems to be more "Synoptic". It seems to present Jesus marching at the head of His flock. The invitation is to follow after His footsteps.

Two central aspects of the Passion of Jesus are: His innocence and its redemptive value. Some would see in this insistence on the "justice" of Jesus, a remnant of Peter's first-hand observation of Jesus - but, this might overstate the case. The real emphasis is the exemplarity involved: all Christians in some way, have sinned - whereas, Jesus, the sinless One, endured His suffering for them.

However, in addition to the exhortative message of the innocent Jesus suffering, there is further the dogmatic evaluation of His Passion: the suffering of Jesus has salvific value. The innocent Jesus has indeed redeemed the world.<sup>43</sup>

In some aspects, Jesus has "substituted" for sinners, in offering a redemptive sacrifice for them. The Servant has justified sinners by His sufferings for them. The Servant has taken upon Himself the sins of the world.<sup>44</sup> This action of the Servant in "substitution", however, has not taken away responsibility for any further response from the redeemed: all are called to follow His example.

Jesus did not place His own Person, or His own suffering and death as the center point of His own preaching. Yet, by His deeds, and through the understanding

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<sup>42</sup> Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude*. The Anchor Bible. Vol. 37. Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1964, pp. 98, ff.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Schlosser, "Ancient Testament et Christologie dans la 'Prima Petri'", in : *Etudes sur la premiere Lettre de Pierre*. Association catholique pour l'étude de la Bible. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp. 83-96, passim.

<sup>44</sup>M.E. Boismard, *Quatre hymnes batesimales dans la premiere Epitre dei Pirr*, ib., pp. 111-119, passim.

of the primitive Church, it is clear that He knew that He had been called more to live the sacrifice of expiation, than He was to teach it.<sup>45</sup>

Just as the wound of the Servant of the OT that healed might lead one to think of the “bronze serpent” story [cf. Nb 21:4-9], a similar paradox is presented by John in using this account [cf. Jn 3:14, ff.]. The mid rash of the Book of Wisdom [cf. Ws 16:6, ff.] sees the bronze serpent as a symbol of salvation. This is John’s idea of the Cross, healing anyone who turns toward it in faith.<sup>46</sup> To “be lifted up” means death and glorification - crucifixion and resurrection and ascension.<sup>47</sup>

Basically, John takes three lessons from this unusual OT story:

- the glorification: and this represents a shift in John’s thought from Paul’s. For the latter, the crucifixion and death were the “lowest” depths of the **kenosis**, whereas for John, the glorification of Jesus begins His Lordship, already with the Passion and Death;
- the salvific power:
- the divine plan behind it all<sup>48</sup>

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#### 4. The Suffering of Jesus

The “soteriological interpretation” of the sufferings and death of Jesus can be traced back to Himself [cf. Mk 10:45; 14:24; par.]. As a theology, it is more developed by Paul and other NT writers:

- His Passion as redemption [cf. Rm 3:24; 1 Tm 2:6; Heb 9:12];
- His Passion as expiation [cf. Rm 3:25; Heb 2:17];
- His Passion as sacrifice [cf. Jn 17:19; 1 Co 3:7; Ep 5:2; Heb 6:27; 9:13].

From the OT developments on Martyrdom, Israel gradually came to understand the sufferings of the good had a mysterious link with Expiation. The death

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<sup>45</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Cristologia del NT.* ib., pp. 113, ff./

<sup>46</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John. I-XIII.* Anchor Bible 29. Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966, p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> ib., p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John.* Vol. I. Herder’s Theological Commentary on the NT. New York: Herder and Herder 1968, pp. 395, ff.

of Socrates had served as something of an example, but he could not save humanity. The sufferings of Jesus, however, have taken away the sins of the world.<sup>49</sup>

In Peter's thought, it is suffering that flows from captivity that enables the slave to identify his/her own lot with that of Jesus Christ. The text from Second Isaiah is recomposed so that its full weight would fall on the parallel with the "unjust suffering" of Christ, and that suffered by slaves. Along with the exemplarity of the suffering of Jesus, there is its mysterious effectiveness for the redemption of sin. Those who find themselves in bondage are asked to follow the foot-steps of Jesus: while not being guilty of sin, He has suffered - and along with His unique personality, this fact brings suffering to a special level.<sup>50</sup>

1 P alludes to Jesus as the Paschal Lamb [cf. 1:19], and as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh [cf. 2:21, f.]. The extremes of His life are: His passion and death [cf. 2:23, ff.], and His glorification [cf. 1:3, 21; 3:18-22]. The emphasis given to His sufferings prior to His death may have been to show that the death of Jesus was indeed real, and also to highlight the more the witness of Jesus for others suffering a similar fate. While Paul emphasizes faith, and John presents **AGAPE'**, Peter offers a real hope, based on faith in Jesus Christ. Even when suffering unjustly, Christians are called to respond with dignity to the example of Jesus. 1 P makes an appeal for perseverance in hope [cf. 1 P 4:7, 19; 5:8, ff.].<sup>51</sup>

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## 5. Mission and Message

The central theme of 1 P, of course, is a message for the entire Church. At the very heart of the document may be found the **Haustafeln**, exhortations concerning family and social life. The implication is that the Church is enduring hardships in the various levels of its life, and that these are destined to increase with the passing of time. The real scope of 1 P - as with the "Book of Consolation" of Deutero-Isaiah, is to encourage, to strengthen - referring also often to the final reward [cf. 1:6, ff.; 4:7; 5:6]. The document makes a strong appeal to persevere [cf. 1:13; 4:19; 5:7, ff.].

The "parenthesis" is based on a number of arguments:

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<sup>49</sup> Karl Hermann Schelckle, *Le Lettère di Pietro*, ib., pp. 191-194, passim.

<sup>50</sup> Maurice Carrez: *L'esclavage dans la première Epître de Pierre*, in: *Etudes sur la première lettre de Pierre*. Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp. 214, ff.

<sup>51</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *NT Foundations...* Vol. 2. *Acts-Revelation*, ibid., pp. 344, ff.

- all believers are really strangers here, "people without a country" [cf. 1:1; 2:11] - the true "home" of the believer is the community'
- there is ample space for a genuine fear of the Lord [cf. 1:17; 4:15, ff.];
- the blessings of the past are all promises for the future - and like Second Isaiah, the "New Covenant" and the "New Exodus", these divine benefits will be even greater in the future [cf. 1:3, ff.];
- the graces received through the sacraments, are meant now to be expressed in the conduct of one's life [cf. 2:1, ff.; 3:21, ff.]'
- ***agens sequitur esse***: one's activity should flow from the new manner of being, established by God.
- the great model, example, is the suffering of Jesus.

This document is something of a mater-piece of parenetic literature: in the harsh conditions of the present, the community is invited to stay together, in the bonds of deep community love [cf. 1:22; 4:7, ff; 5:15]. There is an urgent recommendation directed toward the Church leaders [cf. 5: 2, ff.]. 1 P offers a kind of "battle plan" for trying situations.<sup>52</sup>

There is great balance between dogmatic considerations, and exhortation: not unlike Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians, asking them to be generous, citing the constitutional ***kenosis*** of Jesus [cf. 2 Co 8:9] - and who wrote to the Philippians, urging them toward "fraternal humility", suggesting again the dogmatic principle of the ***kenosis*** of Christ [cf. Ph 2:5-11].<sup>53</sup> There is a kind of "Creed" that is suggested, an exhortation, interspersed with prayer [cf. 1:3, ff., 17; 2:5, 9, 22, ff.; 3:7; 4:7, 11, 19; 5:11]. The will of God is not some whimsical, tyrannical force, but it is intimately associated with the plan of redemption achieved through Jesus, the Suffering Servant. It is a spirituality that is truly "ecclesial", yet makes a fervent appeal to individuals and to groups within it. Here, the mission of hope is indeed attributed to Peter with it.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Le lettere di Pietro...* ib., pp. 38, ff.

<sup>53</sup>Edouard Cathenet, *Les orientations de l'exegese.* ib, p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> ib., pp. 41, ff.

## CONCLUSION

What 1 P asks is not merely “bearing up under suffering”, but implies that the innocent sufferer in some way should turn this terrible situation over to God.<sup>55</sup> The Letter reaches out to new converts, already being tried in a most severe fashion. The ultimate hope through all the “wounds” of the present situation is the resurrected Christ.<sup>56</sup>

In the passage under consideration [cf. 1 P 2:21-25], the situation of slaves illustrates for the whole community what it really means to be a Christian: even in suffering, all are called to imitate Jesus, and share deeply in His redemptive victory.<sup>57</sup> The careful reading and listening to the text was meant to lead one to the recognition of Jesus, and the following of Him. The suffering endured by Jesus obeys an “operative intention” - negatively, in that His death, puts sin to death; positively, this brings life to sinners. This is also the “paradigmatic” intention: Jesus is to be imitated.<sup>58</sup>

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The call to follow after Christ in 1 P does not remain at the moral level, but shows the imitation of the suffering of Christ to be already in the realm of grace: the life of Jesus is to be lived. Jesus’ own suffering, passion and death, along with His resurrection, are the ultimate seal on His word and life.<sup>59</sup> For a believer, in every age, the Christ-Event is the paradigm.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Albert Vanhoye, SJ, “1 Pierre, au carrefour des théologies du NT”, in: *Etudes sur la première lettre de Pierre*. Association Catholique française pour l’étude de la Bible. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp. 123-125, passim

<sup>56</sup>Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Cristologia del NT”, in: *Mysterium Salutis. Nuovo Corso di dogmatica come teologia della storia della salvezza*. Brescia: Queriniana 1971, Vol. 5, pp. 444, ff.

<sup>57</sup>Donald Senior, CP, *1 and 2 Peter*. NT Message. 20. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1980, pp. 50, ff.

<sup>58</sup>Jean Calloud et François Genuyt, *La première Epître de Pierre. Analyse sémiotique*. Lectio Divina 109. Paris: du Cerf 1982, pp. 152, ff.

<sup>59</sup>Edouard Cothenet, SJ, “Imitating Christ in Sacred Scripture.”, in: *Imitating Christ*. The Religious Experience Series 5, edited by Edward Malatesta, SJ. [A translation from the French, cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* Vol. 7, col. 1555, ff.]. Wheathamstead, Hertfordshire. Anthony Clark 1975, pp. 27, ff.

<sup>60</sup>cf. Emily Burns, “Defining Humanity in Every Age: The Christ-Event as Paradigm”, in: *Whither Creativity, Freedom, Suffering, Humanity, Cosmos, God*. Edited by Francis A. Eigo, OSA. Proceedings of the Theological Institute of Villanova University. Villanova PA. The Villanova Press 1981, pp. 9, ff.; cf. also Zachary Hayes, OFM, “Christ’s Life as Paradigm”, in: *The Hidden Center. Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure*. New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press 1981, pp. 39, ff.

It is justly noted that the ancient Israelite read the words: "Yahweh has led US out of slavery" - and knew that they applied to each generation. Every celebration of the word applied its content to "this day", "today.". To "remember" was to "re-live". to experience the same deliverance in a changed situation. The new circumstances were a re-reading, a new interpretation of an ancient delivery, from harsh bondage.

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Scholars note three basic principles for the reading of 1 Peter today:

- there is profound faith in the identity of God through history, and in the continuity of His plan of liberation;
- there is an over-all favorable divine attitude toward humanity, revealed from the very beginning;
- all sacred history is "proleptic" - history is prophecy, the past is promise, the "memorial" is a celebration of hope.<sup>61</sup>

While there are discrepancies in the biblical account of the institution of the Eucharist [cf. Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20; 1 Co 11:24], all these passages seem to converge on the idea "for the many", for "all." So it is that Second Isaiah has shown that the Suffering Servant is the New Covenant in Person - and 1 P applies this to Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup>

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1 Peter is a good example of the "appropriation" of God's word and its "re-interpretation" for the exiles of today:<sup>63</sup> the captives, the unjustly imprisoned, the kidnapped - the many who suffer terrible forms of alienation. While the "pilgrim theology" of 1 P today is questioned by some, its emphasis on hope is clear. The complete realization of union with Christ is still future: but, the preset "home" for believers resides in the fact that all are members of the people of God in Jesus Christ [cf. 1 P 3:16; 5:10, 14].<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Max Alain Chevalier, "Comment lier aujourd'hui la premiere epitre de Pierre. De l'actualisation interne a l'Ecriture a l'actualisation contemporaine", in: *Etudes sur la premiere lettre de Pierre*. Association catholique francaise pour l'etude de la Bible. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp. 131, ff.

<sup>62</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Cristologia del NT*, ib., pp. 119, ff.

<sup>63</sup> Max-Alain Chevalier, ib., pp. 134, ff.

<sup>64</sup> John H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter. Its Situation and Strategy*, ib., pp. 306, ff.

There is some overlapping between social situation and eschatological vocation, between present reality and orientation. In some way, Jesus Christ is united to every human being [cf. GS 22] - but, to those who suffer “wounds”, the Cross, as He did, they will share in a special manner in His glory.

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