

A Psychologist's Testimony on Christ

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XEROSTOMUS



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Dedication

When I see my daughter Judy frolicking with her grandparents I increasingly appreciate what my own grandparents meant in my life. Unfortunately, only one of my grandmothers is still alive. Therefore I would like to dedicate this book with love to her as well as to those who are no longer living.

Motto

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.

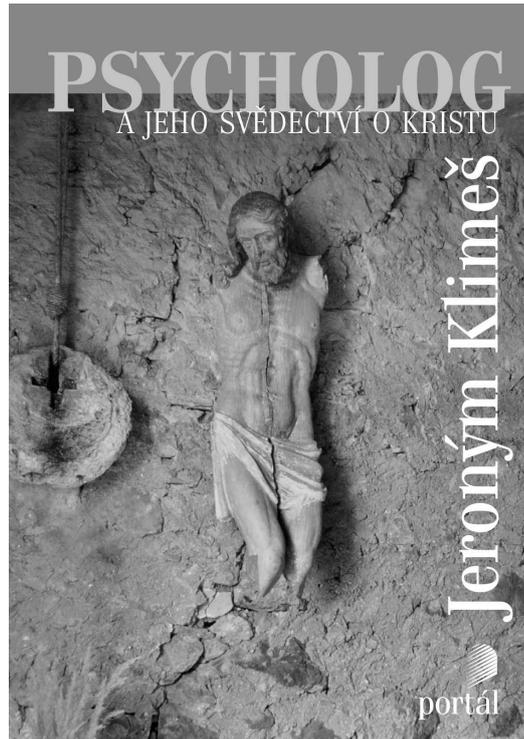
Max Planck

Preface to the English Version

This is just the first chapter of my Czech book of the same title. It treats only one main idea: that according to Christian theology, Jesus is the adopted child of his foster father, Joseph. If this is true, then we must be able to see this aspect of his personhood clearly expressed in his experiences and behavior, and to be able to describe them in psychological terms. Therefore, we will take a tour through the Gospels and try to find what we can that corresponds with phenomena associated with adoption.

As this is just the first chapter of the much more extensive Czech version, it ends just before Christ's resurrection. If readers express enthusiasm for this part of the book, of course the rest of it can be translated later.

Czech Version



For the sake of illustration the remaining chapters of the Czech version cover the following topics:

- A new concept of immortality, different from the traditional Thomistic approach
- The real existence of God versus mental representations of him in our minds
- Morality and religion as evolutionary compensatory mechanisms
- Jesus, the Church, and our place in it
- A few hints on how the uneasy situation within the Czech Church may be improved

Enjoy this book and I hope it will help you to understand the mind of Jesus – whether you are religious or not.

Preface

My dissertation was titled Human Psychology within the Field of Catholic Morality (Klimeš, 1996). I gave it to my friend, who read it over with interest. Then she asked me about the freedom of conscience: “Do Catholics really claim that?” – “Yes.”– “In that case, I’m a Catholic,” she immediately declared. Even though I laughed at that moment, I immediately realized that what is wonderful, and what I love about Christianity lies in things that are not commonly known, or that non-believers do not associate with Christianity.

Then many times I realized that the picture of the Catholic Church that it presents to the world is actually a caricature of it (if I may borrow a phrase from one priest). Sometimes I tried to listen to preaching with the ears of a non-believer, and what I heard made me sad. I had to admit that if I had not been brought up in the faith and have a personal relationship with Christ, if it were not for my fairly wide theological learning, and if I were not constantly communicating with God I would be, at best, as

apathetic toward the Church as most other Czechs, or at worst I would feel aversion toward it. Surely, I would not have found my way to it.

For the same reason I also had a problem with so-called evangelizing. I had always defended the faith, but even if I could handily convince some people, I still wouldn't know where – to which church, to which priest – to send them. In short, I know about five priests whom I can show off with pride and I can recommend them to everyone as personalities and as thinkers without having to be ashamed of what they may say. These are priests whom I am sure are cleverer and wiser than I

When I put aside for a moment the appalling way it is sometimes put into practice, I have to admit that I know no better system of thought than Christianity. I cannot imagine anything better that I could offer to my children, friends and clients, if, of course, they are interested in lending an ear. It is not usually possible to speak about this beauty. It is something like the harmony in music. Musicians hear it. They are able to describe it, explain it, write it down in the form of notes, but when they are with non-musician friends at a concert there is neither the opportunity nor enough time to even sketch in all of this. So a conversation on this topic ends at best with a number of references and the musician involved knows all the same that the others do not understand.

While writing this I was thinking not only of those who like being in churches and are fond of Christian literature and art. I also have sympathy for those who are either indifferent to these things or actually disgusted by them and cannot understand what the believers see in them. For it would have taken very little for me to belong among their numbers.

Therefore, I would also like to show them what logic, harmony, and beauty are hidden in this strange “music” that is played by so many lousy musicians so that even a trained ear has great difficulty in hearing what the composer intended. I myself do not know whether I will succeed in this; nonetheless it is the goal of my book.

I am avoiding the polemics found among various theological schools for I am not writing about scholarship or about the historical-critical method, because this book is not intended for theologians. It is only the personal testimony of one psychologist about one Jew.

Faith as Testimony on Christ

It took more than thirty years until I understood that Christianity does not rest upon a logically ordered system. I had always supposed that its foundation is proof of the existence of God and of immortal souls, from which all the doctrines of Catholicism are derived. So therefore, I read up on Catholic philosophy, theology, and ethics in advance, but then of course I discovered a simple fact. That is, that Christianity is nothing other than handed-down testimony.

Just like someone may be a witness to an extraordinary phenomenon, for example, a solar eclipse, Christians are not doing anything other than for generation after generation passing on those things that Christ once did and what he said to them. Even the word faith in this context does not have any other meaning. It is only the acceptance of testimony. We believe the witness of an automobile accident, trusting that his description of the event is more or less an accurate description of what happened. We know ahead of time that his description will be distorted, imprecise and subjective, but despite this he is the only source of information about an event that we ourselves have not experienced and now cannot experience. In this sense the word believer means that the person has been in some way enchanted, and that he or she has accepted as their own what other people have said about a man named Jesus.

With testimonies or faith we are above all inquiring into credibility of the witness – whether we can believe him, and to what extent. The same thing also holds for nonbelievers. They too live in today's age, not two thousand years ago in Palestine, and then can only validate the credibility of today's Christians. And the nonbeliever cannot be a direct participant of the given events. Each of us believers has at one time or another in our lives met someone whose testimony was so spellbinding that through it we also became indirect witnesses for Christ. We can experience it through telling, while reading books or the Bible. It could have been more logical or more experiential, but in any case it was so powerful that it has shaped us.

Perhaps it is because I am a psychologist, but I have gradually determined that Christianity is, at its base, very psychological. It does not stand upon the columns of logic, but on an experience that has been passed down; that is to say, on a psychological basis. In every period there have been people who have taken this experience and translated it into a more or less logical structure that corresponds to their era.

Shortly after Christ's time there were the Evangelists. Among the apostles, St. Paul was especially powerful in his written expression ("For they say, 'his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account'" 2Cor 10:10). St. Peter certainly excelled as an orator ("But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.'" Acts 2:14). In the Middle Ages St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi translated the same experience into Medieval speech. In more recent times the moralists and Jesuits came along. Although they were able to dazzle with their Baroque style, they were acting in the midst of a period of inertia and crises, when people only bewilderedly shrugged their shoulders and the testimony given them did not seem too appealing.

In my case, there were three people who mediated Christ for me with exceptional veracity. Besides my father, St. Thomas Aquinas had a formative influence on me. His *Summa Theologica* and his metaphysics taught me to think logically in axiomatic systems, which later proved to be very practical in searching for psychological theories (Klimeš, 2005). The third person who helped me get to know Jesus was Dr. Skoblík, with whom I served as a ministrant for five years, the entire period of my study of hydrogeology. Dr. Skoblík was like St. Peter – always a much better preacher than writer. Nonetheless his scholarly range is so expansive that I know very few people who could compete with him.

I had the great good fortune to run into these people. If not for them, I would not be a Christian. Most of my close relatives and friends have not had this luck. I neither wonder at it nor be annoyed that they are deaf to testimony on Christ. However, for all that, Christianity rests on precisely this – you always have to find someone who personally passes their testimony of Christ to you in such a way that you become excited by it.

Then you understand that St. Paul was right when he said (1Cor 12:3): "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." There is no point in trying to force faith on someone. Either it has been given to you, or not.

What's essential is to try and live like Christ. The more and the better we live like he did, the more easily we recognize his style of thinking and even how he handles life's problems. The more we do this, the more convincing our testimony becomes for others around us. Our ability to persuade others is rather his spirit within us than long bygone events.

All that we know about Christ, we have only from testimony. We do not have any direct written sources that come directly from him. We always view through the prism of another person's testimony. I am no exception. I am bearing you my testimony of how I got to know Jesus through the church in various forms. My testimony is also doubtless colored by my life experiences – not only the professional ones, the psychological or scientific but also the purely personal. From this also follows that my book is not in any way a scientific work. For many of my claims I have no proof – I am only bringing forth my testimony, my view of the world and Christianity.

-Author

Jesus as a Man and as God

Testimony on Christ has been passed on over the course of two thousand years from parents to children, from priests to the faithful and among friends. Even in the early days of the church some people felt a need to write down what they know about Christ's life. No one forced them, nor were they commissioned by anyone to do it. Simply, they felt a calling to write, perhaps just like I do now. Testimony about Christ is thus passed on as though on two tracks – through personal contact with living people of faith and through reading old documents. In reality, however, there is only one track – it's just that there our predecessors had various ways of giving testimony.

In the beginning there was direct contact between people, as when today you sit down in a bus and someone sits down in the seat next to you and you start up a conversation. Not about religion, but about anything – about beer, about women, about life, about the internet. Simply, what tales your tongue wants to tell. In this way people's contact with Christ also began. Therefore, we will begin with what kind of a man Christ was.

The description of Christ's childhood is full of gaps and omissions, but however it was, the Church is convinced that his experience of it was human. ("Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!" (2John 1:7) With regard to the extraordinary events surrounding his birth, and which we will

discuss later, his parents had to guess at his exceptionality or his being problematic, but he himself was at that time only a baby. Like all other babies he had to discover that the two objects that kept passing before his eyes are his hands, that he feels pain when he hits them against something, and that he can control them. Just like he also had to learn to walk, his learning of the world had to be gradual. For people who look upon Christ exclusively as God, it is incomprehensible that Christ gradually recognized that as a child there were things that he could not know. However, if he was a real person, he had to learn and develop gradually.

In the Gospels there are many places in which it is clear that after a given event Christ knew more than before it. For example, Christ was amazed by the words of the captain, and it seems that he did not anticipate them beforehand (Luke 7:2-10):

A centurion had a slave whom he valued highly; and who was ill and close to death. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him to ask him to come and save his servant's life. Jesus went with them. When they were not far from his home, the centurion sent his companions with a message: "Sir, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word and let my servant be healed. For I am also a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and the servant does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant in good health.

This story brings us something that Christ had to gradually discover: his own abilities, with which he exceeded the normal population. He had to get to know these during his childhood. Imagine that you were able to change foul, undrinkable water into wine. None of your playmates can do that. According to everything we know, Christ had this ability and his family also knew it, especially Mary. (From the period of Jesus' adulthood we do not know anything about Joseph, his stepfather. It is assumed that he was possibly no longer living.) Why did he have this ability and we do not? When he posed this question, the following had to come after it: "What's up with this? If I have this kind of ability, what must God's plans for me be?" We know that Christ did not have answers to these questions, and therefore he and his mother waited "until his hour came". Until that time he kept his abilities hidden from the public.

From the psychological point of view these are admirable qualities that we do not have and that we would desire. On the contrary, we consider those qualities that we do have as uninteresting. People who are confined to wheelchairs long to be able to walk. Healthy people perhaps long to fly, but mere walking does not fill them with any great excitement. Jesus behaved in the same way. He took the fact that he was able to change water into wine as a matter of course that did not in any way add to his happiness; but, on the other hand, he took pains so that no one would find out about it, because he anticipated that it could only bring problems.

The story about the wedding in Cana of Galilee also discusses this (John 2:1):

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

The conversation with his mother is sketched in only briefly, but even so, from Christ's irritated reaction we can read between the lines that between him and his mother there was a communication taking place that was not expressed out loud. His mother simply reminded him: "Look, our friends are in need." Why did Christ react so sharply? Because he understood what was between the lines: "And you are the only one who can help them now." Christ on the one hand says that his hour had not yet come,

but a few lines later the gospel writer retrospectively evaluates this event as his hour having truly arrived. Who, then is right – the scripture writer, or Christ?

Let us try to find a solution to this problem such that the scripture was right, but Jesus too. The solution is simple. The given occasion became “his hour” because he decided on it at that moment. Perhaps he had waited for some kind of sign from heaven, but he was given only a view of people in need. This was the imperative that told him: “Yes, the hour comes now when I decide to make it.” With this act, Christ emerges from anonymity and begins to make his abilities publicly known. By the way, this is not the last time when we see this kind of communication between God and Christ through the real world and through a view into human poverty.

We keep seeing that he himself took his own abilities for granted. He wanted people to listen to what he said and not to only fix their attention onto his extraordinary deeds. In this he differs from charlatans. They know that they are pulling a confidence trick, and therefore they put all their efforts into making others believe in their having special abilities. Christ’s behavior is just such a small but clear psychological detail that testifies to the authenticity of this account of the event. If the gospel writer, who did not have such abilities, thought it up themselves, they would become intoxicated with the thought of how super it would be to have such extraordinary gifts. They would not be at all aware that being exceptional is not a source of some kinds of thrills and gratification but rather of problems and vexation. Only he or she who is truly exceptional is aware of this, and they do not care for it at all. To write about the supernatural abilities of a made-up hero would be an escape from reality for a normal writer, a way to temporarily induce pleasant feelings.

It is enough to read the theory of so-called well-being. People live in the illusion that they would be happy if they won a bundle of money in the lottery, or that wealthier people are happier than those who live within ordinary means. Nonetheless, descriptions of the true fates of people who became rich overnight are not so enviable. Considerations of Christ’s problems with his own exceptionality lead us to the question that both believers and nonbelievers pose when they confront his miracles. Are they, or are they not made up?

Authenticity of Signs and Miracles

Many authors strive to make a testimony of Christ, and not only Christians. Many artists give free rein to their fantasy: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Kazantzakis) or *The Master and Margarita* (Bulgakov) or *Son of Man* (Hellblazer). Their authors consciously abandon historical sources, so their works then become testimonies of themselves rather than of the historical Christ. That in itself would not diminish the quality of these works, or the importance of the intellectual problems that they are grappling with in them.

It is, however, fatuous to polemicize with them and try to prove that their vision of Christ has nothing in common with the historical Christ. That is as if we had a children’s story about Little Red Christ and then tried with subtle but brilliant reasoning to explain that the historic Christ never walked through the forest with a hamper filled with goodies for his grandmother, and that the similarity of the red skirt and the purple cape is really and truly just a coincidence. Nevertheless, the attempts made by these authors are natural. Thanks to greater sensitivity to psychology, today we have a pressing need to understand Christ also from this psychological angle.

But how should we look at the historical Jesus to whom the Gospels ascribe supernatural abilities? A proper scientist will not accept them so long as they cannot be verified with repeatable experiments. Until this can happen, they remain outside the pale of science. And that is entirely right. Otherwise, we would be making a shambles of science. However, our life and our being are more than just science.

Each person has experienced moments many times in his or her life when something seems to prompt them to change their life’s course or plan. For example, when an alcoholic’s family falls apart, and his wife and children run away, that is a sign that he should reevaluate his attitude towards drinking. For Jules in the movie *Pulp Fiction*, the sign that he needed to end his criminal career came when the boy who shot at him was unable to kill him or even hit him, even though he shot up his entire cartridge at Jules. A sign, therefore, does not require violation of the laws of nature.

A sign always has two parts: the experience or a recognition of something, and then the conclusion that we derive from it and apply to our behavior. A basic source of signs is a recognized necessity or

impossibility. For Christ, the sign that he had to emerge from his anonymity came when he was the only one at the wedding at Cana who was able to solve the problem of the wedding guests.

When interpreting signs a person can, of course, also be mistaken or ignore very clear signs. Here I am reproaching, for example, those bishops who have not come to any practical conclusion from the indisputable fact that in the Czech Republic there is not going to be a sufficient number of celibate priests. They are, in a passive manner, allowing the Church to die out. This is also a sign of the times – that it is necessary to handle the situation differently, for example, by struggling in Rome to abolish the celibacy requirement. There is an art to reading a sign through the lens of one's experience and recognizing the correct conclusion to draw for his behavior (Luke 12:54-57):

He also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge for yourselves what it right?

With signs it is not important that the experience transcends one's understanding, but above all that one draws the correct conclusion from it. What good are miracles to people if they ignore thousands of other things they already know – from the harmfulness of smoking to divorces?

If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? (John 3:12)



Bargaining with God and Signs in the Film *Loners (Samotáři)*

Andrew: Once I made a secret agreement with God, that for your sake I would study medicine. After I saved a certain number of lives, then you will come back to me.

Hannah: Aha.

A: In the night I operated on the man you brought in.

H: You operated on him? How is he doing?

A: Well. But most of all it's a sign.

H: What kind of a sign?

A: I don't know yet, but it's a sign. You bring a person in, and it's me who operates on him.

H: It is a sign.

A: It's a sign that we should live together.

Even Christians are not above simple manipulative tendencies. The classic example is a one-sided bargain with God. Andrew knows that it is useless to ask Hannah's opinion because she does not want to have a relationship with him. He therefore has to ask favors from the highest places, and he makes a little deal with God – he will trade the girl for human lives. That's a fair offer. God couldn't fail to accept it. In this way, many believers attempt to get around the wills of other people and attempt to misuse God as though he were their battering ram, enforcing their wills. The energy vainly expended is then further manifested in anxious expectation of a sign that the fulfillment of the other side of the bargain has finally taken place.

A sign is a relative concept – it always relates to a certain person, and therefore a sign is something different for each one of us. For St. Joseph, seeing an angel in his dreams was a sign, for the wise men from the east, it was the appearance of the star in the west. For me, neither dreams nor astrology are a relevant source of information, so if God wants to communicate with me, He cannot use these information channels.

A miracle is not the same thing as a sign. A miracle is something that goes beyond a person's understanding, or previous experiences. In the modern world, then, something is termed a miracle when it seems to violate the heretofore known laws of nature. For a given person, a miracle may become a sign that is to result in him changing his or her attitude, but it does not happen this way. Some miracles can take place without any practical conclusions being drawn from them.

Just like it is with signs, even the term miracle is a relative concept that relates to our usual experience or else to already known natural laws. With the way our knowledge has grown, many previous miracles have ceased to amaze us because we are able to control processes that people could only dream about in the past, e.g. a microwave oven. Despite this, many of Jesus' deeds still remain beyond the boundaries of our possibilities. Especially the healing of the sick, and the resurrection of the dead. But even here it does not absolutely have to be the case that the laws of nature were violated, because it is certain that we still have many as-yet-undiscovered laws to learn about.

Quantum physics did not exist in Newton's time, but despite that, quantum phenomena did. Just like it is sure that in the future science will recognize much more complex phenomena than quantum physics is able to describe today. However, these phenomena exist even today and they also appear in our world. They remain hidden from the eyes of modern science just like the constant speed of light was not revealed in Newton's era. Even though they are not measurable by us, they may manifest themselves in individual historic events even without our being able to scientifically grasp the physical principles involved.

Because miracles and signs are two distinct, though related concepts, it does not make any difference whether Jesus' extraordinary abilities represented a violation of natural laws or whether he was making use of powers that are not known to us. We also, for example, make use of the quantum tunneling phenomenon in diodes, which is something the Apostles did not have any notion of whatsoever. It has the same value as though someone were able to levitate on the surface of water because "God is holding him on his palm" (direct cause), or if he were able to control processes which eventually, consequentially, also derived from God and which, until this time no other person has been able to control. Leibniz called this the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (*principium identitatis indiscernibilium*, see Glossary). The main question is not whether his deeds were miraculous, but whether they were a sign for the people of that time and for us.

In the Gospels there are places that indicate that God sometimes directly intervenes in the world, for example at the end of the world (Matt 24:21-22):

For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Nonetheless, for most of Jesus' extraordinary acts I will still try to assume a natural operation for the world and the functioning of natural, though heretofore unknown laws. For, after all God created this world this way, and that is the way he likes it. Should he contradict his work just because we like miracles? Therefore, I prefer to assume unknown laws than the so-called God of the gaps (see Glossary – Bulgarian Constant).

If a Christian believes in God, he or she has to at least in principle admit to the possibility of his intervening in the world's functioning – whether directly or indirectly. Anyone who claims that an absolute miracle is impossible cannot be a Christian. Therefore, the ideal lies somewhere between these two extreme positions: "Everything unusual that is written in the New Testament is a miracle and is historical truth" versus "Nothing is a miracle, everything there is a fabrication that late grew into tall tales."

I imagine God as being like the conductor of an orchestra. The conductor does not violate any physical laws, but he is still able to transcend them to a remarkable extent using his craft. God loves his natural laws and therefore has precious little desire to violate them. He does, however, have a tendency to ask us to join in his grand "jam session". We therefore do not have to be collectors of curiosities, miracles and mysteries, but most of all attentive listeners and painstaking musicians who hear and also help to co-create the Divine harmony and also with their instruments not hinder God's composition.

Fortunately, to a great extent it is up to each of us what we will consider from the Gospels to be an authentic record of these supernatural powers of Christ. I personally orient myself through a

psychological perspective. For example, by comparing the behavior of charlatans in comparison with people who truly have extraordinary abilities. That is, with something similar that King Solomon used when he had to distinguish between the true mother and the baby thief (1 Kings 3:16-28):

“Divide the living boy in two; then give half to one, and half to the other.”

The woman who was only trying to pass herself off as the mother wanted both of them to be equally badly off (the law of sharing frustration), and she therefore agrees with killing the child. The real mother thinks about the well being of her child and would rather give him up than have him die (thus, again the law of equalizing frustration, but this time between herself and the child, not vis-a-vis the other mother.)

Certainly it is because I am a psychologist, but for me psychological laws (for example, the law of sharing frustration) just as convincing as the law of gravity is for a physicist, or a proof of mathematical induction for logician. I can rely on them. I know what they are able to do, and on the other hand, what imagination and crowd behavior, suggestion or hypnosis, and how the memory of an event is deformed by many retellings, how the mind of a ten-year-old child appears, and also what we may expect from manipulators. I thoroughly understand that my argumentation may not be convincing for someone who does not know psychology. That person simply has to wait for someone else to come along who will be a more convincing witness for Christ for him or her.

On the other hand, my mind balks at how some people on the one hand do not want to believe the descriptions of miracles in the Gospels, which were composed not long after Christ’s death (Tresmontant 1985), but at the same time they are willing to believe dubious interpretations of Apocryphal Gospels from the 3rd century in which it is told that Christ kissed Mary Magdalene, or that he had an amorous relationship with her. Of course, it is antimanipulative behavior that explains these paradoxes, where these people are afraid that they will be manipulated by the church into some kind of distorted “official version”. The question, however, remains, whether the absurdities to which their defensive reactions lead, do not represent an even greater distortion of history than the entire “official version”.

The authenticity of the miracles is testified indirectly by the behavior of Christ himself. He took them as something that was just a given in his life, and he generally perceived them as a source of problems rather than as a privilege that intoxicated him.

Nonetheless, it is entirely understandable that his followers will have exactly the opposite mindset. They will be intoxicated with having such a powerful intercessor in heaven. They will have a tendency to believe anything. Therefore, if we want to remain on the ground of critical thinking, let us focus our attention on those who did not wish Christ well, who struggled with him and wanted to get rid of him, or at least to discredit him in the eyes of the public. These people had the least measure of willingness to believe in the authenticity of Christ’s miracles. They were the greatest doubters and therefore also the greatest allies of critical thinking. With their behavior therefore, they provide an indirect testimony of how easy, or how difficult it was in that era to dispute the authenticity of Jesus’ deeds. We will observe their natural defensive reaction.

Yes, the ancient world liked to believe in all kinds of miracles, but only on one condition – so long as the miracle suited the observer’s worldview. Children also like to believe in fairy tales, but woe if it means that they should clean up their room, then they don’t believe in anything! A person in the ancient world was not, of course a child; he or she was just as intelligent as we are.

It is enough to take a look at college graduates – how many of them can demonstrate the ancient Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$)? You would have to look for them with a lantern at a liberal arts school! Even the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, when reading the sentence “the sum of the areas of squares on the two legs facing the right angle is the same as the square of the third side – the hypotenuse,” (Pythagoras’ theorem) cried out: “For God’s sake, that just isn’t possible!” Later, however, it is said that after more through study of the proof, he “fell in love with geometry” (Youngson, 2004 ***<uvidíme - GET quote 20>).

Psychological laws are just as uncompromising as physical laws. You cannot cheat gravity. Similarly, you cannot get around the entirely natural and intuitive tendency of every critic to try and catch the charlatan in the act. It is precisely when the critic is not able to do this that he or she attempts to attack other elements of the suspected charlatan’s behavior. Even the Pharisees tried to catch Christ pulling a fast one. When they found that nut too hard to crack, they began to wage war with him over the pettiest issue of the time – the controversy over the Sabbath (John 9:1):

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means 'Sent'.) Then he went and washed and came back able to see [...]

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age. He will speak for himself!' His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.' So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, Lord? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' 'He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him.

This is a record of an often-recounted tale, which, after Jesus' death, with which his disciples or the blind man illustrated the narrow-mindedness of the Pharisees and mock their attempts at discrediting Christ. Thanks to its many, many retellings, this story is somewhat schematized into a humorous yarn. Details have been whittled down and it has been framed into an ideological introduction and conclusion. For example, in the given situation, the healed blind man would have to be practically paralyzed with fear. The Pharisees had the power to drive a person out of the synagogue, which for a Jew meant social death. Therefore, the cowardly parents would rather repudiate their son than risk such a fate. The blind man took his expulsion so well only due to the fact that he was all of a sudden able to see. He took Christ's side according to the principle of hanging with one's homeboys.

It is precisely this manipulative tension between the powerless blind man and the powerful, enraged, but all the same powerless Pharisees that gives strength to this humorous experience. In any event, the story illustrates the inability of the Pharisees to catch Christ committing a fraud, and therefore they seek another problem as a pretext on whose basis they could get rid of their inconvenient critic. They apply the same logic even in later disputations with the disciples (Acts 4:16): They said, "What will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it."

These Pharisees simply have no willingness to believe in miraculous deeds. People today do not have greater intelligence than the Pharisees had, because intelligence is primarily given genetically. Even we would therefore be unable to prove it to be a sham, especially when the healing often took place demonstratively in front of a whole gathering of people and it was performed on people that the community knew, and where they did not know Jesus. Imagine a synagogue full of your critics who are carefully watching your every move. (Luke 6:6):

On another Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

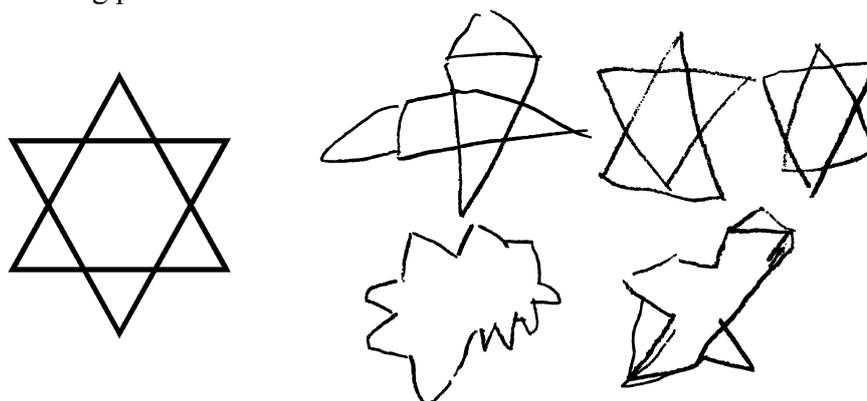
Even here it is paradoxical that Christ, unlike a confidence man, takes his abilities for granted. He wants his audience to rather acknowledge his arguments about the Sabbath. With his acts he demonstrates only factual and theological advantage. The whole synagogue is full of antagonists who had been dyed in the wool of their logical considerations, their manipulations and legal argumentation. Their critical thinking was actually quite fanatic, but despite this they were not able to find any argument against him, nor were they able to prove him a fraud. This powerlessness filled them with a raging fury that in the end cost Christ his life. On the other side, this same powerless furor proves the unassailability of Christ's miracles.

From these instances you can see why Christians are convinced that Christ had extraordinary abilities. And these abilities, which despite all the paraphernalia of modern science, still exceed our faculties of comprehension. In the literature there are many other arguments that support this conviction but I, personally, am most convinced by the fact that Christ was surrounded by many motivated and well-funded critics who despised him enough to wish him dead. They did not find any fraud. It is thanks to this non-voluntary testimony on Christ that I believe more than thanks to those left by people who were rooting for Christ and were liable to believe anything he told them.

Even other circumstances testify that here were real abilities and not fiction. When the disciples received, for a time, the power to heal, they were overjoyed from this just like small children. (The seventy returned with joy, saying: "Lord, in your name, even the demons submit to us!" Luke 10:17) For Christ, this was already a tried-and-true game that he had asked his disciples to play as a matter of course, and which was supposed to belong to all of them (for example, as when he asked St. Peter to walk on water as he did; Matt 14:26). Confidence men keep their tricks secret and do not request that others repeat them – they would thus lose their air of exceptionality.

The Problem of Reconstructing Christ's Mind

When we attempt to reconstruct how Jesus thought and felt we run into a wall. That is, his disciples. Let us demonstrate this in one simple example. When the school readiness of children is tested we ask them to trace the following picture:



If the children are truly ready for school they see two opposing triangles. If they are not ready, they draw us a cluster of tangled lines. From these tangled lines we are often unable to reconstruct the original picture. If the analysis of the picture did not take place in the child's mind immediately then it will not take place in the future either so long as we do not show the child the original picture again. Simply, it is not possible to reconstruct something that was never filed away in the child's head into the long-term memory.

And that's how it was with Christ too. Given that the disciples did not understand his mind when they were walking around with him, it is quite difficult or practically impossible to reconstruct his mind from

their writings. As with the confused lines of the star, the descriptions provided by the disciples will also the disciples' descriptions also will not follow the natural laws of the human mind.

The events are going to be written as they came back to the disciples, as they gradually remembered them, not according to how they actually played out and what kind of internal logic they had.

However, unlike the case of reconstructing a star from a child's drawing, we have an advantage here. We know what a natural human mind looks like and we know what rules it conforms to. If Christ too, had such a mind, and it was similar to, say, the mind of an adopted child, we shall be able to discuss it below. A sign that accompanies this kind of mind is that we do not make it ostentatiously obvious what we are unsure of. On the other hand, as soon as we gain subjective certainty, then we do not hesitate to go public. The opposite process lacks psychological logic.

However it is clear that Christ's behavior was guided by some kind of internal motivations. All the same, what is at stake is whether we will be able to at least partially – yet reliably - reconstruct them. It is like when a child sings a song out of key at preschool. A trained musician is generally able to reconstruct the original melody according to the laws of simple tonal harmony that govern children's songs. It is not, however, always an easy task and let us admit that sometimes it is altogether impossible.

Christ's Divinity

All Christian churches preach that Christ was God and at the same time also a human being. We have already explained his humanity, but how did his divinity originate? Christ himself did not systematically claim that he himself is God and has God's nature. He spoke of God as his father who had given him extraordinary abilities. A clear proclamation of his divinity ensues as a logical deduction based on his abilities and from interpretation of his words. Here is an example of one of his many arguments with the Pharisees (John 8:31ff):

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from your Father."

They answered him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does."

They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself."

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God."

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death."

The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' Are you greater than our

father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God, though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad."

Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

*Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. <***možná trochu dlouhý citát - možná ho zkrátím>*

In this argument it is interesting that Christ began it with a reproof for something had probably been eating at him for a long time. He does not conduct himself in the conversation at all like someone who had the edge over the others from the beginning. He gets angry at how those who had in one way or another believed in him are not showing which side they stand on. And he knows how to show them their limitations and their half-heartedness of their attitudes, which they themselves do not see. Here we are not at all encountering Jesus' strength, but rather his powerlessness. The argument has evidently drawn to a stalemate. Despite this, in the conversation, something did come out in passing that can help us grasp the reasons why the disciples claimed his divine nature. Christ's slip of the tongue in the middle of the conversation: "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day." This led him to the claim that he pre-existed Abraham. That was certainly not the subject that Jesus wanted to talk about at the beginning, it simply came out in the course of the conversation. Nevertheless, it follows from this that in some way Jesus was there before Abraham, which he could not have done as a man.

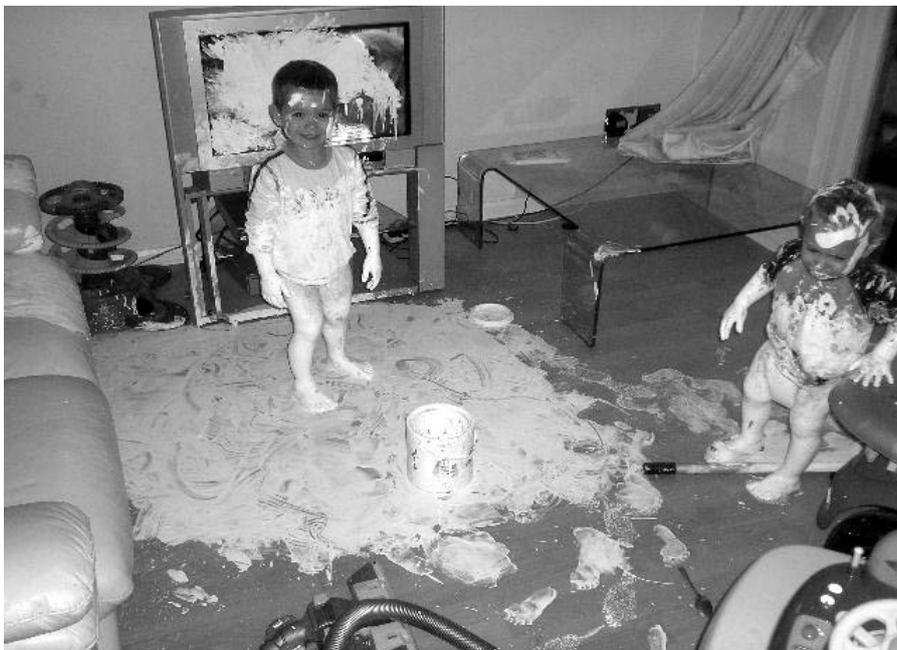
It is true that in the course of the boisterous debate Christ could have been cornered into tossing something in about Abraham and then standing behind it in order not to lose face. For the faithful, such ideas are somewhat offensive but if we are going to stay honest we have to pose such questions and seek satisfactory answers to them. Christ evidently had a very negative attitude toward lying and hypocrisy (see the above conversation). He proved able to resist social pressure, he was able to bear insults and vituperation, and lack of understanding in the moments when his disciples felt insulted down to the marrow of their bones. Thus, he did not have an overgrown, touchy, narcissistic ego, even when he was aware of his true exceptionality (Luke 9:51ff):

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them as Elijah did?" But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

If some text is the product of fantasy and the main character is endowed with supernatural abilities, he or she usually uses them for physical self-defense; or, if he is a villain then it becomes an instrument of aggression against other people. For example, Elijah, to whom the disciples appeal (2 Kings 1:10, or similarly in (1 Kin 18:20ff) :

But Elijah answered the captain of fifty [men], "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

Whether for aggression or defense, in fantasies extraordinary abilities are used as a weapon against others. In this sense, the Evangelical descriptions of Christ are anomalous and they attest that they could hardly be the mere product of human fantasy, because they do not obey its laws. This behavior of Jesus testifies that he had such a significant physical advantage that he did not need to demonstrate it. Perhaps like parents who, even when they are trembling with rage, possess internal protective mechanisms that generally will not allow them to kill their children. The writer of made-up stories does not have this advantage of compassion, and therefore the heroes of fantasy stories do away with their enemies wholesale in order to convince readers of the fictitiously superior force of their hero (see the example from the Apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Thomas).



The Fifth Commandment – Thou Shalt Not Kill!

Children are not evolutionarily designed for life in apartments. To make them live there is somewhat against nature. Among the most natural children's toys belong mud and sand. Theory is nice; however, parents' love for their children has to be strong indeed in order to withstand these evolutionary rudiments. Therefore, in the case that even Christ kept a tight rein on his abilities in contact with people, this is a testimony to his having to have loved them very much.

Just by-the-by – this story is, according to all sources, illustration that Christians are, for example in comparison with Muslims, still very restrained in proclaiming their religion. Even though they have at some times proclaimed their faith with the sword, their religion did not give them any support in it. Only they themselves were subjectively convinced that they were doing the right thing.

Christ never utilized his supernatural abilities against another person or an animal, not even against his enemies. In rare cases he used them for his own material advantage, for example when paying taxes (Matt 17:24ff). In the previous example he does not object that it is impossible, but that it is against his mission. That something of this type would be possible is evident from the story with the fig tree (see below). The tree dried up after he cursed it. Christ used his extraordinary power only to help people; as an example, let us take the healings he performed and the material help he offered, and he then made use of this fact at the most in the form of an argument in the discussion with his antagonists. Even when he was very angry with someone he did not escalate the confrontation beyond than warnings or threats (Luke 10:13–15):

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

It does not seem that Christ was claiming something because he got carried away or in order not to lose face. As evidence against this we can find other places where he takes his own divine nature as a fact (John 10:32ff):

Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?"

The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God."

Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods' -- and the scripture cannot be annulled -- can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Again they wanted to seize him; however, he escaped them.

These kinds of authentic places are again a better testimony on Christ's self-concept than the testimonies of his followers, because they had tendencies to use the word God in its general meaning – something that utterly transcends human experience. For example, Thomas's confession: "My Lord and my God!" should not be taken as a direct confirmation of Christ's divinity because it is only the exclamation of a person whose breath has been taken away by an experience (John 20:19ff):

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus usually spoke of himself as the Son of Man. The meaning here is not an equivalent word for man, but rather a kind of religious-political function. (There will be more discussion of this later.) He does not deny his divine nature, but speaks about it with outsiders only seldom and in passing. Clearly he speaks of it more often with his disciples. He wants, above all else, for people to use their own common sense. It is only when this exceeds their powers that he devises to deeds (John 3:12):

"If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?"

Or (John 15:24):

"If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father."

Jesus had an aversion to anyone considering his position as a Pharisee, a teacher of the Law, or a priest to be important. He was irritated, for instance, when someone addressed him by the epithet of "Good Teacher" (Luke 18:18). Similarly, he forbade his disciples to let themselves be called "rabbi" (Matt 23:8). And yet, as an adopted child, he was certainly glad when people acknowledged his unique, divine origin (observe his joy when Peter declared: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. "). Perhaps it is precisely for this reason that he would not have liked it if someone unthinkingly applied the phrase "Son of God" to him, in the same way they might flippantly refer to the "Divine Elvis" in our times. That would be a degradation of the idea. He is not "The Divine Jesus," he is God himself.

Christ, although he had extraordinary qualities, above all else wanted the people around him to think for themselves and to act according to their own sure understanding. It is as though his divinity was not what was important, but rather our own humanity. He was not principally interested in convincing others that he is extraordinary, but in convincing us that we can do more and that we can be more ourselves. From this, therefore, naturally follows recognition of his extraordinariness.

Perhaps this is the reason why he spoke of himself as "the way and the truth and the life" and said: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). It is because experience with him begins just like with any other person. People in his times also simply met a person whom they began a dialogue. Then we later discover that his words and deeds somehow do not fall into our ordinary expectations. Soon we realized that there is an exceptional personality beside us who deserves to be followed and imitated. And that through this imitation, our personality develops much faster it usually would without him.

Every Christian walks this path for a longer or shorter way. Each has to gradually discover that Jesus is not only a great historical figure for him or her, but also a role model who shows us how to resolve life situations, how to communicate with others around us, which values are important in life, and what is

merely illusion. And, as I have already emphasized several times, we always first encounter this experience with Christ through the convincing testimony of other people.

Let us note how narcissists (by which I specify a diagnosis, not just call someone names), laboriously and carefully build their image in the public's eye. For example, the Czech writer Milan Kundera carefully reads his own translation in order to be sure that they completely and faithfully express his thoughts. Christ had not such need. Not only did he not really care that his resurrection was not better documented, he did not even give his disciples any instructions to carefully record his words. He departs with the words (John 16:5):

But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'
But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

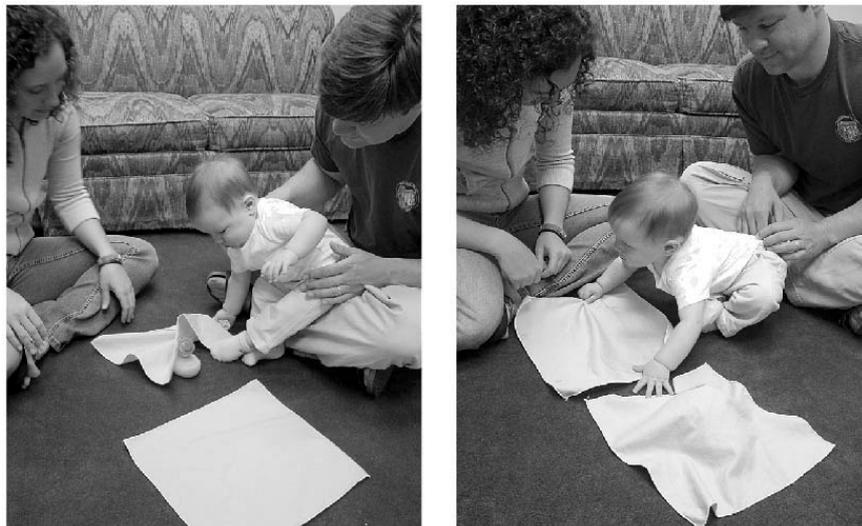
It is better for us that he left, because otherwise we would heedlessly go after him and we would not manage to activate the abilities that lie slumbering within us.

Christ's Fallibility and Gradual Recognition

The union of divine and human natures explains the facility in which he performed acts that massively transcend human potential. Christ, as a true human being, however had to have gradual development and understanding. As a man, his sinfulness is denied, but certainly not his human fallibility, or imprecise, incomplete and changing understanding and expectations.

Psychology describes the developmental phases a person undergoes from early childhood through old age. They are typical for every person, so it would therefore be heretical to deny them to Jesus. If we were to do so, we would be denying him his humanity. If Christ was a real child, he had to, after birth, have the grasping reflex, the later the ability to discover the so-called object persistence, the "A-not-B error", and in his case the law of conservation of volume also had to apply. Let us demonstrate several of these developmentally specific mistakes:

Object persistence: Babies younger than six months assume that an object ceases to exist when it is hidden. If we conceal a toy from the child's sight under a pillow, the child does not search for it. The toy has ceased to exist. A baby around six months of age will begin searching for it; that is, she assumes that it does exist, even if she cannot see it. This is what is called a "persistent object." Even Jesus, until the age of six months had to have assumed that a thing that he could not see did not exist.



The A-not-B error: we place two pillows in front of a baby around six months old. We hide a toy for her under pillow A. The baby is already able to take off the pillow in order to find her toy. Now, as the baby watches we take the toy out from under pillow A and transfer it to underneath pillow B. The baby has watched the transfer with her own eyes, but despite this she will again seek the toy under pillow A. By the way, adults also make this mistake in what is for them an atypical environment, for example, when they learn to work with computers. Even though I may have put an icon behind another window as they are watching, they will still look for it behind the window where they found it the first time.



Conservation of quantity and volume: a preschool child will put the same number of beads into two containers that are the same, proceeding always by putting one into the right one, and then one into the left one. We then ask which one will yield a longer necklace. The necklace will be the same from either is the answer. Then the child himself pours the beads from one of the containers into a narrow test tube, and from the other container into a glass with a wide bottom (a Petri dish). When we now ask the same question of which collection of beads will make a longer necklace, the child will answer that those in the narrow glass will.

Theory of mind: Sally and Ann are two dolls. Sally has a ball. She puts the ball under the cushion on the chair. Then, she leaves the room. While she is out of the room, Ann takes the ball out from under the cushion and hides it in the toy box on the other side of the room. Later, Sally comes back into the room. Where does Sally think her ball is? (False belief test: Dunbar, 2004).

Children under four and a half years will answer that the doll is in the closet. Older children, however, will answer correctly, that it is “under the pillow”. From the children gaining the ability to model events in Sally’s mind independently of their own knowledge we recognize that they continually play with this ability. Certainly you know the children’s game “Someone called you an owl!” “Who?!” and the following outburst of laughter and children go to try this foolishness out on the next victim.

It would be absurd to deny these regular developmental errors to Jesus. What kind of a human being would not have gone through them? But Jesus was also God. He, of course, could not make mistakes, so the question arises of in what way the divinity and the humanity were associated.

There have always been many believers who, although they did not openly profess allegiance to the Docetists’ creed, imagined Jesus to be some kind of eviscerated man who is filled with a Godly stuffing, which is the very essence of Docetism. But the theology of Christ states that he was a real human being and also truly God. This means that his mind was not eviscerated by his divinity, but was fully maintained and it was subject to the same mental laws as our minds are. Thus, the second divine person – the Son or the Word, as it has been called – had to limit its effects on Jesus-the-man in order not to destroy his human nature. Christ is denied only one typical human characteristic – sin, and that means both personal sin as well as original sin. Otherwise, no crucial mental or physical process could have been affected by his divinity.

We can only partially get a look at this in the way in which he performed miracles. We can surmise certain developmental stages:

- 1) He uses various aids (mud, spit);
- 2) He wants to be in physical contact with the one he is healing;
- 3) He performs miracles without being limited by material or spatial constraints.

In the same way, he gradually overcomes the uncertainty he experienced at the beginning. He concealed his special deeds at the outset, but later made a public show when demonstrating Lazarus’ resurrection. Other people also help him with this maturation process. The transition from the second to the third stage is illustrated in a passage (Matt 8:5), which is a variation on something we have examined above:

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.”

And he said to him, “I will come and cure him.”

The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go’ and he goes, and to another ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this’ and the slave does it.”

When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

This passage also illustrates also how he gradually overcame further errors or imprecise expectations; that is, that the Jews would turn to and believe in him. As God, he had to know beforehand how it would be, but as a man he had to gradually and painfully find out. In the same way, he explicitly speaks about his lack of knowledge when the end of the world is mentioned (Matt 24:36):

But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

This gradual development was recorded by the evangelists inadvertently. Perhaps they noticed it, but they certainly did not deduce anything from it. Nevertheless, if Christ had been caught committing a fraud this growth in self-confidence while performing miracles could not have been observed.

For example, the givers of the so-called Darwin Prize for those who (inadvertently) improve the human gene pool by removing themselves from it relate the following incident with amusement:

One 35-year-old pastor from Libreville, the capital city of Gabon, claimed that if a person has sufficient faith he or she can walk on water just like Jesus did. Therefore, he set out for a nearby bay in order to prove that the Heavenly powers will, thanks to his faith, hold him above the water's surface. But, alas, although the pastor was a skilled orator, he was unable to swim. He had neither Jesus' miraculous abilities nor the legerdemain of David Copperfield, so within a few minutes this heedless priest ended his sojourn on this world.

If our attempts at making miracles end ingloriously then we will not see the development that took place in Christ's learning that the evangelists inadvertently recorded for us. It is not, therefore, in error to claim that Jesus did not at first know that he was able to heal others, or to raise them from the dead from a distance, and that he became aware of these abilities at the time when others around him – for example, the above-mentioned centurion - reminded him of them.

Even fantasy constructions always derive from the knowledge available in their age. Falsifiers are also children of their times. They use arguments that are acceptable for the people around them, living in the same age. They cannot think up something that has yet to happen. For example, the evangelists recorded the developmental stages which we are not familiar with for only a few years, but which were at their time entirely unknown. This is however, a signal that the Evangelists were describing reality and not making it up. A champion storyteller of that era could "make" any kind of miracle, but the description of his gradual acquisition and development of these abilities would be missing.

How Fantasy Constructions Appear

So that it will be utterly plain what I mean by the phrase fantasy construction, I will attempt to clarify it by taking a little detour. When ten-year-old children write diaries they are matter-of-fact in describing events, but when reading them you get a kind of strange feeling. When you attempt to analyze this feeling you become aware of, among other things, that in their narratives any description of emotions and subjective experience is utterly missing.

These products of pre-adolescent children are literary artifacts that are difficult to replicate, and they are reminiscent of the Apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Thomas about Jesus' childhood. It has amazed whole generations of readers for centuries with its absurdity. Nor would I wonder if the author of this text was some eleven-year-old boy sometime in the 3rd-6th century. He had hardly learned to write, and hid his made-up tall tales about Jesus into a secret hiding place. Then he lost them or forgot about them, simply goodness knows how history or various wars buried it. But when, after several decades his tales were found, no one could guess that they were written a long time ago by a child who was, through them, working through his feelings of inferiority. And so it was made out as an unsolvable mystery. Judge for yourselves whether an adult could have written something like this:

One time he was walking through a village, and a boy ran around him and bumped into his shoulder. Jesus frowned and cursed him: "You will not escape your fate!" The boy immediately fell down dead.

People who saw this happen said “Where did this child come from, whose every word makes miracles?”

The parents of the dead boy went to Joseph and lit into him: “You cannot live with us in this village with a child like that unless you teach him to speak decently and not to curse others; see, he kills our children.”

Joseph called his son to come to him and expostulated: “Why do you do this, do you want it to bother them, and for them to hate us and eventually to drive us away?” Jesus answered: “I know that these words do not come from you, so I will be silent now if you want; they’ll get it in the end anyway.” And immediately everyone who had complained about him went blind.

Those who saw this became very frightened, they did not know what they should think about this, and they said that whatever Jesus utters, whether bad or good, would come true, wonder of wonders. And they saw that Jesus had done this thing, and therewith Joseph picked himself up, grabbed hold of him by the ear and gave it a good pull. (Translated from the Greek by Pavlína Noemi Šípová.)

In any case, whether these little fables were written by a child or an adult, they have the character of a fantasy construction. Their authors intoxicate themselves on how it would be wonderful to have these kinds of extraordinary qualities. Everyone would be afraid of him and they would remember him well, because even his Jesus keeps repeating the sentence: “And don’t forget me.”

It is also worth mentioning the manner in which children describe adults’ behavior. A child always explains the motivation of an adult at his or her own level of comprehension and development. Thus, adults in children’s stories have children’s minds; they are sort of just overgrown children. So if I am a rational, pragmatic-minded psychologist, I therefore imagine Jesus being just as rational and pragmatic-minded as I am. I simply cannot outrun my own shadow.

I will provide one more example of children’s writing as an illustration of this point. D’Orta (1994) collected during the course of his teaching career seventy stories that exemplify the same type of description without emotions and by a grandiose ego that is typical for this developmental stage.

Which of Jesus’ parables do you like the best?

I like the parable about Lazarus the best. Lazarus was Jesus’ friend. Sometimes they went shopping together. One day, however, Lazarus caught a gross skin disease. Because the nearest hospital was all the way in Rome, Lazarus died. Everyone in his family cried and lamented more than necessary. They said under their beards, if they had them:

“Such bad luck! Such bad luck! Who would have thought?”

The second day they buried him and sealed up the tomb with a boulder that not even Pippi Longstocking could have lifted. The third day Mrs. Lazarus met Jesus, the boy, and told him that his good friend died but that if he would visit her he would make her very happy.

So Jesus moseyed right on down to the cemetery. As soon as they saw him, everyone came crowding up to him and they all cried: “Come here, Jesus, my brother died! Come here, my sister died, my mother, my cousin...”

But Jesus could only raise one from the dead – and the dead were like mushrooms after the rain! So then Jesus called out in a mighty voice: “Lazarus, jump up!”

And Lazarus jumped up from the grave. He looked, however, like a ghoul and walked like a Zombie or the Phantom of the Opera. He had bandages on his face, but he smiled happily.

Jesus hugged him and said: “Lazarus, I’ll forgive you this time, but next time, don’t do this to me again: don’t die!”

When Judas saw this, he went to betray Jesus!

In these children’s stories we can most clearly observe the laws of fantasy which govern those who dream up supermen with supernatural powers. We do not find this in the Gospels.

Fortunately, we know exactly what the fantasy creations of people at that time looked like. If someone in Jesus’ times felt called to make up a superman figure who worked powerful miracles, nothing more than yet another apocalypse would come of it; certainly not the Gospels – an utterly new and original literary form with a sober description of reality which, moreover, comes in four versions.

Jesus had read up on the apocalypses well judging by the term Son of Man. This term appears only within the apocalypses. He himself uses apocalyptic diction when he speaks of the end of the world. Even the Evangelists have some traces of it when they speak of graves opening and the tearing of the

temple veil at Jesus' death, but otherwise this style is not found in the Gospels. For illustration of a work of apocalyptic fantasy we may look to the passage describing the opening of the sixth seal in the Book of Revelations (Rev 6:12):

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

If the Gospels were a fantasy creation, then we would have to expect to find a passage that looks like this: "High Priest, Scribes and Pharisees, you all fled to the mountains to hide yourselves in the caves and cliffs and called to the mountains and cliffs: 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" In the Gospels, other than the above-mentioned exceptions, nothing of this kind is to be found, and therefore they can hardly be made up. If they were made up - and despite this did not obey the laws of fantasy - that would be just as much of a miracle as when Jesus was able to resist gravity and walk upon water. Then there is the question of why we should believe in this particular miracle and not believe in the ones that are recorded there.

Mary – The Lord's Slave

It certainly is not a good idea to begin talking about Jesus' claim that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Anyone possessing even a trace of sense would have to throw me out the door if I came in with that little tale. Even I would have to have fallen on my head somewhere if I were to expect that you will adopt my conviction without reservations. Nonetheless, just like it would be unnatural to assume that anyone around Mary enthusiastically believed her either. Especially her relatives (recorded as brothers and sisters) thought she was a loose sort of girl. They did not call Jesus the son of Joseph, but the son of Mary (Mark 6:1–6):

*He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, **the son of Mary** and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him.*

Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house"

And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

Notice that the behavior of all three sides has its own logic – in short, we cannot reasonably expect either today's nonbelievers or the people of that time to make the story of God's paternity their own. The psychological realism of the story however testifies that the Evangelists captured real human relationships. If they had just made up the story, their protagonists would have willingly believed Mary's tidings. She would then have rejoiced over having become the Mother of God. Mistake: only those who cannot imagine what it means to be the Mother of God would consider it that way. This is not any privilege at all; it is literally a holy pain in the rear. From the beginning you know that no one is going to believe you. If you are going to get through this unscathed, you are going to spend your whole life as a punching bag, dependent upon your relatives. And I am not mentioning how your life and your notions of it are going to be turned upside down (Luke 1:26).

When Elizabeth (Mary's aunt, the mother of John the Baptist) was in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the

Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God"

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her.

Mary's first reaction is truly psychologically appropriate – no enthusiasm, pragmatic, technical inquiries – a vision of an unending series of problems. Her answer to the angel is typically Jewish theocentrism: "I am the slave of the Lord..."

We have every reason to assume that immediately after this experience Mary did not run right to Joseph to tell him this joyful tidings. Rather it aroused an expectation in her, and she went to make certain whether some part of it might be true; namely whether Aunt Betty is also pregnant. The young girl thus set off for the mountains to visit her already aged, childless and evidently infertile aunt: "If I'm in the family way, that's just as absurd as if Aunt Betty was also in it."

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." (Luke 1:39-50)

Let us say right away that these two hymns are not truly a realistic notation of what happened up there in the mountains. (It would have been odd if Luke had had such detailed information about all of it.) It is possible, however, to assume that both of the women took note. This shared excitement then gave Mary the strength to endure many years of harassment and humiliation from those around her.

Elizabeth, unlike the rest of their relatives, believed Mary because her maternity was also woven round with unusual events, see Luke 1:5ff. Notice how the motives of the Lord's Prayer repeat – theocentrism, sanctification or rather glorification of the name of God. Of course, you can in a moment think up a whole range of other psychologically unbelievable stories of Jesus' origin. Even if we can agree that this interpretation is not the only possible one, still we can agree with the statement that Mary certainly did not have an easy and enviable fate. God sometimes lays truly insane demands on people.

We cannot consider either Mary's relatives or today's unbelievers as wicked for not being able to accept this interpretation as their own; it is possible only when a person has fathomed Christ's exceptionality. It is thanks to him and to his deeds that it is possible to believe that even his conception took place not at all in a natural way, but in this way, unusually. Of course, also picture Saint Joseph. He had to face all the slander before he had even seen the exceptionality of the child that Mary was to give birth to. His mind had to also suffer stress that it difficult to imagine.

Joseph – the Adoptive Father

We have said that the question of Mary's virginity entirely justifiably provokes non-believers. How is it possible that a virgin conceived and gave birth to a child? The debate over whether it was, or was not the truth is without a doubt important, but notwithstanding, it is even more important for us to pose another question: *Did the information about a divine origin fundamentally shape Jesus' mind?* This question is important for everyone – whether they accept the dogma about Mary's virginity or not. Simply, we have to answer a series of related questions:

Did Christ consider God to be his biological father?

Did he have the mind of an adopted child?

How did this conviction shape his psyche?

Today it is popular to construe lusty fantasies about his relationship with Magdalene, but we are entirely overlooking (and this includes theologians), this adoptive aspect of his psyche, which was more formative for him than was his relationship to woman. It is clear why we are constantly mainly concerning ourselves with the question of his possible partner relationships. This is our way of perceiving the world. Today's age is one of temporary, makeshift, falling-apart-relationships, and so we see them everywhere and with everybody. Compared with this, the question of surrogate family care lies beyond the pale of society's interests. Politicians have been successfully ignoring it for entire decades. Thousands of children are kept in institutional children's homes that only deform them. We futilely await the implementation of professional foster care.

There are several places in the Gospels where this aspect of Christ's mind is clearly evident. For example, Mark 9:30:

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

Christ knows what he is talking about. In high politics there is a ceaseless struggle for power (see Joseph Flavius). Each person who gets a high position is suddenly the next one after God and behaves like a despot. The apostles did not dream of anything different. Christ thus wants to put a stop to this natural tendency in order to show them what is important in life. How is it possible at all that in the considerations of who is the greatest, Christ speaks about welcoming a child? Try to make yourself a survey, perhaps also to share among Christians and you will see how many of them mention welcoming a child as a sign of a person's greatness.

When Jesus takes the child in his arms and speaks about welcoming, he is coming from his personal experience. He speaks about his foster father – Joseph. He truly faced a great dilemma in whether or not he should take in the pregnant Mary. It is truly a miracle that Christ did not develop the syndrome of the rejected, unwanted child. Matthew describes this event in a few lines (Matt 1:18):

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, who was a righteous man, was unwilling to expose her to public disgrace so he planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, 'God is with us.'" When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

For every guy it is incomprehensible that his fiancée would come to him saying: "See, Joey, I had an apparition of an angel come to me, saying that, like, I'm gonna conceive from the Holy Spirit. Yeah, and get this, now I'm like kinda pregnant. But I didn't do anything with any guy. Cross my heart." This is just as absurd today as it was two thousand years ago. What's more, their society was governed by an inflexible patriarchy. Statements of the type: "A woman can decide about the life in her body the way she wants" would be for these people only a random cluster of letters.

The instinctively pious thought would be that Saint Joseph reacted to this information inhibitionally, impassively. Theoretically it is possible, but an activation reaction was much more likely, and from a psychological point of view even more natural.

Thus the entirely innocent looking “she was found to be with child” in reality probably meant: Mary returned from Elizabeth four months later. Even the dimmest folks around begin to notice that her belly is starting to get rounder. It makes absolutely no difference whether she told her news to Joseph herself, or whether someone else did. In any case, there would have followed an outburst of rage, strong emotions, subsequent hearing her out, and possibly even determination of Mary’s virginity with witnesses as the Torah commands. Even if it had been satisfactorily proven that she was a virgin, sure enough the follow-up reasoning looks like this: “Well, that’s nice that she’s still a virgin, but she’s pregnant all the same! She just isn’t going to be my wife... What should I do with her? Should I send her away? And let the one she’s got that child with take care of her!”

Surely her relatives went to her and said: “Such a disgrace you have set up for our family...” Even Joseph would have had to face reproaches of the type: “Joey, don’t tell me that you believe those fables of her about the angels. What were you, dropped on your head?” In short, it is not possible to reasonably expect that those around them willingly accept the unwanted child as well as the angel story, which had no other testimony than what Mary herself had said.

Saint Joseph would have had to, as a matter of course, gone through all the stages of grief from the loss of his ideas about his wife, with whom he had planned his life to be utterly different. Stories from this period would have had to been preserved in family tales that Jesus was hearing in his childhood. He would have been well aware of what it meant for Saint Joseph who welcomed the boy as his own. He knew what it meant to internally welcome an unwanted or illegitimate child, and that he did so when there was nothing much unusual about the child, who represented only the disgrace of the family and the cuckoldry of his father.

Suppose a man marries a woman, but after going in to her, he dislikes her and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, "I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity." The father of the young woman and her mother shall then submit the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

The father of the young woman shall say to the elders: "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man but he dislikes her; now he has made up charges against her, saying, 'I did not find evidence of your daughter's virginity.' But here is the evidence of my daughter's virginity." Then they shall spread out the cloth before the elders of the town. The elders of that town shall take the man and punish him; they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver (which they shall give to the young woman's father) because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

How Virginity was Proven According to the Torah

The Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, represents the foundation of Jewish law. It treats life’s basic questions, and therefore also the question of how to proceed in marital disputes. This is the way women’s virginity was proven (Deut 22:13-21). The bloodied garment after the first intercourse served as proof of virginity. Of course, Mary did not have to go through this procedure. On the one hand, in Christ’s time many commandments were not so strictly kept (see the stoning of the adulteress John 8:1-11), and on the other hand if Saint Joseph had not had intercourse with her, there would have been nothing to show. It is, however, likely that Mary’s virginity was proven in some other similar way, for example, by examination of her genitals. The phrase “dismiss her quietly” in Joseph’s story likewise does not look so innocent, for we see that to dismiss her publicly would have meant condemning her to death by stoning. Just by the by, the verb *heuriskein* and its conjugation *eurethe* (found to be) is identical in Septuagint with the one that Saint Luke used in his description of Mary’s motherhood. We are therefore looking at something relating to the legal speech of the era.

We have already mentioned Joseph’s dream where the Angel of the Lord says: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Here it does not matter one bit whether we are looking at the apparition of a supernatural being or only a fantasy figure in his dream. In the given situation, this sentence reflects the logical deliberations that any reasonable-thinking Jew would have had to go through, considering the state of knowledge at that time.

Let's assume that an examination of Mary's inviolate genitals had taken place, and it was proven that she was a virgin; that is, that she had not had sexual intercourse with any man. Based on this fact that had been proven from the kind of biological observation that was possible to carry out at that time, every man would have come to the conclusion: "If her pregnancy did not arise from sin, from harlotry, then there exists only one imaginable manner in which a woman could get into that condition without a man's semen, and that is through the intervention of God himself." The words of the angel are only a theological elaboration upon this thought: "If something comes from God, then I do not have to be afraid to accept it. Additionally, if God should engage himself so powerfully, and in such a strange manner in worldly events, he has to have a solid reason for it. Thus, this child is a priori destined to great deeds, perhaps to saving people from their sins. Therefore, it is logical for him to have an appropriate name: "The Lord is salvation." That name is Jehoshua, Jeshua, Jozue, Jesus.

Saint Joseph and Relatives

Joseph clearly believed Mary. He was an older man, probably a distinguished member of the local community, and as the head of the family, he protected the child with such strange origins against those around them. This was one of his main tasks. The Bible records his flight to Egypt from Herod. He must have gotten the finances for such a long family journey from "wise men from the East" (Matt 2:1), but perhaps much more important was the protection Joseph provided Jesus against their closest relatives. Saint Joseph died sometime after Jesus' puberty, and before his public appearances.

I understand that this will outrage believers, but it is absurd to assume that everyone around them approached Jesus' family with some kind of a priori respect. Joseph was certainly not addressed as: "Saint Joseph, patron of foster parents", but certainly with the ordinary nickname of Jossile - Joe, Joey. They didn't say to Jesus Jehoshua, but Jesua. And similarly, Mary was not venerated as the Mother of God, but was treated more in this manner: "Hey Mare, shut up and shake a leg. You should be glad that we didn't have you stoned to death." This was without a doubt the argument anyone would use to get her to keep quiet whether or not she was right. In short, the inexplicable maternity made her a universal punching doll. It is no wonder that she mentally succumbed to them when they attacked her. She didn't have a choice. Her livelihood depended upon them.



The Crucified Donkey

This graffiti was created after the year 200 AD and was found in 1856 on the walls of the Imperial Palace in Rome. The inscription under the crucified ass reads: "Alexamenos worships his god. (Alexamenos sebetei theon)" From the point of view of the Christian message it is an entirely irrelevant debate, but despite that, this old picture is one of the indirect proofs that Jesus was crucified on a cross with a transverse beam rather than on a simple post, which was another form of the same manner of execution. (The New Testament, just like Joseph Flavius, to wit uses the Greek word 'stauros' - post.) In any case, we see that Jesus was mocked not only in his adulthood and after his death, but first and foremost as a small child.

Even the nearly-grown Jesus was formed by his family's efforts to free themselves from dependency on relatives. We find only a reactive formation of these efforts – wandering radicalism (wanderradikalismus, Ryšková in press). For example, this verbal aggression (Luke 9:59-60):

To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

The Gospels record several clashes between the already-grown Jesus and his relatives, and the chilly relations between them (Mark 3:21; 31-35):

When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

The second clash clearly took place later (John 7:1-9):

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." (For not even his brothers believed in him.) Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. Go to the festival yourselves. I am not yet going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come." After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

Jesus sometimes unburdened himself about his feelings toward his relatives (Mark 6:4): "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he clearly had his relatives in mind in this passage as well (Matt 10:34-36):

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Jesus did not have respect among his relatives when he was 33. It is preposterous to assume that he had it when he was three years old. From the book of Acts of the Apostles however, a certain brother Jacob is known, who played an important role in the early church. Therefore, it seems that these strained relations were not with all of his relatives.

Christ's Adopted Sonhood

When Christ speaks of God as of his father, for example, in the Lord's Prayer, it is not a high-flown metaphor. Christ sought God as adopted children seek their biological parents. The heavenly kingdom is therefore literally and precisely just the home of his biological father.

Christ found out about the strange manner in which he was born before his twelfth year. In any case, at their home there was an agreement that they will not talk about the peculiar circumstances surrounding his birth with those around them. It is no wonder, for Mary already had egg on her head among her relatives. Besides this, try and imagine your own reaction if some acquaintances came to visit you and among other things discussed, they tossed in that their son had been born without sex.

This family agreement was clearly also extended to Christ's extraordinary abilities, which he manifested from time to time probably since early childhood. They took open-ended forms. There was an expectation: "Your hour will come, and we will get some sign telling us what more we have to do." How that hour arrived at last and the sign, which was rather different than what they had expected, are described in the passages about the events at Cana in Galilee. Nonetheless, a similar double life is not all that atypical even today's adoptive families. Just like with Jesus, this secret in the end almost always comes out, so it is recommended to tell everyone the truth about the child's origin from the beginning.

Christ probably had extraordinary abilities even before his public appearances in his thirties. His life had not been distinguished by any spectacular performances such as, for example, the resurrection of Lazarus. It was evidently foreseeing the future or reading thoughts, changing water into wine, possibly healing acts with the aid of mud, spit, or other aids. Extraordinary abilities in their dazzling form fully manifested in his adulthood.

Because Saint Joseph adopted him, Jesus acquired his genealogy. This was a pretty boring compendium of names, but it represented the identification documents of that era, the civic identity that

every adult had to know. Jesus was officially Joseph's son, and he was the son of Eli, who was the son of Matthat, who was the son of Levi, who was the son of Melchi, and so on, all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23).

With this identity he also gains adopted, genetically unrelated siblings, because according to some sources, it is assumed that Saint Joseph had children from a previous marriage. Because Jesus was therefore the baby of the family, he also received the ordinary name of Jesus, and not a royal name like David, Jacob, or Joseph, which the first-born or an earlier-born son would usually receive.

If we want to comprehend Christ's mind and his relationship to God, we have to truly and thoroughly know the mentality of adopted children. Christ is the (unfortunately, unofficial) patron of all adopted children.

The Question of Jesus' Blood Siblings

There have been endless nit-picking debates about whether Mary did or did not have any other children. These, by contrast, with the ones previously mentioned, would have been Jesus' half-siblings, because they did not have the same father, but only the same mother. All the old churches that lean on the tradition that reaches back to the Apostles (Catholics, and the Orthodox and Coptic Churches) claim that Mary did not have other children than Christ, and that she also did not have any sexual relations with Joseph. More recent debates on the issue have cast doubt on the older testimonies, mainly based on the fact that in the Gospels there is explicit mention of his brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3): "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

But in these languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, etc.) the true word that means brother/sister also indicates relatives, or even a close friend. See, for example (Matt 18:21–22):

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy times seven times."

Tresmontant (1996) convincingly argues that the Gospels are altogether mechanical, literal and therefore also clumsy translation from the Hebrew notes taken by the apostles cum Evangelists into Greek. At that time, educated Jews were writing in Hebrew. Even here, in today's Czech Republic, three hundred years ago educated people wrote in German or in Latin even though they may have spoken Czech at home with their parents. The Jews already had a well-established tradition in translating their Holy Scriptures dating perhaps back to the second century before Christ – the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek Septuagint. According to Tresmontant, the New Testament was also created using the same translating technique. He supports his claim with so-called calques. A calque is a slavish translation from one language into another. Czech is, thanks to Jungman, also full of calques from German.

For example, the Czech "představit" is a calque of the German "vorstellen", and it has two meanings "to imagine st." or "to introduce sb. to sb.". This was also adopted into Slovak from the Czech, but besides this line of development we do not find "stand in front" in any other language – say the Russians have the words predstavljat - poznakomit sja, English speakers have imagine - introduce," etc.

Tresmontant's logic is simple. If a German reader came upon the sentence: "Ich fuelle mich unter dem Hund," or an English reader encountered: "I feel myself under a dog" it is clear to her that this is not an original German or English text but a literal translation of the Czech: "Cítím se pod psa." A German or English person would never utter this phrase. In the same way, we find the phrase in the Greek text of the New Testament "A man dies and did not leave sperm" (Mark 12:19), it is clear that this is a slavish translation from the Hebrew where the translators from Hebrew did not even try to find a phrase with equivalent meaning. Neither a Czech nor a native speaker of Greek uses the phrase "leave sperm" to mean "have offspring."

In this sense it is necessary to interpret the Greek text of the New Testament. If we find the word "brother" in the text, we have to seek the meaning of the original Hebrew "ach" and not the Greek "adelphos" - which would only lead us into error. If the Hebrew original of the New Testament meant a brother who is a blood relation, it would have used the Hebrew phrase "brother, son of my father" (see, for example, Judg 8:19) and we find this phrase literally translated into Greek words. Just like it is in Septuaginta: "Let him be cursed who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his

mother.’ And all the people say: ‘Amen.’” In Czech we would also normally say: “Let him be cursed who sleeps with his blood sister.” Notice that even the Czech translator does not look for a Czech equivalent in meaning for the Hebrew phrase. So what about the fact that in the New Testament we do not find the phrase “brother, son of my [his] father”?

The New Testament was not burdened with the question of blood siblings of Jesus. The Evangelists wanted to spread the good tidings. Therefore, Matthew writes: “He had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.” Matthew wants to emphasize above all that Jesus certainly is not a child of Joseph nor of anyone else than God himself. It is a mistake to infer something more from this phrase than what Matthew had in mind.

The oldest church tradition has the idea that Joseph took Mary as the Mother of God’s son and he also treated her accordingly – “one does not have intercourse in God’s temple”. In the temple we see that he approached her and her son with a certain reserved detachment, when they found the twelve-year-old Jesus who had been lost. Joseph let Mary handle the situation, and he treats Jesus as carefully as he would an adult. Thus, his respect for the House of God is one reasonable interpretation of the modest facts that we have at our disposal, and it is additionally supported by tradition.

On the other hand, the angel said to Joseph: “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.” If God himself gives Mary to Joseph as his wife, why would he be afraid to sleep with her? The expression “unconsummated marriage” had to make about as much sense to Jewish ears at that time as “emancipated woman” - why in the world would a man take a wife if he was not going to sleep with her? They have their union confirmed and approved by God himself, so why would they morally forbid themselves to have a sex life?

Both of these views can be brought together. Joseph was no spring chicken, and he already had many children. In a man’s older years erectile dysfunction is no rarity. Therefore, it is possible that he did not give forbid himself to have sex with Mary, but he was no longer able to do the deed. For God does not protect his faithful from diseases and suffering, so why should Joseph have been an exception?

In any case, I consider as most important the fact that the New Testament ignores the existence or nonexistence of Jesus’ blood siblings. It is clearly a question of the same importance as of whether Jesus had blood type O or shoe size 9. Because textual analysis will not get us very far in answering these questions it is better for us today to accept the testimony of the old churches rather than believe in ideas of more recent provenance.

This marginal question does, however, have one serious theological complication. It is assumed that Mary was conceived without hereditary sin. So how was it with her children? They would then be born without hereditary sin from her, or with hereditary sin from their prospective fathers? The term “to be born without hereditary sin” thus means to be immortal, and we will get back to that later.

Seeking the Identity of the Adopted Child

One typical characteristic of adopted children is seeking their identity and their biological parents. If Christ considered himself to be the child of God, he must have posed himself the question typical for children who do not know their biological fathers. He looked at his image in water and said to himself something like: “What do I have from Mama, and what do I have from Papa? I have the curly hair from my Mama, but this nose might my Papa’s...” According to the Jews, the soul is in the blood, so Christ would have had to be convinced that his blood is somehow connected with God. If we know adopted children ourselves, we are also going to understand the sentences (John 14:1-11), that he said before his death:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves."

These are not sentences that Christ understood metaphorically. They are just logical conclusions derived from Jesus' own realization: I am not the child of a human father. When, for example, people look at my daughter, they say "Just like her daddy..." In just the same way, when someone looked at Christ – physically or spiritually, they would have to see God, his biological father. Even with Jesus, the sentence was true: "Just like his daddy..."



Me in 1968 and My Daughter in 2006

It is not only the psychological identity of biological children that rests upon physical resemblance, but also paternal identity. She looks like me – she is my child. This statement also works the other way: if I am the Son of God, I have to see His resemblance in myself. We can also take the phrase Kingdom of God just as literally. This is, for Jesus, the same thing as the courtyard of his biological father. The effort he put into seeking this yard enables us to understand how he came to this kind of consideration (Luke 17:20–21):

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you." (Or within you)

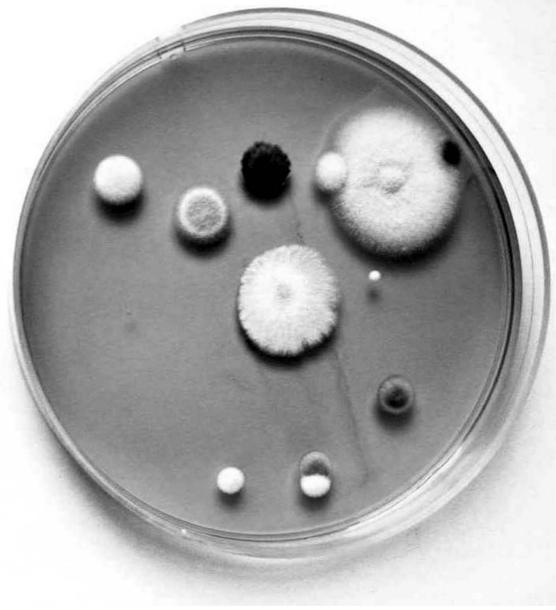
The shift from the idea of a visible kingdom to an invisible one is proof of the long and deep abstraction which had to have been driven by a very strong motivation. From the psychological point of view it is a reactive formation. Something that developed as a defense or reaction to perceptible frustration. This frustration is the mind of the adopted child who seeks his biological father.

The word biology comes to us from the beginning of the 19th century (Treviranus and Lamarck). Not long afterward, in 1826, Karl Ernst von Baer discovers the female egg in mammals. Therefore Jesus could not have used the expression biological father himself, nor would he have known about the genetic contribution of mothers. In the ancient world women were viewed as a kind of Petri dish upon which, a man deposits his seed through a pipette. It then grows and is born. The woman is thus a source of nutrients, a kind of arable land, upon which the man's child grows.

Jesus had to have, within the confines of the knowledge of his era, considered things this way: "If Mama didn't do anything with any man, where would that germ of life have come from? That seed had to have been made by God, even if He is only a spirit." Jesus would thus not have objected to the use of the modern expression of "biological father" for his heavenly Father.

In recent times it is in vogue to consider miracles rather as signs, or as a violation of the natural way the world works. However, if we can admit the premise to our discussion that if Mary's motherhood was not some peculiar form of parthenogenesis or hermaphroditism, it is then possible from a biological point

of view to trace out a legitimate line of inquiry, but looking at it through Jesus' mind, this is an utter anachronism. It is almost certain that he did not look upon the matter this way.



A Petri dish with wort agar and several mold spores (www.plisne.com)

In the ancient world they viewed women as a kind of Petri dish filled with wort agar. Although it is prepared to nourish living cells it is, of itself, something utterly without life. It is only when a man comes along - like a biologist with his pipette -and introduces his life-giving seeds into the woman that life can appear. If Jesus perceived his mother this way then he could not have perceived God in any other way than as his biological father. Where else could the germ of life that appeared in the woman have come from?

Mary and Chimerism

Basing the primary explanation for this phenomenon within the purview of known or hitherto unknown laws of nature does not exclude God's involvement or intentions. When a pianist plays her instrument she does not violate the laws of nature, though she is able to utterly transcend them. By analogy, if God plays his instrument – the world - with us, he does not necessarily have to violate the natural laws that he himself created. Nonetheless, by his actions he plays a concert in this world that greatly transcends natural laws.

One part of this show could be chimerism (Černý Jan: Krize identity<*** někde seženu přesnějši citaci>). If, after conception has taken place, the embryonic cells of a pair of twins are combined, one child is born with the genetic material of two people. For example, there is a well-known case of chimerism where one woman and her husband actually conceived three children whom she gave birth to, but she was genetically only the mother of one of them. The other two came from the ovary that had belonged to their unborn sister. However, if the cells of a sister and a brother are combined, then it can happen that an individual is born who has both testes and also ovaries with eggs. There is also the famous instance of a boy from Edinburgh who in this way gained a normal set of ovaries from his sister, and he is said to not be a unique case (Strain et al. 1998).



Mosaicism, and the Chimera Called "Geep"

The English neologism "geep" originated as a composite of the words goat and sheep. This mosaic was artificially created by combining the cells of two embryos – of a goat and a sheep – under a microscope. On the body of the geep you can see two distinct coat types. In some places that of a sheep, in others of a goat.

Let us return to the thought we were holding before and imagine that Mary was biologically a chimera who had fully developed female reproductive organs and also, somewhere inside her body the testes of her unborn brother. If a chimera of this type grows to puberty, hormones will activate either simultaneously or sequentially activate the functions of both sets of sex organs, so that in Mary's case the testes of her unborn brother could have fertilized an egg from her ovaries.

True, this is a pretty wild flight of fancy, and of course we do not have any argument that has to convince us that this is the way it happened. In any case, on the basis of this example I only want to demonstrate an example of what kind of things are possible from a purely biological point of view, and where the melodies heard in God's concert may come from. In short, Mary's possible chimerism is only one of the possible illustrations of God's virtuosity.



Mosaicism in People and Blaschko's Lines

Mosaicism also spontaneously appears in people. The man in the illustration is a mosaic of two half brothers – one white and one mulatto, who merged into one another in their mother's womb. Their mother had therefore had, in quick succession, intercourse with a white man and a black man. If she had had intercourse only with white men or a white man the Blaschko's lines would not be visible in normal light, and thus no one would know that this individual is a chimera. It would only be apparent if someone shone an ultraviolet lamp on him. If Mary had been a chimera, not only would it not have been visible, but none of her contemporaries would have been able to guess what such lines mean. For how many readers of this book wouldn't have guessed the same thing before reading these line, and we are 2000 years further along.

Believers love miracles, and they longingly seek out all kinds of exceptional events. However, despite this, it seems that our heavenly Father seems to love the natural laws that he created more than he loves miracles. It is undeniable that he devotes more energy to bacteria, leaves on trees, and clouds than he does to miracles for entertaining or astonishing believers. From what we know of the distinctive character of our heavenly Father, we can therefore assume that he would have preferred to use some kind of atypical process that is unknown to us than to create a miracle – an act which does amaze us people, but which is in direct contradiction with the entirety of his production that preceded it.

Family Narratives that Formed Jesus

A formative significance for Jesus' identity had clearly, the conversation with the angel that his mother Mary repeatedly retold him when Jesus, like every child, asked her about the circumstances surrounding his birth (see above, Luke 1:26–46). This narration was certainly originally a part of the lore of family narratives – something that the two families (Jesus' and John the Baptist's) sometimes repeated, that they analyzed and returned to when the right occasion presented itself (Duke, Fivush, Lazarus, Bohanek 2003). This kind of tale is a generator of an infinite number of questions that have no answers: "Who or what is the 'Holy Spirit'?" What am I to imagine when I think of it?"

Adopted children need to build their identity. They ask anyone who ever knew them for information about their parents; for example, they will approach their parents' old classmates or friends. These witnesses in Christ's case were the Pharisees and scribes who were continuously studying the Word and

who were generally considered as confidential familiars of God. It is now wonder that it is precisely with these men that Christ began drinking in everything they were able to tell him about his father. About this proclivity are even messages in the second chapter of the Gospel of Saint Luke (Luke 2:40–52):

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety. He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's interests?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in divine and human favor.

Jesus already at twelve years of age did not consider Joseph to be his biological father; otherwise his answer would not have made sense. This event took place in his twelfth or thirteenth year, because at this age he reached the age of adulthood and went through the initiatory rite of bar mitzvah, literally “son of the commandment”. Although this rite did not achieve its definitive form until the Middle Ages, it is documented from earlier periods (Divecký, 2005; Bauman, 2001).

It is difficult to say whether he went through it before his visit to the temple or during it, but in any case it was a turning point when he could, for example, to pronounce blessings, join in learned debates and he could ask questions and controvert. From his answers to his parents, it follows that he nimbly made use of this recently-earned right in order to help his Father with something. Of course we do not know what question he was resolving on his Father's behalf in his debates with the Pharisees and scribes. However, it had to be something that he considered to be more important than the consideration that by doing so he might hurt his parents.

In the previous chapter I mentioned how Jesus, according to his genealogy, became a descendent of David. Internally, he did not consider himself to be so, for after all, he was the child of God himself. This is the only way we can explain his deliberations on this theme (Matt 22:41 ff):

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ,What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?'

They said to him, the son of David.'

He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet' '? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?'

No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

If he had only wanted to proclaim himself as the Messiah, he would have pushed his origin from David's line. That was the period's expectation for the Messiah. But here he, on his own initiative he develops the thought that the Messiah actually is not the son of David. Why would he ever want to say: the Messiah is not David's son?

The same logic also applies for potential forgers of that era. If someone were to have set up for himself the task of tracing Jesus' origin through St. Joseph with David all the way back to Adam, why would he suddenly brush all of his hard work off the table with the thought that the Messiah actually isn't David's son? It is precisely the absurdity of this kind of action that testifies to us of the authenticity of the Gospels and, what's more, we can elegantly explain it with the help of the model of the adopted child's mind.

Often in the Holy Writings we find the observation that “They did not understand his word.” This also partially indicates the relatively large gap between Christ and his parents and disciples. He surely lived a great deal of the time in his own world which the others often did not understand (John 16:12): “I still

have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” His deliberations greatly exceeded that which his contemporaries usually engaged with. This is why he so fascinated his disciples so that they said to him “You have the word of eternal life.” Unfortunately, this coin has another side – they were often unable to record what was going through his head, and he often spoke to them in words that they were incapable of understanding.

Family narratives evinced themselves in Jesus’ adulthood, and again in a manner that is typical for adopted children. They go back to past places in order to consolidate their personal identities. For example, one woman sent me the following e-mail:

Peter is an adopted boy. His adoptive mother couldn't put up with his frequent predicaments (debts, slot machines) and she kicked him out of the house, so now he lives in a rented studio apartment and works as a cook. Not long ago he won \$2000 in a roulette game and bought himself a used car, and although he does not have a driver's license, he still manages to get around in it. I went over there not long ago and ran into Peter. I asked him how he is doing and whether he has gotten a driver's license yet. He said that he didn't but that he is doing just fine with his driving and he even went to visit his family in Nashville. "What do you mean, his family in Nashville?" I asked. I received an answer that until his third year he had lived with his family, until they put him into a children's home and that he even remembers the building where they lived, so he drove there to visit. And if I want, he will show me photos. He went to the car and brought back several black and white photos in which he was a baby in his receiving blanket with his biological mother, next to birthday cakes, with his grandmother and grandfather, with his aunt...

Identity Seeking in the Adopted Adolescent

Adopted children at the threshold of adulthood enjoy cruising by landmarks of family narratives (Osborn 2001). From a few fragmentary memories and photographs they are even able to reconstruct a more or less accurate picture of their childhood. They keep returning to it in their thoughts and they elaborate upon it in their fantasies.

Until his adulthood Jesus waited for his call from God, but it did not come in the way he expected. First his expectation was shattered at the wedding at Cana of Galilee, but that was only the beginning. Then, of course, Jesus decided to seek his cousin – John the Baptist. If Christians are walking in Jesus’ footsteps, then Jesus himself, as an adopted child, is walking along the path of his family narratives. Once again he is mulling over the people and places that he remembers. Then he wandered about the wilderness and there we hear further echoes of these existential doubts: “Are you, or aren’t you the Son of God? Can this be tested in some way?”

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

He, however, replied: “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him’” Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him. (Matt 4:1-11).

Whether he was dealing with a genuine devil or only with massive doubts about his own identity, in any case the basic question is clear. Jesus’ Achilles heel, his most vulnerable spot was the question of his sonhood: “Whose son is he?” From the third temptation his diminished self-confidence and tendency to overcompensate for it are additionally evident: “Either you are God’s Son or else an illegitimate bastard.”

John the Baptist – Jesus’ Forerunner

John the Baptist was a forerunner of Christ. He already had an established “prophet’s trade license” in the period when Jesus was still seeking his identity. Just like Christ, he was not sure of himself and he gradually found inner confidence, and John also considered himself to be a forerunner of the Messiah, but he did not know for sure who he was to be. All of the Evangelists testify on John the Baptist, for example Mark (Mark 1:1-8ff):

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

To untie the thong of someone’s sandals is a sign of the deepest abasement. For example, “it was utterly commonplace that a pupil served his teacher, as illustrated in the saying “All work that is done by a slave for his master should be done by a pupil for his teacher – with the exception of untying his sandals (b Keth 96 a).” (Gnilka, 2001, p.148) John nor only did nor presume to be the Messiah’s disciple, he did not even presume to be his slave.

Family Stories, John the Baptist and Jesus’ Baptism

It is a difficult question, why Jesus let himself be baptized by John. I can offer you this explanation: from the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth (see the chapter Mary – God’s Slave) it followed that Elizabeth told her son John the Baptist the same family narratives that Jesus had been hearing.

If Elizabeth believed that Mary conceived the Messiah or Son of Man, John had to have heard the statements “Somewhere over there in Nazareth lives your cousin, and he was conceived of the Spirit. And therefore we assume that he should be the promised Messiah...” From this family philosophy, John entirely logically deduced that the Heavenly Kingdom was approaching and he began to prepare people for God’s judgment and the arrival of the Messiah. He had information from family stories about which those around them had no inkling. Therefore his answer here is logical (John 1:22-27):

Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.

Along with these events, after the wedding at Cana, Jesus furtively comes to John the Baptist to verify what he had been hearing in the family stories. He just observed John from afar – as he was preaching and how he baptized people. He himself is full of doubts whether he is truly the Son of God or not, whether his hour has come yet, and so on. Here he hears how John speaks of his divine inspiration:

"I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'”

This had to fill Jesus with great anxiety, for this statement represented a great challenge – a litmus paper for his identity – and it has a number of implications. Above all else, that his Father-God requires that he lets himself be baptized by John. But what if when he lets himself be baptized by John and no Spirit descends upon him? What if his father denies him? Then it will be entirely clear that he is an illegitimate bastard, that his mother had lied to him throughout his childhood, that Saint Joseph was a cuckold, and that all those who mocked him were right when they jibed at him throughout his childhood. (Here we are looking at the classic doubts of adopted children whose parents deny their true origins and tell them that they are their own.)

Even he is shaken by doubts and anxieties until he finally musters up enough strength to go find John. He recognizes his relative and reminisces on the family narratives he had heard from his parents. He says to him (Matt 3:13-17): "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus logically answered him, saying: "If it is to be I who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, we will not recognize it unless you baptize me. Besides, God wants you to baptize me or else he would not have given this instruction."

In other words, both of them go to the Jordan River to find out whether the instructions to John regarding the "one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" indicate the same person that both their mothers had told them about. As we know, the experiment proved it true and the three traditions came together – yes, the family narratives of both and John's prophetic instruction indicate one and the same person, who was Jesus (Luke 3:22):

And the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Notice that the voice assures mainly Jesus, but it must have also been quite an experience for John the Baptist. Since that time, whenever Jesus passed by, and repeatedly says (John 1:29ff):

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.'

With this, John considered his task to have been more or less completed (John 3:25–30):

Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and the Jews. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him."

John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

John the Baptist's Doubts

John also had to find his own way to Christ. What our parents say to us is one thing, but our own lives are always a little different. Jesus did not fit into traditional ideas about the Messiah. A year or two after Jesus' baptism John sees that everything will play out differently (Luke 7:18–28):

John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'"

Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'

From these words of praise it is clear that Jesus had a very close relationship with John the Baptist. And that is also why the news of John's execution grieved him so deeply. The two of them had not spent much time together, but rather mostly respected each other from a distance.

John knew well enough that he himself was not the sent Messiah, and that his task was to announce the Messiah's arrival. With Jesus, it was the other way around. Internally he considered himself as the

Son of God, and therefore he could not become, even for a short time, John's disciple, for it would have been absurd if he became John's disciple and began to anonymously announce his own arrival. Jesus did not deal with the question of whether he has to prepare people for his arrival or not, but whether he was truly the Son of God and when he was to emerge from anonymity.

Jesus also did not have a clear-cut relationship to John's baptism. He himself probably did not baptize others, but he did not prevent his disciples from continuing in the established practice that they had learned from John (John 4:1–2):

Now when the Lord learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John' - although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized - he left Judea and started back to Galilee.

I would also interpret the next quotation from the same Evangelist (John 3:22) in a similar way:

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized.

Thus, some of Jesus' disciples were recruited by John the Baptist (John 1:35–39):

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

The opposite case, where John would have become Jesus' disciple would have psychologically been possible. However, the growing friendship of these two personalities was interrupted by the execution of John the Baptist. In any case, Jesus did not entirely fit in with John the Baptist's notions of the Messiah, and that is why John was sending his disciples to him with the inquiry about his mission. John the Baptist had to have undergone a fairly large shift in his conceptions about the Messiah before he could become Jesus' disciple. This surely explains why these two relatives did not manage to draw closer during their brief lives

Christ's Introspection

There is one more dimension of Jesus' thought not recorded by his disciples – the path of introspection. Because he considered God to be his Father, it was entirely logically that he should also seek him within himself, in his own experiences and feelings. During these experiments with what he was going through he must have had to gradually discover his own extraordinary abilities, which he was able to, without a problem, make use of for his own material benefit (Matt 17:24ff):

When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes, he does.'

And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?'

When he said, 'From others,' Jesus said to him, 'Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me.'

I have posed the question of why the Gospels record hardly any mention of Jesus' introspection and have only one answer for it. The authors of the Gospels were, in short, children of their era. There is no ancient book that I know of that describes experiences within the body, for example, in a state of relaxation, or gives instructions on how to distinguish fantasy conceptions of God from the real God. Simply, ancient authors knew only a few emotions, and this delimits the extent not only of their introspection but also the vocabulary with which they would have been able to describe it.

The disciples lacked the perceptive apparatus needed to register what kind of thoughts and observations led Jesus to the conviction that: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." Despite this, we see that Christ carefully observed not only things in the world around him but also within his own body (Luke 8:43ff):

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped.

Then Jesus asked, 'Who touched me?'

When all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.'

But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.'

When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Jesus was able to rely on his introspection with such certainty that he resisted social pressures. It was just as reliable a source of information for him as his sight or hearing. We are also lacking the vocabulary to describe these inner experiences. We do know which phenomena are significant ones that are worth paying attention to, and which ones, on the other hand, we can ignore with a clear conscience.

This passage additionally indicates the limits of Jesus' gradual human recognition. He felt that someone had touched him, but he really did not know who it had been. Therefore, he asked the crowd. I do not believe this was an instance of so called indirect manipulation – that is, that he knew which woman touched him, but just played dumb in order to get her to “declare why she had touched him and how she was immediately healed.” We find proof that Jesus was capable of this kind of behavior when he satiated the multitudes (John 6:5-7):

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii [six months' wages] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

We may deduce three facts from this passage. The first is that Jesus had arrived at the developmental stage of the theory of mind: in other words, he was capable of what is termed mentalization, which we have already discussed in the chapter about Jesus' fallibility. Next, the disciples were capable of distinguishing when he was using this technique and when he was not; and finally, that he only made use of these abilities on rare occasions, not all the time.

Therefore, it is to no good end when Christians present this charade of playing the fool as something in line with his character, only because they would like to somehow reconcile it with their conviction that Jesus – as the second person of God, the Word – ought to have been omniscient. Simply put, as a human being he could not have been omniscient. To put a finer point on it, if God had poured his omniscience into that human mind it would have killed his humanity. Therefore, we must conclude that during Jesus' earthly life the divine nature had to have kept itself on a tight rein in order to support his healthy mental development and not to destroy his human nature. This is like a father who, when teaching his children, must hold back and exercise a great deal of patience with them so that they will have enough room to fully develop their skills. Ignorance, fumbling along, and endlessly seeking our fates are given in our nature and I dare say that these characteristic traits of our being are preserved even after our death or, perhaps, resurrection from death.

Once the disciples asked Christ why they could not cast out some evil spirit when he was able to do it with no problem. He told them: “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”

It is not, after all, important whether we have great faith, but how precise it is. We are also only able to repair a watch when we have precise tools, and we can only repair it with very precise and also very well thought-out and directed motions. This is the same way that, for example, couples' therapy can work – with great caution we have to analyze what is working badly in the couple and what is the logic of their relationship. From this insight we are then able to generate one or two functional recommendations. The unpremeditated “banzai approach” can only result in a disservice to clients.

Many people believe in all kinds of things – from UFOs through homeopathy and numerology. But faith is not about having the ability to blindly and uncritically believe in any old thing – that is not the faith that Jesus had in mind in his parable about the mustard seed. Only a little bit of faith is sufficient, but above all, it has to be the right kind and be precise – to carefully distinguish what we believe and what we do not. (Fide, sed cui fidas, vide - Trust, but look at whom you are trusting!) Therefore, in

principle I resonate more with those nonbelievers of good will who do not believe out of caution than with those who uncritically accept and then the very next moment reject any kind of hypothesis.

Jesus had a precise faith, because he dedicated a great part of his day to prayer and to careful observation of both his surroundings and his own interior, for example (Mark 1:35–37):

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you..."

We can see his observation of his surroundings, in, for example, the following passage (Mark 12: 41–44):

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

There somewhere he found his strength, that mustard seed that enable his extraordinary deeds. This was not the popularly-conceived "power of will", but a precise will and precise faith. This precision and dispassionateness are in Christian terminology called holiness.

Jesus had to integrate the Jewish opinions of his times with his own conviction that he is the son of God himself. According to the ideas of the Jews, life is contained within one's blood. Therefore, when slaughtering an animal they are so meticulous about removing its blood in order for all its life, which belongs to God, to leave it. Even Jesus had to have been convinced that God somehow had to have put his life into his blood – in the same way that, according to the Jews, every father passes his life on to his son.

Thus, he did not feel closest to God in the Jerusalem temple the way other Jews did, but when he was looking into his own heart in introspection. Therefore, he devoted an incredible amount of time and energy to introspection (prayer). Introspection meant a return home for him – to his father, whose life was gurgling through his veins. Therefore he repeatedly says, and not metaphorically (J 14, 10):

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works."

So long as we are going to take these words figuratively we will not understand how a long time ago a man named Jesus was really thinking. We do not necessarily have to agree with his stream of thought, but whether or not we are believers we should know that this is the way he was thinking.

For this reason Jesus was presented with a huge problem. If he had gained access to his father through introspection, how was he to teach it to his disciples? How was he going to lead them to the same knowledge? They had their fathers elsewhere, and they were not going to seek them in their own hearts.

We understand the way Jesus finally cracked this nut when we recall what he said at the dinner before his death, on Maundy Thursday: He said to them then (Luke 22:15): "He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'" And then he did something unprecedented, for which he had long prepared himself. He transformed bread and wine into his body and blood and gave them to his disciples to eat.

Thus, he achieved the same effect. When his disciples are going to seek him at some time in the future, they are going to look for him where is closes to them – in their own bodies. Just like he sought his father – God – in his own body. In any case, Jesus' thoughts about the Eucharist underwent a long process of development about which we will talk about more at the end of the book.

Social Identity - The Son of Man

Jesus grew up outside the center of Jewish life in Galilee (Gelil ha-goyim literally means the land of Gentiles; NGS 1967, p. 302). He was thus shaped by people who in that time did not set the tone. We can surmise this not only because he was never presented as the member of any group, but also because of how he indicated himself. About himself he most often used the phrase: Son of Man.

In its original meaning this was probably simply a synonym for the word man, because Jews did not use surnames. A person's identity and name were derived from his or her genealogy: Chuck, the son of Joey. For example, Pontius Pilate asked the crowd whether he should set Jesus or Barabbas free.

Barabbas means *bar abbas*, that is, just the son of a father, perhaps as the leader of an anti-Roman rebellion in the years 132–135 after Christ was called bar Kochba, or the son of Kochba. Therefore, the phrase Son of Man originally meant just a person or anyone who has the nature of a human. We also recognize this kind of designation of one's nature in the Czech threat: "You are the son of death!" or in the English insult "Son of a bitch!"

Of course it is necessary to be aware of the origin of this phrase. It comes from the Hassidim. The plural Hassidim means, literally, the pious or righteous ones and originally it was a general designation of religiously and mystically engaged individuals who then gradually formed organized groups. They were in this way first mentioned in the period of the Maccabee revolt (approximately 164 years before Christ; Maccabees 2:42): "Then was assembled to them the congregation of the Assideans, the stoutest of Israel, every one that had a good will for the law."

The Hassidim were the authors of a great number of books, especially apocryphal ones. These include: the Ethiopian Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and the Book of Daniel (circa 200 B.C.; Daniel 7:13ff):

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man [a human being] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One [meaning the Lord] and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

This literature, just like the phrase Son of Man does not refer to the later Rabbinical, Pharisaic tradition, but rather to the Old Testament and apocryphal and apocalyptic branch of the Jewish religion. The fact that Jesus consistently identified with this appellation reveals to us which intellectual tradition shaped him. This tradition, in his era, did not represent any organized group, but rather a lifestyle and a way of thinking held by certain individuals who mostly lived on the fringes of society and there, away from the center of what was going on, they composed various apocalyptic texts.

Allow me one marginal comment: Apocalypses are a type of literary work, similar to the novel, short story, or perhaps essay. In the Bible and the ancient world, we have a great many of them, for example, the Book of Daniel. John's Apocalypse, which is at the end of the Bible, is only the best known of them. I recommend reading some scholarly literature about apocalypses (Schubert, 1994, Kovář, 1923), in order to understand what kind of people wrote them and what kind of lives they led. They were usually recluses who were waiting for the arrival of the Messiah, and with him, the end of the world any minute. Some kind of recluse or maverick oddball could have provided Jesus, a child born out of wedlock, an education with which he astonished those around him.

That Christ uses the fixed term Son of Man does not speak directly to the question of his humanity or divinity, but chiefly defines his religious identity, function or calling. "The Son of Man is the anticipated eschatological figure the Savior in the apocalypse. He is a heavenly being, abiding with God, existing alongside him even before the creation of the world." (Gnilka, 2001) <***mozna je v anglictine> It is a kind of apocalyptic parallel to the term Messiah, the anointed one. This was the means of inaugurating Jewish prophets and kings; that is, ceremonial induction to the office by anointing with oil, which has survived into our times as the visible sign of some of the sacraments (confirmation). The Son of Man, therefore had to be a personality that would definitively lead the Jews from bondage. This was Jesus' program manifesto, which he actually fulfilled his whole life long (1 Enoch 48:2–6 Careful, this book is apocryphal, you will not find it in the Bible):

In that hour was this Son of Man invoked before the Lord of spirits, and his name in the presence of the Ancient of days. Before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were formed, his name was invoked in the presence of the Lord of spirits.

A support shall he be for the righteous and the holy to lean upon, without falling; and he shall be the light of nations. He shall be the hope of those whose hearts are troubled.

All, who dwell on earth, shall fall down and worship before him; shall bless and glorify him, and sing praises to the name of the Lord of spirits. Therefore the Elect and the Concealed One existed in his presence, before the world was created, and for ever.

We can speculate on how influential this apocalyptic literature was based on the use of a number of the same metaphors. For an illustration, let us compare the answer to the Samaritan woman with the passage from the Book of Enoch, which immediately precedes the place that speaks of the Son of Man:

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4, 13-14 - a gospel from the Bible)

Versus

In that place I beheld a fountain of righteousness, which never failed, encircled by many springs of wisdom. Of these all the thirsty drank, and were filled with wisdom, having their habitation with the righteous, the elect, and the holy. (1 Enoch 48, 1 - an apocalyps not in the Bible)

If Jesus sought God – his father and his plans for him, he had to hungrily devour these passages. Then there follows a chain of associations from his own identity to the Eucharist – I am the fountain of righteousness, I am the drink - wine, which is the source of eternal life, I am the bread of life that came down from heaven, I am light of nations or world (Joh 8:12), etc.

In Jesus' era the Hassidim were polarized mainly into the two groups of Pharisees and Essenes, which represented one of the most important organized groups of religiously active Jews of that era. It is, however, likely that many pious Jews did not organize themselves or become politically engaged. I imagine that it is just these kinds of apolitical Hassidim or their descendants who educated and shaped Jesus before his public appearance. And moreover, why couldn't his mother Mary or his foster father, Saint Joseph also belong to this tradition?

It was generally the father who religiously led the whole Jewish extended family living in one house. Although "tehton" is translated as carpenter, but a more exact term that does justice to this profession is jack-of-all-trades. The content of his activities included not only work with wood and stone, but also the construction of dams, homes, bucket wheels, saddler and even works of art (Gnilka, 2001, p. 69). The tehton was at that time considered to be an educated man among tradesmen and it is not off the mark to suppose that Saint Joseph could have been that sought-after, self-made personality who planted the phrase Son of Man in Jesus' mind.

Christ, as fits with the Hasidic tradition, was apolitical and relatively open toward people of different nationalities (Matt 22:15):

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?'

But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.'

And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?'

They answered, 'The emperor's.'

Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'

When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

The essence of the pitfall they set up was that if he said that it is right to pay taxes he could be branded as an ally of the hated emperor. If he said that one should not pay taxes he would be against the emperor. Jesus, however, shows them the picture of the emperor on the coin, the denarius, with which the tax was paid. The Jews, meanwhile, had a prohibition against depicting a man or God. A true Jew should thus not even touch a denarius, let alone treasure it or hold on to it at home. That they themselves passed the coin to him incriminated them for idolatry. With this pronouncement, Jesus has said nothing about taxes, but has clearly declared his apoliticism – the Romans did not interest him.

It is interesting that the term "Son of Man" was used only by Christ and not his disciples. Additionally, Jesus speaks of himself in the third person, for example:

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." (Matt 17:9)

These terms are developmentally linked. Jesus, as an adopted child had already before puberty built up a belief that he is the Son of God. The phrase Son of Man, however, represented a specific function or task that he gradually took upon himself as an adult. With his behavior he actually defined the authority of such a function (healing, forgiving sins, being the Lord of the Sabbath). Just as this statement from a company's boss does not sound strange: "You should know that the company boss can issue an invoice,

so I will submit one now,” we should not wonder that Christ speaks of the Son of Man in the third person (Matt 9:2-7):

And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

Then some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.”

But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” -- he then said to the paralytic – “Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” And he stood up and went to his home.

This obsession with the appellation Son of Man was truly a truly specific trait of Jesus, even to the point of being an eccentricity. His disciples did not make the term their own either before or after his resurrection. Even Peter in his well known declaration answers (Matt 16:16): “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*” He does not say: “*You are the Son of Man, God’s Son.*”

It is possible to assume that already by Christ’s time the term Son of Man was perceived as an unusual archaism and it was a phrase without any more exact meaning; see the objection of the crowd (John 12:34):

“We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”

Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer that arose at the incentive of the disciples (Luke 11:1–4):

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us into temptation.”

At the time when the Gospels were written this was already a partially fixed text. Only in the Gospels are there two versions (Luke 11; Matt 6), but a third version has also been found among the Essenes (Pokorný, 1993). Even if the disciples knew this text by memory, it was rather a guideline for how to pray than a dictated text that they were to commit to memory and mindless repetition. It is just the above-mentioned Matt who brings further instructions from Christ on how to pray (Matt 6:7):

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

This approach sits well with me, because I prefer when a prayer is said in a straightforward and matter-in-fact spirit and does not include unnecessary sentimentality or devotion. The entire set of instructions for prayer is composed of two parts. The first is oriented to God and the success of his works, and the second toward human affairs. The most important thing, however, is that it begins by addressing God as the Father. Jesus was led to this by a direct line of reasoning – he considered God to be his biological father.

I don’t know about you, but I have never in my life said to my father: “Father,” it’s always just “Dad”. A similar diminutive form, Dad – *abba*, is how Jesus also begins his prayer.

Thus, although the commonly-used phrase “Our Father” is historically fixed, it represents an inaccurate translation of the Aramaic word *abba* – Dad. That is, Jewish boys addressed their fathers as *Mari* (Lord) and in his presence they spoke only with permission. They were permitted to say “*abba*” (Dad) only while playing, in a relaxed family atmosphere (NGS, 1967, p. 304).

In a few isolated cases we can find this kind of approach to God in Jewish literature and in the Bible. For example, Moses says (Deut 32:6):

Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

The Jews knew this passage, but they always took this term of address metaphorically, enthusiastically, and rather reproached Jesus that he is construing it literally (John 5:18):

“For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.”

Jesus thus shifted the meaning of this word far beyond the boundaries of the usage of that time. The motivation of an adopted child who is seeking his “Daddy” is one of the few that could explain this curious phenomenon.

However, it is thanks to this innovation that God is perceived within Christianity as a father who follows his own interests that massively exceed a child’s understanding. He just follows what the parent does, sometimes joining in, trying not to get in the way, trying to be helpful, and ultimately sometimes entirely legitimately looking after his own personal interests. The more he grows, the more he understands his parents but despite this at the present moment most of the parent’s purposes are entirely inaccessible to him. At his age, at the given level of personality development it is not possible to understand them.

Try, for example, to explain to a two-year-old child how to make a piggy appear on the wall using a mirror. The child understands material objects (cups, shoes) or actions (walking, sleeping), but to understand a beam of light is beyond her capacity. What she considers to be a piggy is only a reflection on the wall. When you same mirror shines on her leg it isn’t a piggy any more. (“Where is the piggy?” “It’s gone, went to bed...”) She does not understand that the reflection is related to the sun, or that when she holds the mirror she cannot run after the piggy at the same time. It is fascinating to observe children, and how in various ways they “don’t get” this or that. In any case, even we are in a similar situation with God. Our entire lives are filled with illusions: we are running after something that we can observe only when we ourselves do not move.

Prayer also begins by putting God’s interests first and then human interests fall into second place (theocentrism). Although people are often driven to prayer by their troubles – prayer as a kind of call for help – but before the traumatized person gets to this appeal (“deliver us from evil”) he asks the question of what God is looking after at this moment, what his will is, and examining the possibility of his own guilt, temptation, and so forth. With this, he can partially soothe himself, and partially view the whole situation with different eyes (see the chapter about the evolutionary advantage of religion). It is difficult to say what influence it would have had on the world if the structure of this prayer had been different. But in any case, in this form it at least somewhat compensates for the reactive egocentrism that arises as a natural defensive reaction to traumatizing life events.

When I want to explain what prayer means for me personally, begin by reminiscing on Professor Dunovský from the Children’s Crisis Center (DKC, in Czech). He worked there as a pediatrician. Like every doctor he was used to morning rounds and he brought this very useful practice into the DKC, which he founded. Every day at 7:30 we had to all be in attendance. Fairly quickly we went over the tasks for the day and the problems that each individual in the whole DKC had been working on. These meetings were not at all a waste of time. On the contrary, all the employees from the psychologists to the social workers through the lowliest assistants on civil military duty (that was me), were generally informed on what was going on in the institution, and how this or that problem had been solved, and why. It was an unbelievably practical experience with an educational system that doctors have been using since time immemorial. Daily prayer has a similar effect on me – simply, within the framework of a team I sort out my mind with my boss.

Besides this team-building function, which is perhaps its main one, prayer also represents in my life a certain kind of daily hygiene. Simply, in the morning or evening I am all broken into pieces and I need to somehow put myself back together or stretch myself back into shape. This regular adjustment takes place not only by means of principles of mental hygiene or relaxation techniques but also within the framework of prayer. I really have a need to regularly rid myself of the various tensions and anxieties that daily life brings. This is also the basis of success – with prayer I can consistently get quite a lot accomplished.

God’s Fatherhood

Not long ago I solved the case of a monk and priest who had fathered two children and did not take care of them. This is without doubt sad, but even worse is that the traditional rules of our church are such that our clerical representatives put pressure on this monk to either reject his children and not be in contact with them or else face a literal social execution – he would have to leave all of his positions, stop studying at the theological faculty, and simply stop all functions in the Church. At this price, there are very few priests who are able to step up for their children.

With this psychic blackmail the church forces priests to deny their children if they have them, and thus de facto deprive the children of their fathers. Because in this way my own church is neglecting children, it is worth a reminder of how God himself behaved toward his child:

- 1) **It was not rape.** He made an agreement beforehand with the woman and asked for her permission.
- 2) **It was not adultery.** He conceived him when Mary was still single – he did not wreck Saint Joseph’s marriage.
- 3) **It was not irresponsible parenthood.** He found his child a substitute father – Saint Joseph.
- 4) **It was not denied fatherhood.** He repeatedly and publicly claimed his child. From heaven a voice was heard: “You are my beloved Son.”
- 5) **When his child was born, he had such joy that he held a celebration** not only for the heavenly hosts, but also for the shepherds and he let even the wise men from the East know about it.

In comparison with these facts you probably get why I was truly angered when one bishop said regarding the child of another priest: “He has a mother and that’s enough for him.” God, fortunately, did not see it that way. He gladly acknowledged his son and provided him with a substitute father. Now this is how a real religion of life should look!

Jesus’ Aggression and Succession in Time

In psychology, phenomena are often labeled as aggression that lay people would not so label in ordinary speech. Aggression often means a growth in the activation of an organism, which is directed toward a frustrating obstacle. We see this growth in activation after Jesus finds out about the execution of John the Baptist. Then follows a display of his extraordinary abilities (walking on the sea or feeding the multitudes), that is to say, he was displaying an unusual activation of all of the abilities that should have, as it were, broken the powers that led to the death of his predecessor and which threatened him as well (Matt 14.).

Jesus is often portrayed as a pacifist, a person without any aggression. It is an imprecise picture. Yes, Christ for the most part refused violent solutions, but he would not have been a true human being if we could not observe tendencies to aggression in him. For this is an innate human quality. It would more accurate to state that we can observe a certain development, during which certainly various possibilities for how to solve the situation occur to Jesus, including, among others, power and aggression. At the same time, however, we see that he gradually overcomes these temptations. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her work with the dying described five characteristic stages that people go through when faced with a great loss. It is a de facto process of gaining a new identity, when, for example, a young and successful businessman has to gain the identity of a severely ill person with the expectation of impending death, or a boy in a fit of passion kills his girlfriend and has to recast his self-conception from the vision of a university graduate and future scholar to the identity of a despised murderer in prison. These stages of change of identity are:

- 1) **Acute shock** (denial; a man cuts off his finger with a buzz saw, and then in shock goes for the superglue and sticks his finger back on);
- 2) **Nonspecific defense** (growth in the organism’s activation, outbursts of aggression);
- 3) **Specific defense** (purposefully seeking a solution, bargaining, bribes, and the like);
- 4) **Reactive depression** (reaction to powerlessness);
- 5) **Acceptance of the new identity** (reconciliation).

This well known progression is typical, so long as at the beginning there is some kind of event that breaks with the previous reality – a car accident, notification of having a disease, a murder... However, the stages take a different form if the progression is gradual – slowly worsening conditions that lead to a disaster. We can imagine foster parents whose child that has been entrusted to them enters a tumultuous puberty and they gradually but utterly lose control over him. Another possibility is a partner relationship that is gradually falling apart:

- 1) **The stage of losing control over the process and trying out time-proven methods.** The parents in question try out a whole range of their “natural” disciplinary methods that they had usually employed to solve problems. They try being nice and being mean, they try patience, lecturing, grounding, and so on. At this stage they usually commit many unnecessary amateur mistakes that arise from underestimating the problem or possibly from a wrong diagnosis or lack of understanding for the crux of the problems.

- 2) **The stage of specific defenses.** When the tried-and-true methods chronically fail, the parents begin to set off on new paths. The condition for this being that they still have enough strength and have not fallen into despair. They begin to systematically and rationally seek solutions – they consult on their situation with experts, authorities or books, they discuss it with friends, and think about it at night when they can't sleep.
- 3) **The stage of nonspecific defenses** (growth in the activation of the organism, outbursts of aggression). If even the specific defenses do not achieve their goals, a person falls into despair. Outbursts of aggression such as excessive physical punishment or abuse appear as a defense reaction to this fall, which are things that these parents would “normally” never do. In a similar way, very sharp outbursts of domestic violence between spouses can unexpectedly appear. Looking back, the people involved do not even know where the sadism they found in themselves had come from. In short, desperate people do desperate deeds; therefore it is not possible to take behavior displayed in this state as proof of a person's inner essence. Thus, statements of this type are mistaken: “It was only then that I understood what kind of a monster she was!”
- 4) **Reactive depression** (reaction to powerlessness). In this period, among other things, there may take place a definitive *transfer of blame to the child or to the other partner*. The transfer of blame comes about through a simple mechanism. The person involved is in their own conscience convinced that they have done everything that was in their powers to protect the other person, yet they failed. Therefore they lose the feeling of subjective guilt. It is difficult to arrive at any other result for this equation than that the guilt lies on the side of the other party.
- 5) **Accepting the new identity** (reconciliation). The newly-found identity may, but does not have to be better than the one at the outset; for example, rejecting the child, transferring the blame to her, and returning her to the orphanage.

Christ's mental state developed exactly according to this scenario. His hope gradually died that the world was going to turn around. Jesus had his relationship to violent solutions well worked out even before his public appearance. He avoids aggression everywhere, so that is why his aggressive behavior in the temple is very conspicuous. Everything indicates that this the case of a particular situation that does not at all correspond to his character but rather to the third of the stages described above. The advantage of the stage of nonspecific defenses (aggression) is its striking flagrancy. Thanks to this phenomenon we can draw up the events in the Gospels as they occurred in time, one after the other, it is precisely according to these states that the third stage of aggression is somewhere in the middle (Mark 11:12ff):

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city. In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”

Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

This story captures Christ when he was in a really grumpy mood. We see his peaceable nature in contact with the Samaritans. His aggression is turned toward the fig tree, but not in the same form toward

the vendors in the temple courtyard. It is interesting that none of the high priests or scribes ever reproached him for this incident later, or at least we have no record of it. Perhaps they all knew that the commerce in these places exceeded reasonable bounds, but despite that, this extreme behavior of Christ's discomfited us because it contrasts with his gentleness in other situations. Let's then break it down into the stages mentioned above:

- 1) **The stage of trying out the usual methods** for Christ means still leading patient discussions with the Pharisees about the Sabbath or about healing (for example, as in Mark 2). When the usual methods of conviction chronically fail, Jesus seeks new ways.
- 2) **The stage of specific defenses.** Christ tries out how miracles will affect people. Here also belongs his reaction to the death of John the Baptist, which had crushed him, but despite this after it happened there followed aggressive-violent behavior, but above all else it is a fireworks spectacle of extraordinary deeds – walking on water, feeding the multitude (Matt 14) and the most sensational of these deeds, the epideictic resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). Debates around this act of feeding the multitudes have led to, among other things, shaping thoughts about the Eucharist (John 6:25ff). Jesus, however, gradually discovers that even miracles are altogether not doing much for him. He begins to anticipate that the one way left to him is the way of the cross.
- 3) **The stage of nonspecific defenses** represents a short period of rage relating to cursing the fig tree and driving the vendors out of the temple, preparing “swords” for self-defense. Here, however, Christ clearly runs up against his own conviction that the Son of Man did not come in order to annihilate people, but to save them, and therefore he puts aside his violent deeds. Just like all the other things he tried out, they did not achieve their goal. Then follows his descent into depression.
- 4) **Reactive depression** is a period when he copes with the vision of ineluctable death. It is possible to observe fantasies about his own defense (Luke 22:38).
The climax of this period and at the same time the beginning of the following stage is represented by his prayer at the garden in Gethsemane shortly before his arrest (Matt 26:38ff): “Then he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.’”
- 5) **Accepting the new identity** is in the word recorded by a change in rhetoric at the Gethsemane garden. It is a rebirth from saying “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want” to saying “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Between these two statements is a view of the sleeping and uncomprehending disciples (Matt 26:40). Of course what's at stake is not just these two sentences but the overall change in rhetoric, for example, his fantasy of self-defense entirely disappears (John 18:11): “Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?’”

Aggression and the Naïve Picture of the Believer

There exists something that could be called a naïve picture of the believer. This picture of a nice person clearly takes shape in prepubescent children's ideas of the “good child.” This child is never naughty, is nice to everyone, behaves utterly perfectly, does not use rough language and makes everyone around only happy. However ironically we may ridicule this altogether primitive ideal, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is formative – it gives many people the strength to help others (for example, many nuns, even if they are keeping this model of the model little girl, are able to provide great help to people who are ill in hospitals). And what is more important? That it is a developmental ideal. It corresponds to a particular, though not the last, stage of moral maturation. Every healthy person had to go through this stage at some time. Some people move on, others do not, but it is true that so long as we criticize this ideal of the “good boy and model girl” we ourselves have gotten no farther than the stage of adolescent defiance, which is only the following point on the scale of moral development.

What is wrong with this ideal? It develops as an attempt to live according to a certain set of principles that are given in advance. There is nothing wrong with this except that it is not a realizable ideal. Human life is not predictable enough that just a few principles will suffice for solving all the situations that come up. In the same way, it is inevitable that a person will get into situations that can be resolved only by increasing their efforts. This sometimes takes the form of offensive aggression. At other times coping requires the emotions that are generated by difficult tasks and losses.

In the case of Jesus' aggression in the third stage it is not difficult to guess what the burden was whose result was that Christ reacts in such a drastic, and for him, unaccustomed manner. It is the vision of an impending and inexorable death. Christ knew the Scriptures, he also knew what had been written about the Messiah, so he had to reconcile himself with the thought that it was expressly for him that this painful fate had been written for him. From the beginning we saw that he did not want to get into this kind of enterprise. At first he tries gently, then more brusquely, but he sees on all sides that his attempts at conveying several elementary ideas is dashing up against the incomprehension not only of his opponents, but all the worse, even of his own disciples. This is also illustrated by the passage where the disciples are arguing among themselves along the way about who among them is the greatest (Mark 9:30).

Only with difficulty can we imagine the mind of someone who is worried about his own neck and who at the same time sees that his disciples are completely out of touch and they do not understand the fundamental basis of his message. Other than cases of the deepest depression, unbearable pain, reactions to acute stress and similar pathological stages, people do not long for death, and the thought of it terrifies them. And so it must have also been in the above-mentioned case of the fig tree and Christ's behavior in this period.

Perhaps the questions have occurred to you of why this didn't occur to his disciples, and why they didn't describe this in more detail. It is necessary to be aware that we have only mediated tales about Christ. The story is detailed to the extent to which the Gospel writers were able to understand Christ's mind. We can demonstrate this to ourselves with children's descriptions of the behavior of adults. A child is not able to comprehend the world and thinking of parents. When he describes some events it is always at the level of the mental development he has reached. It was no different for the Gospel writer and Apostles. Nobody can get past their own shadow.

After the experience with the resurrected Christ they took a giant step forward, but they were still not able to reach his level. Nor did they become psychologists, they did not know the developmental stages for coping with a great loss, and so they were not able to retroactively identify them in Christ's behavior. They recorded what they say, but they did not take note of other circumstances – what came before and after. Similarly, children also when they grow up are not able to entirely reconstruct and identify what was going on in their parents' minds when they went through their crises. Maybe in adulthood they will also have enough empathy but they are lacking the memories – as children they did not pay attention to many details and did not commit them to memory. Maybe this seems to you like so much psychological philosophizing, but it is interesting that Christ was taking it into account (John 16:12–13):

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

This is also related to Christ's other conscious plan: to lay his teachings entirely on the shoulders of his disciples, however weak, limited, or big-mouthed they are. Christ needed for his disciples to begin thinking the way he did, but for the time being, he saw that they were utterly dependent upon him. This applies to both his distant as well as his close followers. He reprimands the nameless crowds for following him for selfish reasons (John 6:26):

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

Then he warns his close disciples that their big talk about devotion is only their own illusion which they themselves would like to believe in (Mark 14:27ff):

And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

Here we find one of the main reasons why Christ had to gradually reconcile himself with the thought of the inevitability of his death. If he did not die, his disciples would not have gone past the developmental stage of the mindless follower of a great master. He even found a parable for this (John 12:24):

“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

To depict Jesus as a person of merely crude aggression would mean degrading his human nature. A proper human being is not a person without aggression, but one who can control his aggression himself. Here also falls the case of his refusal to bring fire down upon a Samaritan village, from which he along with his disciples had been driven out in probably a most humiliating manner. (Luke 9:54–56). What is interesting is the change that took place in Jesus after his prayer in the Gethsemane garden. Before it, he urged the disciples to keep swords with them. Afterward, we hear a completely different rhetoric (Luke 22:49–51):

When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.

In Matt 26:52-54 the story continues, differently:

Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?”

So something works in a similar way with aggression as with miracles. Just like Christ gradually understood that his extraordinary abilities are practically useless and that they do not have the power to convince the Jews of his mission, he also gradually realizes that even violent reactions do not accomplish the goal he had in mind. Everyone who wants to consider themselves Christians have to go through both processes. It is not that one has to refuse aggression, but to free oneself from the vain desires for miraculous omnipotence.

The goal is to utilize it, and in the case of aggression, also to control one’s natural tendencies and abilities that are bestowed in the nature of each one of us. It is not becoming an angelic superman, or having supernatural abilities, nor of losing one’s selfhood, ceasing to be oneself or dissolving one’s identity.

A Christian strives to be a perfect; that is, a holy person and not to metamorphose into another kind of being. Each one seeks and puts the finishing touches on their identities with these talents that were given to him or her. In this we follow our Lord, who himself led a complicated search for his own identity as God’s Son and who did not have an at all easy or enviable fate.

Christ’s Death

It was human misery that made Christ emerge from anonymity and likewise, it was people’s misery or distress that made him ascend the cross. There is no better illustration of this decision-making process than the following example (Matt 26:36):

“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.’ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.’

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again he went away for the second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.’ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.”

The description of this even appears three times in the Gospels in various permutations. It seems that even the disciples after his death were not able to appreciate the meaning of this event for the identification of Christ with his fate. From the psychological point of view it is important to point out the authenticity of the detail that Christ's struggle for his own identity took place over the long term and went in waves. It was not a once-off decision or a momentary impulse. It was a gradual determination that the path does not lead in any other direction.

We find an example of one of the previous waves and the manner in which he himself gradually matured to an internal decision, in the exclamation (John 12:27-28):

“And what should I say – ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Here we also see the function of fantasy figures – something or someone in his head is telling him: “Plead with your Father to save you from this hour!” This fantasy figure represents his own strong tendencies to escape, with which he himself had to laboriously reckon. This fantasy speaker did not have to be formless and anonymous. It could have a clear likeness. It could have been a replayed memory, as his friend and disciple Simon Peter tried to dissuade him from meeting this fate (Matt 16: 21-25):

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

Jesus had tried a thousand times to have an effect on the public and on his disciples. At Gethsemane he wants, for the last time, to arouse them from their dreaming and to actively take all the responsibility for their opportunities. Let's notice the change in rhetoric. The sentence “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want” changes after looking upon the inept disciples into: “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” From the inquiry (“if it is possible”) becomes after looking upon the incompetent disciples a statement (“if this cannot pass”). Notice that the mouth of God the Father did not speak to him again with some supernatural directive from above, but spoke to him through the sight of the sleeping, incompetent disciples - human misery. This even in Gethsemane was only the last answer – one of many that gave Christ the certainty that there really was no other way.

But answer this for yourselves. Do you now another way to wake up mindless followers or narrow-minded enemies so that they would become able to read between the lines of realities and thus discourse with God and discover and fulfill his plans?

The more functions, rights or responsibilities Christ would have accepted, the less his disciples would have taken upon themselves. He left just at the moment when the sentence was true (John 16:7): “It is to your advantage that I go away.”

This mental rebirth is possible to illustrate again, for example in the change of Christ's attitude toward armed resistance (Luke 22:35ff):

He said to them, ‘When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?’ They said, ‘No, not a thing.’ He said to them, ‘But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted among the lawless’; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.’ They said, ‘Lord, look, here are two swords.’ He replied, ‘It is enough.’ He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.

Even here we have proof that Jesus was not clear of aggressive thoughts, which is borne witness by the previously mentioned cursing of the fig tree and also driving the vendors out of the Courtyard of the Gentiles. In the background we can speculate that he is thinking “If I am to be reckoned with as a bandit, couldn't I defend myself with a sword in my hand like a partisan, the Sicarii of that age? (The *sica* was a short sword or long dagger that the fanatical Sicarii used to murder Jewish collaborators with Rome from behind. It seems that suicidal and terrorist tactics have not changed much in this region since that time.)

Before the prayer in Gethsemane the possibility of armed insurrection had to have run through his head one more time. But his behavior would have been entirely different if the time came when it would have been apt to defend himself. Thus, it is very likely that it was precisely in Gethsemane he went through internal development that was hinted at above (Matt 26:47).

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.'" At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?' At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

The Last Attempt – Resurrection of Lazarus

Although Christ allowed himself to be killed, he did not have depressive and suicidal tendencies. His self-sacrifice was the way out of desperation and he himself did everything he could in order to avoid it. One of the last attempts to persuade the Jews around him was the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). This event had to have come just before Easter.

Practically all of the miracles that Christ performed were situational, intended to help a specific person in a specific situation. They were not intended as spectacles for the masses. However, this does not apply to the resurrection of Lazarus, which was supposed to represent just such a spectacular show for the Jews and to convince them of the veracity of Christ's mission. Jesus had promised himself a lot from this event. Unfortunately, though, his mission remained misunderstood.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. [This introduction indicates that the event took place toward the end of Christ's work because when she rubbed his feet with the oil, Jesus spoke about his funeral.]

So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' [The main motif of Christ's approach towards evil: evil is not a consequence of the past. Evil is a challenge for him to demonstrate God's power and glory in the future. This statement also indicates what Christ has promised himself from the resurrection of Lazarus.]

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'" [Here we see that he planned his entrance very carefully so that the act he was preparing would have the greatest possible effect. In short, he waited until after Lazarus died, after the whole community prepared him for his funeral, buried him, and when Lazarus had started to decompose in his grave. Better proof that Lazarus had really died could not be offered to the onlookers.]

Thomas, who was called the Twin, [Didymus] said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' [Here as well as in other places in the Gospels Thomas' somewhat depressive Temperament is shown. In any case, by that time all of the disciples could already feel dark clouds gathering over their heads.]

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.'

Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

[Probably dozens of his relatives and friends took part in the funeral and subsequent mourning. There had to have been many influential persons from nearby Jerusalem in attendance. Christ could not have wished for a better audience.]

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." [Notice the completely identical rhetoric of both sisters. They must have continually repeated this sentence for each other.]

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb.

[For translators, it is a tough job to correctly translate the words "greatly disturbed". It is difficult to say whether he was merely sad, exasperated because the people around him are so dull-witted or just simply experiencing stage fright before his big performance. I personally incline toward believing it was the second alternative of these three. Especially when Jesus was supposed to be "again disturbed" after the sentence: "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" This would certainly not have made me weep. It is overt mockery. Anyway it is understandable, that Jesus had a lot of stage fright before such a big show.]

It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.'

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.'

Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone.

And Jesus looked upward and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' [Here he totally openly says why he has come to resurrect Lazarus.]

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'

The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." ... So from this day they were agreed that they would kill him.

Now it is evident that the effect of resurrecting Lazarus was a far cry from what Christ had expected. What happened was miracle inflation. They hardly excited anyone any more, it was something like: “Yeah, so? Now he raised the dead. And I should jump out a window or something?” This is a psychologically understandable reaction. How many of us would turn our lives upside down just because we saw some kind of very unusual phenomenon? Notice how quickly society has become used to, for example, cell phones and other previously unimaginable devices.

Jesus’ later resurrection was conceived as only a private event of the church because miracles already had practically no effect on people. It was not to be theater for the masses. The theater show had already gone over with Lazarus but the event transpired utterly without effect. Christ understood that this was not the way to convince the masses, but above all else it was how to “fire up” his disciples. He woke them up only by leaving. This is why during the Last Supper he does not plead for the world but for his own disciples (John 17:9): “I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.”

Seeking Subjective Certainty

The Gospels are peppered with hints to how Christ sought subjective certainty about his mission. If the resurrected Lazarus was to have persuaded the Jews, then Christ himself clearly had one important breakthrough experience. This was the revelation on the mountain which is traditionally considered to be Mount Tabor, located near Nazareth (Mark 9:2ff):

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my beloved Son; listen to him!’ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. Then they asked him, ‘Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ He said to them, ‘Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah [meaning John the Baptist – author’s note] has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him.’

When Christ indicates that they should keep silent about something it is a sign that he does not yet have a stabilized position regarding it. Even here, this was not a routine affair, but rather a unique experience of his own transfiguration. He tried out somehow transcending the limits of his physical body. The meeting with the prophets explained to him the path that he was yet to walk down. Who knows, perhaps it was the requested sign from God, or the thought: “If I can resurrect Lazarus, who was already rotting, why couldn’t I bring Moses and Elijah back to life?” In any case, his disciples then still did not get even the basic terminology, let alone that they would have been able to monitor the internal struggle that Jesus was going through at that time. We have to only hope that this after-the-facts reconstruction corresponds to the real events.



Mount Tabor

Probably each of us would try to resurrect somebody from the past if we could – for example, I would wish to meet the historic Czech king Charles IV. or an American might like to resurrect Abraham Lincoln. When Jesus found out that he was able to bring people who had already been dead for three days back to life, he must have logically come to ask himself this question: "If I can resurrect the daughter of Jairo or Lazarus, then why wouldn't I also be able to resurrect, say, Moses or Elijah? OK, then let's try it!" and after doing so, what logically follows is: "If I can resurrect Moses, then can I resurrect myself after my own death? Or what does my father God expect from me when I have such abilities?"

Picture source: Wikipedia

This story is found with minor modifications in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), and Peter also returns to them in his fairly late epistle (2 Peter 1:17) I have chosen the version that an ecumenical translation poses the question: "How is it then that it is written about the Son of Man that he has to suffer much and be held in contempt?" This translation corresponds not only to the original Greek text^(*), but Jesus had to have asked this question of himself at that time and afterward to have found an answer for it.

(*) Particle $\pi\omega\varsigma$ corresponds to the interrogative "How is it?"

Let's pay attention to two thresholds that were crossed: At Cana of Galilee he still doesn't know when his hour will come and how it will appear. On the other hand, at the garden in Gethsemane it is virtually certain that he knows he will have to go the way certain that he already knows he will have to go the way of the cross. At some time between these two outlying points he had to come to an understanding of his path in life. But when? The disciples did not understand the process, so they could not even accurately record when the turning point arrived.

It is clearly no coincidence that Christ met with Moses and Elijah during his temporary transformation. The choice of Moses is clear. He speaks of his successor, with whom Jesus had to have been identified (Deut 18:15):

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.

The choice of Elijah is less clear, rather we would have expected Deutero-Isaiah, when the question of the suffering servant is discussed (Isa 52:13-53). Clearly, the choice was made for Elijah because he was to have appeared before the arrival of the Messiah (Mal 3:23): "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." It is necessary to agree with Elijah upon a common approach. Jesus got the answer, which he then passed on to his disciples: Elijah has already come – he was John the Baptist. Now it is to be his turn.

The apparition on Mount Tabor is a consultation on technical questions about resurrection with two of the greatest personalities of the Old Testament. For the time being it is only a rough rehearsal of Jesus trying to transform himself while still alive, which he will of course have to be able to do in a few months under much worse conditions – that is, after his death.

Other Reasons for Christ's Death

In many parts of the New Testament you can read that Christ died for our sins. I have already spoken about one aspect of this statement, but it has several more meanings. But people are always going after one or a limited number of purposes with their behavior. God's purposes are always multi-leveled. With every event millions of various goals are accomplished that overwhelm us people. For example, natural laws are upheld, geological history unfolds, thousands of bacteria are born and die, species arise and become extinct...

The events in our lives are also always multi-leveled. We find and lose things in order for thousands of various goals to be accomplished. We do not even have an inkling of most of these, we discover and appreciate others only in hindsight, and we do not consider others to have been goals at all, but despite this, they eventuated. When some end appears to be meaningless from our anthropocentric point of view it does not mean that it is not important for God. We chose those of his works that seem significant for our lives. Certainly, we would not be satisfied with the answer that our child died in order for a few million bacteria that carry infectious disease, and which are not in any way exceptional, could come into the world. The concept of theocentrism, however, assumes that in many cases we cannot even guess why God brings the world along the paths that are important for him. Well, not even children understand the sense of most of their parents' acts.

We also apply the same logic in the case of Christ's death. On the cross it was not only the one or two anthropocentric goals that we keep on tossing over in our minds that were accomplished. Besides these there were thousands of events that unfolded that were insignificant from a human point of view – the grass was trampled, a few stones fell down from the hill, etc. God always tracks many goals at the same time. We only select from them those that appeal to us. But so be it, we will never be any different. When we are seeking humanly pleasing reasons, as we do so let us be aware of our own limitations.

Jesus' death was necessary in order to activate the disciples and finally they at least partially understood what their teacher had in mind. Also, Jesus' and his mother Mary's minds fully matured. Even she did not understand how it is possible that her son, about whom she had heard so many promises will die a death that was considered among the Jews to be one of the most humiliating (Deut 21:23): "Anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse."

Early Christians had at least two models for explaining Christ's death. The first was the model of buying a slave out of slavery and the second model was a sacrifice to conciliate a furious God. Jesus took an ambivalent stance toward the Old Testament sacrifices and temple, and that is why he probably never used a comparison between his death and Old Testament sacrifices. That was done after his death by the Apostle Paul, because he needed to find a common language for disputations with the Jews.

Jesus primarily used the comparison of ransom, in the sense of buying a slave out of servitude. The slave serves his master (sins, limitations, foolishness, death). He is then ransomed and becomes the friend, child of God, brother of Christ, in short, a free citizen. Jesus thus takes his death to be a payment that is necessary for emancipating men from the bondage of sin. ("Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever." John 8:35). It is enough to go through the Gospels and you will find out how many times Jesus uses the word freedom or redemption, and it is clear that that was a central theme which he had to have contemplated innumerable times.

Sin is not only conscious and voluntary transgression of God's commandments as written in the catechisms. In a more general sense it is everything that makes a free child of God into an unfree slave and vassal. This could be an unbelievably wide spectrum of our weaknesses, offenses to others, foolishness, addictions and fears. Ranging from an inability to be alone through having the courage to stand up for others, from not lying to establishing and maintaining a meaningful relation with a partner. Each of us knows well where the battles are that we are momentarily fighting for our own freedom. This concept of sin thus is not only a Christian or Jewish contrivance. It is enough to look back over the past week and we immediately see where things were left undone and what should have been done differently. It's not about wallowing in feelings of guilt and pouring ash over your head. Jesus wants for us to be free from that which binds us.

The Trial

The Romans had revoked the Jews' right to execute for a capital offense (*ius gladii*). Thus, if the Jewish leaders wanted to eliminate Jesus, they had to arrange so that Pilate as the Prefect of Judea executed Jesus. Of course the Jews were most vexed by Jesus' conviction that he was the Son of God and the Messiah. That was blasphemy that cried out to the heavens (Matt 26:62ff):

The high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?"

Except that with the claim that "He claims to be the Son of God" the members of the Sanhedrin would not have gone before Pilate, so they had to find a better argument that Pilate would listen to. "All of the crucifixions that we know about in Palestine in the time of the Roman procurators until the Jewish war happened for political reasons." (Kuhn, ZTh K 72, 1975, 3 according to Gnllka, 2001) Therefore, even Christ's offense had to be interpreted as a political crime against the Roman people (Luke 23:2–5):

They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king."

Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

He answered, "You say so."

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man."

But they were insistent and said, 'He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.'

Although Pilate said at that moment that even if he is the "King of the Jews" he does not find him to be guilty of anything. But it is precisely this indictment that was written on the so-called *titulus crucis* – a placard where the official reason for the execution was provided. This was carried before the condemned man or else they hung it around his neck so that everyone would know why he was to be executed. The acronym of this inscription that was originally written in three languages is the well-known INRI (IESUS NAZARENVS REX IVDAEORVM). We find it on pictures of the cross and a part of the original has even been preserved:



INRI – Titulus Crucis

The placard that tells the crime and the official reason for Jesus' execution. Note that even the Roman letters are written from right to left as Hebrew is written.

With this inscription we run into the same problem as with the Shroud of Turin. All the analyses indicate an origin that corresponds with Christ's era, except for the radiocarbon method. That would date it to the era of St. Wenceslas, around the year 1000 AD. But at that time there could not have been any forger able to create something like it, and who would have had the corresponding motivation and knowledge of ancient letters. Isn't it proof that this piece of wood was a witness to Jesus' resurrection, similar to the Shroud of Turin, and that it was subject to the same physical processes?

For Pilate had seen through this deliberate manipulation by the Jews and does not want to let himself be manipulated. He therefore made a few attempts to save Jesus, but in the end, surely for tactical reasons, he gave in to the pressure. He said this sentence to Christ: "You are going on the cross," which every convict heard. Because Pilate did not believe in Jesus' being dangerous he did not proscribe his disciples or have them followed, which he would have done in the case of a truly dangerous rebels.

Death on the Cross

All of the Evangelists carefully describe Christ's death. It is not pleasant reading. Let us focus just on the moments right before his death (Mark 15:34):

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

At first glance it may seem that this speech is different from the one that we heard in connection with Lazarus:

Jesus looked up and said: "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

It is a question of whether these two statements contradict each other: "Why have you forsaken me?" and "I knew that you always hear me." The answer is simple, if we know what formed Christ's mind – the texts of the Old Testament. For on the cross we are not seeing a hopeless calling that came from a feeling of abandonment by God. The suffering Jesus began to recite various Psalms that he had known since childhood. The instinct to quote the Psalms was the same as when Christians in dire situations begin to recite the Lord's Prayer.

From the psychological point of view, a person begins to quote a text because it seems that this text best fits the given situation. He or she already had the whole main idea of a text like this in his or her head a long time ago. Therefore we cannot only take out one line from this Psalm. A Psalm or a passage or text works in a person's mind as an indivisible unit. Death on the cross is a death by exhaustion and slow asphyxiation. We cannot expect a suffocating person who has death on his tongue to recite an entire Psalm for us. Because he began to recite the first lines of Psalm 22 we know what Jesus was thinking about during his last minutes:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; 'Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver -- let him rescue the one in whom he delights!' Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen.

You have rescued me.

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from him, but heard when he cried to him. From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! All the ends of

the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

This Psalm is composed of two parts. The first is a description of suffering and a shift takes place with “you have rescued me” and the glorifying hymn follows.

The first part describes people’s natural tendency. The feeling of abandonment by God is usually derived from negative experiences that bear on a person. Things are going well for me, so God is with me. Things aren’t going well, so God has left me. This is the way our minds work, whether we want them to or not. However, the Psalm overcomes this primitive religio-psychological tendency. God is with us in our failure, because in the second part again appears the theme of answering: the Lord “heard when [the afflicted] cried to him.” In other words, in his darkest hour on the cross Jesus repeats to himself his program statement which does not contradict with other statements made during his life. This statement is again clearly theocentrism and more or less identical with the thoughts in the Lord’s Prayer (see the Glossary). God’s interests are in the first place – his kingdom should come, his name should be glorified. From the success of God and the enactment of his will should then follow also man’s success and the satisfaction of his needs.

I know that theocentrism does not belong by any stretch of the imagination among the most popular lifestyles or philosophies for our contemporary generations. This book, however, makes its mission not to convince, but to explain. What is it that gives Jews and Christians the vital strength and endurance? Not that they are doing it for themselves, but for God. No one, of course, knows what God really thinks and wants, but the effort to see the world from his perspective represents a certain compensatory mechanism. It helps people suppress their natural tendency to soullessly chase after only pleasurable experiences (under the motto “Just Do It!”) and to overcome their unwillingness to invest energy where it is necessary. In short, theocentrism reduces the unhealthy exuberance of the ego and hedonism.

But whatever your attitude toward theocentrism, here we are mainly interested in Christ’s mind. Up to and including his very last moment Jesus did not abandon the program that he had been proclaiming for his whole life – in short, that he had to die in order to find a way for people out of the slavery of death. This is proven even by the second Psalm that is it recorded that Jesus recited before his death. This is, according to Saint Luke (Luke 23:46) the Evening Psalm 31 (Gnilka, 2001). Notice that even this second Psalm has a similar structure to the one before – a contrast between suffering and seeming defeat versus victory and the favor of the Lord given to the side of the one suffering.

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD. I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have taken heed of my adversities, and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many -- terror all around! -- As they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go dumbfounded to Sheol. Let the lying lips be stilled that speak insolently against the righteous with pride and contempt. O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of everyone! In the shelter of your presence you hide them from human plots; you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues. Blessed

be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was beset as a city under siege. I had said in my alarm, "I am driven far from your sight." But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help. Love the LORD, all you his saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD."

I have provided the entirety of both Psalms because they are the best probe into Jesus' head in the moments when he was dying. We have this probe available only because we know the rules of the human mind: people who are face to face with death sooth themselves with recitation or singing pertinent texts and prayers and the choice of text corresponds to their momentary mindset.

Conclusion

Well, we finished just between Jesus' death and his resurrection. We will not go any further now, as it would require us delve into explanations of many of the theories that have been put forth on human immortality, the Eucharist, etc. This translated first chapter of the Czech version at least covers the question of Jesus' mindset and it painstakingly explains how his thoughts were shaped by the fact that he was Joseph's adopted child.

Writing a book about Jesus' mind is a very bold and possibly even arrogant act. I had put off doing it until 2006, when the threat appeared that I would have to go for a second round of chemotherapy. I even had a bed picked out to lay in at one hospital. This was a sign for me that I could not delay this book any longer. The chemotherapy was at the last minute canceled, however, it is still thanks to it that this book has seen the light.

It is a compromise of what possibilities and experiences my life gave me at that time, and therefore it cannot but include mistakes and errors that I am unaware of, or do not understand.

In the history of the Church and of science heresies and errors had one great advantage. In the words of Czech genius Jára Cimrman they always said: "Not this way, friends!" In order to show the truth or falsehood of often ideas that were often only roughly sketched out, it was necessary to mobilize the forces of many thinkers. You are now these thinkers, my readers. Therefore I now respectfully offer this book to you.

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