

Jesus : Christ of Atonement or Christ The New Man ?

(A paper written from the Biblical angle)

R. VAN DE WALLE*

Our dilemma is: either the Christ of atonement or Christ as beginning of a new creation? That is: the Christ of the Cross or the Christ of the Resurrection?

When Martin Luther wrote, 'Crux sola est nostra theologia'¹, he was echoing St Paul 'I decided to know nothing among you, except Christ and him crucified' (I Cor. 2:2). But in a later chapter, the same Paul brings such theology to a 'crossroads': 'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins!' (I Cor. 15:17).

Ernest Käsemann finds a synthesis of these two assertions in Rom. 4:17, where God is defined as the One 'who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist'. When man is reduced to his naked creaturehood, when he accepts his utter weakness and inability to achieve anything towards his own salvation, when he has dispelled the illusion that he can transcend himself, when he is truly man, obedient unto the humiliation of the death on a cross, it is only then that God can be revealed as 'the one who gives life to the dead'².

All men are by nature mortal, therefore it is only the immortal who can 'obey' unto death. In this sense, Christ is True Man and True God i.e. the Christ of atonement and Christ the New Man.

Vocabulary of Redemption and Atonement

Before examining the major biblical texts on atonement and on the new man, let us take a quick survey of the vocabulary of redemption and sacrifice, basing ourselves chiefly on the work of S. Lyonnet and L. Sabourin:

Sin, hamartia, is a power of death, dwelling in man, separating him from God and leading him to slavery and perdition. Redemption is a liberation, accomplished by a supreme act of obedience and of love, enabling all men to pass from hate to love.

Salvation, sōtēria, is less a preservation from temporal evils and infirmities than a liberation from the slavery of sin (typified by the exodus and the return from exile) and a bestowing of the messianic

*Fr Van de Walle S.J. is Professor of Sacred Scripture in De Nobili College, Pune.

¹ Martin Luther, Werke, (kritische gesammte Ausgabe Weimar 1883ff.) V. 176.

² E. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, (NT Library SCM 1969), p. 39f.

blessings: already now we become a new creation and receive the pledge of the eschatological fulfilment in the kingdom.

Liberation, (apo-) lutrōsis, p-d-h and g'-l: The root *padah* often implies the payment of a price: redemption, ransom, purchase, especially the emancipation of a slave, *Ga'al* is more the rescue of a captive but with the added connotation of blood relationship: there is a certain obligation, a personal concern and an act of love.

Lutroō does not only signify a liberation 'from' (*apolutrōsis* Rom. 3:24 Eph. 1:7) but a liberation 'for' i.e. from the slavery of sin to the service of the Lord³ (*lutrōsetai... katharisei heautoi laon periousion*, Tit. 2:14). This liberation is 'for us' i.e. both instead of us (*anti*) and in our favour (*huper*): *antilutron huper pantōn*, I Tim. 2:6.

The act of redemption is onerous not only for Christ but in a way also for the Father who 'did not spare his son, but delivered him for us all' (Rom. 8:32). We were redeemed at the cost of Christ's blood i.e. at the cost of his life, 'for life is in the blood' (Gn. 9:4).

The price of our redemption is not based on the principle of justice, 'do ut des', so that our liberation would be given against the payment of a certain ransom-price by way of compensation to the owner of the captive or the slave. St. Hilary joins the metaphors of price and redemption in his commentary on Ps 135, but not as compensation, for he does not hesitate to take Christ's resurrection into consideration as well as his blood and passion: 'He redeemed us when he gave himself for our sins, he redeemed us by his blood, his passion, his resurrection; these are the great prices of our life'.⁴

Fr S. Lyonnet concludes, 'the terms *lutrousthai, apolutrōsis*... indicate the source itself out of which proceeded the whole economy of redemption, namely, God himself, the Father, not however as that merchant who does not grant freedom unless he has first been paid the corresponding price, but as he who quite gratuitously frees us from every slavery, so that we become his own: in other words, not as one who does not set free unless he does not lose anything, but as he who grants freedom for no other reason than because of his love, who does not wish anything else than to communicate his own life to all and make us participate in his own beatitude provided that we wish to accept that gift as a free act, an act of faith'.

Buying Back, agorazein, q-n-h, segullah: Paul uses the metaphor of sacred manumission in I Cor. 7:22f, 'he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord'.

According to Greek law, a slave had no rights and therefore could not buy his freedom. But he could deposit (either himself or by a third person) the ransom money in the temple of a deity, usually Apollo. According to a certain ritual, the slave was sold to the god and the money was given to the previous owner. The slave was not attached to the service of the temple but was free, although remaining under the protection of the deity.

³ Cf. G. Auzou's title given to his commentary on Exodus: *De la Servitude au Service*.

⁴ St. Hilary, *Commentary on Ps 135* in PL 9.776.

There are several difficulties in admitting a strict parallelism of the two cases: the vocabulary: in case of sacred manumission, the verb *priasthai* is used, not *agorazein*.

—the money was ultimately given to the previous master; Christ would have paid the devil.

—although redeemed, the slave was always bound to stay with his former owner for a certain number of years, usually till the death of his former master.

It seems more likely that the notion of purchase is derived from the Old Testament, the notion of acquisition in connection with the exodus and the covenant: 'I brought you to myself... you shall be my very own possession (*segullah*)' (Ex. 19:5f); 'we are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it' (Eph. 1:14). This acquisition is effected by the work, sweat and blood of God's son i.e. by the supreme act of obedience and love, Christ giving his life-blood on the cross. 'The price of his blood' means 'at the cost, i.e. the sacrifice, of his own life'.

Expiate, hilaskesthai, kipper; *Hilaskesthai* often means to placate, to pacify an angry person or a god, in which case there may be a ritual intercession aimed at removing from man the cause of divine displeasure and disposing man to receive God's favour. *Kipper*, on the other hand, signifies to remove, wipe away, condone, and it is usually God who is the agent. In the passive form, the sin is wiped out, condoned and the person is cleansed.

The full meaning of expiation and propitiation must also be understood in the context of the sacrificial function of blood. The blood of the Pascal lamb averted the danger of death at the time of the tenth plague of Egypt. The sacrificial blood sprinkled by Moses on the altar and on the congregation seals the Sinaitic covenant: one and the same lifestream unites YHWH and his people, his children of adoption. The blood of the goat applied on the cover of the ark, on Yom Kippurim, purifies the sanctuary, removes the guilt of the people and renders them worthy to be re-united, reconciled with their God: at-one-ment.

It is therefore not surprising that Christ himself, at the last supper, may have referred to all three sacrifices at the same time, 'to the pascal sacrifice, as is evident from the day and hour chosen; to the covenant sacrifice, explicitly indicated by the blood of the new covenant; and finally. . . to the sacrifice of expiation which seems to be implied by the words added according to Mt. 26:28 "unto the forgiveness of sins".'

'God is said to be placated not in the sense that God would begin again to love, but in the sense that the cause of hatred, sin, is removed from man... No "placation of God" can be conceived unless man, separated from God by sin, be changed inwardly, be converted to God, be re-united with God'.⁵

⁵ S. Lyonnet and Leopold Sabourin: 'Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice, a Biblical and Patristic Study', *Analecta Biblica*, 48 Rome 1970, p. 181.

ATONEMENT: The Christological Hymn of Phil. 2 and the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah

Phil. 2:6-11 is a liturgical hymn that might not be of Pauline origin: redemption from sin, the resurrection, and the place of the Church within the mystery of Christ, three favourite themes of St Paul, are conspicuous by their absence.

However, there is the antithesis between the first and the second Adam (Rom. 5), that of the heavenly and the earthly (I Cor. 15; Eph. 1:21), and also the triple division of the universe (Eph. 1:3; 3:10; Phil. 3:19) which are definitely Pauline.

If not Pauline, the hymn was fully accepted, adapted and perhaps retouched by the author of Philippians.

Literary and doctrinal affinities: Scholars have found in this passage some elements taken from mythological and other religious sources:

—Heracles was of human origin but acquired divine status by service and hard labour. His conquest is considered as '*harpagma*' or '*laphuron*' i.e. grasped as a prey or usurped.

—Some gnostics (e.g. Poimandres 12-13), describe the mind as engendering a being like itself, *isos*; each man is like a Demiurgos manifesting the 'form of God', *morphē tou theou*, as an immortal being, and yet he becomes a slave.

Fr J. M. Lagrange prefers 'less polluted sources', the OT (including the deuterocanonical books): the theme of Wisdom personified and associated with God, coming to dwell among men (Prov. 8:31; Sir. 24:8ff); the just man humiliated, persecuted and thereafter rewarded and glorified (Job and the story of Joseph); the 'one like the son of man' (Dn. 7:13); and, in contrast to Christ, the first Adam created in the image and likeness of God (Gn. 1:26) and aspiring to become like God (Gn. 3:3, 22); similarly, the fall of Lucifer (Is. 14:12-20) and that of the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:11-17).

But above all there is the *EBED YHWH* of Deutero-Isaiah:—In both cases, the humiliation is taken up voluntarily, as obedience to God's plan and it results in an exaltation willed by God but unexpected by men (*laken* in Is. 53:12 and *dio kai* in Phil. 2:9). —The vocabulary shows a close affinity: *morphē*, *homoiōma*, *schēma*, countenance, face, form, appearance; humility (*en kakōsei*, *tapeinōsis* in Is. 53: 4, 8 and *tapeinoun* in Phil. 2:8); acceptance ('he opened not his mouth', Is. 53:7, and 'obedient' in Phil. 2:8); till death (Is. 53:12 and Phil. 2:8); exalted and lifted up (Is. 45:23, Phil. 2:1); glorification ('Kings and princes prostrate', Is. 49:7, and 'to the glory of the Father' Phil. 2:11).

L. Cerfaux also refers to '*kenōs*', 'he laboured in vain and spent his divine strength for nothing' (Is. 49:4) and the '*ekenōsen*' of Phil. 2:7.

E. Dhorme suggests an allusion to '*he erah lammawet naphsho*', he bared (depouiller) his soul i.e. stripped unto death (Is. 53:12).

However, there are several elements that are absent from the suffering servant narratives:

—he is not explicitly said to be transcendent or to divest himself of a higher form of being; or to become the source of salvation for all mankind, although he interceded for transgressors (Is. 53:12).

—the *EBED YHWH* is more an honorific title of the messiah; his service is the princely service of a knight; he is a '*pais*', a servant, and not a '*doulos*', a slave who knows the deepest humiliation and spends his life in the service of his brothers.

Ultimately, the source of our hymn must be the historical Christ himself, according to the pre-gospel tradition: the mysterious transcendence of the 'son of man' who came to serve and not to be served (Mk. 10:45), and submitted himself to the humiliation of baptism in order to 'fulfil all righteousness' (Mt. 3:15).

Although Acts uses '*pais*' (not '*doulos*'), we find there the same archaic Christology in the speeches of Peter: Calvary is considered as a prelude to redemption, Christ is exalted at the right hand (*hupsōtheis* of Acts 2:33 and *hyperhypsōsen* of Phil. 2:8), and he is given a name by which everyone can be saved (Acts 2:21; 3:16; 4:12).

In its final gospel-form the best expression of the '*morphē tou theou*' and '*morphe tou doulou*' is found in the prelude of the washing of the feet: 'Knowing that the father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God. . . he rose, stripped himself of his garments, and girdled himself with a towel' (Jn 13:1-15).

It should be noted that Paul himself shows how Christ took upon himself human limitations and even sin and curse, in order that we be liberated and abound: II Cor. 8:9: Our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich, i.e. he took up the limitations of human existence (poverty) so that we may partake in his divine riches.

—II Cor. 5:21: For our sake God made him to be sin, i.e. treated him as the representative of sinners, so that in him, by his voluntary submission, we might become the righteousness of God, be reconciled with God.

—Gal. 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: a dead body on a tree.

—Gal. 4:4f: born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.

The hymn itself: Phil. 2:6-11

The purpose of the hymn is given in the exhortation of the previous verse 'have (experience) among yourselves the same feeling (of humble service) which you should experience in Christ (as a people united in Christ through baptism)' (v. 5).

A similar exhortation is found in II Cor. 8:7-9, regarding genuine and effective Christian love of the neighbour.

—'though he was in the form (*morphē*) or God': *morphē* can be synonymous to '*eidōs*' in the Platonic sense of nature; or to '*eikōn*', as translation of *demuth* (Is. 44:13; Dn. 3:19) i.e. image, effigy, likeness; or to *schēma* i.e. condition, status, character; it is also related to '*doxa*' as translation of *themuna* (Nu. 12:8 and Ps. 16:15).

All in all, 'form' is the less ambiguous translation and is to be preferred to image or figure. It has the additional advantage of being used in suitable components of the same root: to conform to Christ, to be transformed into him.

The Book of Degrees (*Ketaba Demasqata*), a collection of 28 Syriac homilies from the beginning of the 4th cent., gives us a remarkable commentary of this verse:

'Adam did not observe the command, but tried to usurp equality with God out of pride and not through humility. This is why the apostle says that it was not by usurpation that Christ wanted to become equal to God like Adam, but he divested (stripped himself). . . and took the image of a slave. Out of obedience, love and humility he assumed the image of a slave in order to obey his father as a slave' (21st homily, No. 11).

The image of God which he was before his *kenōsis* is not the image that was found in the first-created man, since he had to divest himself of the first image in order to become the second one.

—'he did not deem equality with God to be a "*harpagmos*", a thing to be grasped':

'*harpagmos*' has several connotations: grasping, usurpation, jealous preservation, advantage to be exploited.

The closest parallel presented as illustration is perhaps the one found in the letter of the churches of Lyons and Vienne to the Christians of Asia and Phrygia. It is now attributed to Irenaeus:

'Those who had suffered persecution did not want to be given the title of "martyr" or take advantage of the esteem shown them by their fellow Christians. They became true imitators and followers of Christ, who, though subsisting in the form of God, did not consider as *harpagmos* to be equal to God. Although they had gained such glory and had given witness to their faith, not once but some of them even several times, and had been taken away from the beasts of the arena covered with burns and wounds, they never proclaimed themselves "martyrs" but did not even allow others to call them by that title'.⁶

Christ's *morphē tou theou* was not usurpation, but a rightful possession which he however did not want to exploit, parade with or take advantage of for his own glory.

v. 7: 'on the contrary (*alla*), he emptied (*ekenōsen*) himself': He could not renounce his divinity i.e. the immanent attributes of truthfulness, sanctity, love etc., but divested himself of the 'economic' attributes such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and accepted the limitations of human existence to the full extent of humiliation and suffering unto death.

—'taking the *morphē* of a slave (*doulos*)': as the servant of all, without rights and privileges.

v. 8: 'he humbled himself still further (*etapeinōsen*). . . obedient. . . unto the death of the cross': dying out of obedience, absolutely helpless, condemned as criminal to the gibbet.

⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church*, V-2-2 to 6.

As remarked at the beginning, it is in this obedience unto death that our redemption consists. According to E. Käsemann, the addition 'unto the death of the cross' may be an addition by Paul himself. He wanted to show man in his helpless creatureness, as opposed to the first Adam who out of disobedience aspired at equality with God and only came to know that he was naked and sinful, in discord with the woman and the earth, and separated from his Maker. When Christ had humbled himself to the lowest depth of a 'true man', God could restore the broken harmony and bring forth a new life, 'give life to the dead'.

v. 9f: 'wherefore also (*dio kai*) God highly exalted him (*huperupsōsen*) and gave him the highest name (*huper pan onoma*):'

This is not the traditional exaltation of the patient sufferer, but the unique response of the Father to a unique and free humiliation.

The highest name is not just the restoration of his former glory (the resurrection is practically glossed over), but a position of power by which the glorified Christ subjects the three worlds to himself: heaven, earth and the underworld.

v. 11: 'every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the LORD': He is given the new title of KURIOS (Rom. 14:9).

CHRIST THE NEW MAN: Redemptive creation in Deutero-Isaiah and the 'first-born of all creation' (Col. 1:15).

Redemptive creation: Creation as a philosophical notion, 'producing something out of nothing', is foreign to Hebrew thought.

It was mainly by reflecting on YHWH's salvific intervention at the time of the plagues of Egypt and the exodus, and at the end of the exile, that Israel discovered her God as the Lord of history and the Lord of all creation.

Deutero-Isaiah faced the objection that it was not proper for YHWH to choose Cyrus, a foreigner, as his principal instrument in the great redemptive act of the return from the exile.

Since redemptive creation is beyond the scope of our conference on the confessions of Jesus of Nazareth, it will suffice to quote the summary of C. Stuhlmüller's argument and the final formulation of his thesis:

- a. By transforming Israel's entire life from chaos to prosperity, YHWH merits to be considered Israel's *creative redeemer*.
- b. Because Cyrus occupies a place of prime importance in the creative redemption of Israel, YHWH's creative action extends to the Persian conquerer and his worldwide activity.
- c. Thus YHWH appears more clearly than ever before as re-creator of the world, and as such must have been its first creator. Therefore, YHWH can use the universe and foreigners just as he sees fit.⁷ The thesis of Creative Redemption in the Book of Consolation (Is. 40-55) can be enunciated most briefly: from the new redemption of

⁷ C. Stuhlmüller 'Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah', *Analecta Biblica* 43, Rome 1970, p. 204.

Israel, to the creation of the entire world of Israel; from the creation of the entire world of Israel, to the creation of the entire world *simpliciter*; from the creation of the entire world, to the redemption of this world'.⁸

In fact, even the sacerdotal narrative of Gn. 1 can be considered as God's redemptive act, as a victory over the cosmic powers.⁹

The ensuing peace, '*shalom*', is not so much the primitive bliss of paradise or the mere absence of belligerence and tensions, it is the prosperity enjoyed by one who has conquered the evil powers.

The Corinthian Mirror

Before we examine Christ as the image of the invisible God and as the first-born of all creation, let us take a look at two verses of the second letter to the Corinthians in which Paul gives us his own view on Christ's relation to the Father and to creation: II Cor. 3:18; 4:4.

The context is the superiority of the new 'spirit' over the written code of the Mosaic law: 'The way of the law (trying to be saved by keeping the commandments) ends in death; but the new way (turning to Christ) gives life through the Spirit'. (3:6).

The law of the letter shone already with such brilliance that it transformed the face of Moses: he put on a veil in order not to blind the people. But this splendour was transitory, and Moses kept his veil so that its fading away would not be noticed.

Not only Moses' face was veiled, the Jewish people's minds and understanding were veiled as well. It is so even today. . . unless one turns to the 'LORD' who alone removes that veil and reveals the way of the Spirit. 3:17: Now the LORD is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Although Paul often uses Lord, *Kurios*, as referring to Christ (e.g. I Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:11), yet he also refers it to God, the *Adonay* of the OT (e.g. Rom. 4:8; 9:28f; 11:34; II Cor. 3:20; 10:26; 14:21 etc.) Such is most probably the case in II Cor. 3:16 which echoes Ex. 34:34 'when Moses turned to the Lord, the veil was removed'. When contemporary Jews turn to the Lord (God), they are actually converted to the way of the Spirit, because the Lord is the Spirit i.e. the Lord of Sinai has become the way of the Spirit, the vivifying Spirit of the new law. As Moses turned to YHWH so does the Christian turn to the Lord-Spirit. If they turn away from the Lord, they sin against the Spirit.

v. 18: 'And we all, with unveiled face (having turned to the Lord-Spirit), *hatoptrizomenoi* (contemplating in the mirror of Christ who is the visible image of the Lord) the Glory of God, are changed into his likeness from one degree to another'.

As Moses experienced a change in his face through the vision of the Glory, so now all Christians are looking at God's mirror (Christ) and are thus gradually transformed into another Christ.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁹ Cf. L. Legrand, 'La creation, triumphe cosmique de YHWH', *NRTh* LXXXIII, 5- May 1961, pp. 449-70.

4.4: 'The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light (*phōtismos*) of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness (*eikōn*) of God'.

A. Feuillet has pointed out the similarity between these texts and the 7th chapter of the Book of Wisdom:

'Wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her there is a spirit that is intelligent (there follow 20 other qualities, 3×7, altogether 21). . . she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. . . a reflection of eternal Light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, an image of his goodness' (Wisd. 7:21-26.)

Wisdom is this image and mirror of God, not only in its functional aspect i.e. salvific revelation (Johannine view), but also in itself as 'light of Light' and in its relation to God. It is personal and yet equal to the source from which it proceeds (Paul applies both these aspects to Christ).¹⁰

4.6: 'God. . . has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory, shining in the face of Christ'.

Christ is the objective redemption, the mirror of our transforming vision, while the Spirit is the power of transformation working internally.

The more we contemplate, the more we become similar to what we contemplate. If we turn continually to the Glory of God, in the mirror that is Christ, we are gradually transformed into this new Christ which the Spirit creates in us.

The first-born of all creation: Col. 1:15-20

It is significant that the author inserted this hymn of the firstborn of all creation into a context of redemption: 'The Father snatched us from the tyranny of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his dear son, who redeems us and forgives our sins' (vv. 13f.).

Once more, it is after reflecting on Christ's salvific action that the author introduces his creative role in the cosmos and in the Church.

The origin of the hymn is still disputed, as well as its structure and additions. E. Käsemann traces three steps: (a) a pre-Christian gnostic poem, (b) given a baptismal liturgical interpretation, (c) and finally cited by the author of Colossians in ironic refutation of the gnostic countermovement at Colossae.

Apart from the fact that the so-called Colossian heresy is all but defined, one must not fall into excessive parallel-hunting and reduce the hymn to a mosaic of pieces picked up from all directions.¹¹

Such Judeo-Hellenistic texts as Prov. 8, Sira. 24, Wisd. 7, and the other Pauline letters, provide a substantial background for its Christology.

¹⁰ A. Feuillet, *Christologie Paulinienne et Tradition Biblique*, (Desclee-De Brouwer, Paris), 1973.

¹¹ N. Kehl, *Der Christushymnus im Kolosserbrief*, (Stuttgart, Katholische Bibelwerk 1967). Often alluded to in John G. Gibbs's *Creation and Redemption, a Study in Pauline theology*, (Brill, Leiden 1971).

We shall first examine the major titles of the 'beloved son' and then give the main theses on the Christ of creative redemption.

(i) '*eikōn*': likeness, image, implies more than a model, a plan which the artist has in mind. It is the reflecting mirror of God himself, cf. the interpretation of II Cor. 3:18; 4:4.

(ii) '*prōtotokos*': first-born as closely associated with 'son of his love' of v. 13. 'Prōto' is more qualitative than temporal. The Hebrew *bekor*, that which opens the womb as the first-fruit of the father's virility, is related practically exclusively to the parents and not to younger children which may eventually follow.

Christ is the first-born of all creation and the first-born from the dead (v. 18) in the same way as Wisdom was 'engendered' at the beginning of God's ways before she cooperated in God's creative activity (Prov. 8:22, 30).

It should be noted that Sira. 24 and the prologue of the fourth gospel rather restrict wisdom and Christ as word and revealer. Proverbs and Paul extend their activity to the establishment of the cosmic and moral order.

(iii) '*kephale*': refers to the head of the Church, although it may also have a certain cosmic implication. In any case it is more a juridical than an organic analogy (cf. Col. 2:10).

(iv) '*plerōma*': is probably to be taken in the active meaning as in the LXX (v.g. I Chr. 16:32; Ps. 24:1; Jer. 8:16) 'In him the complete being of God came to dwell' (NEB).

This is corroborated by N. Kehl's interpretation of *apokatallaxai* (v. 20) as to reconcile, change back, restore the order distorted by worshippers of idols (*ēllaxan* of Rom. 1:23)¹².

The author's major assertions regarding Christ's role in creation and redemption:

(i) Christ is the *exemplary cause* of the universe: 'everything was created in him who is the first-born of all creation': Col. 1:16.

His function is identical to that of personified wisdom, engendered (or acquired, *qanah*) at the beginning of God's work (Prov. 8:22). According to Job 28, wisdom is inaccessible to man and known by God alone. When he created the universe and formulated cosmic laws (as capricious as those of the wind, rain and lightning), he contemplated wisdom as his model and inspiration (Job 28:23, 27).

Christ, the beloved son, is the mirror in which God contemplated the mysteries of the universe. He is the first-born because all was created 'in him'. His kingship is not something added *a posteriori*, his likeness (*eikōn*) is in all of them and every creature is intrinsically subjected to him (I Cor. 14:24; Eph. 1:21).

(ii) Christ is the *final cause* of the universe: all have been created for him (Col. 1:16b).

Prior to the incarnation, as Wisdom personified, he cooperated in creation, as Christ incarnate he became the core of redemption.

¹² *Ibid.*, 'die Wiedergutmachung der allagē von Rom. 1:23', p. 119.

The incarnation is not exclusively motivated by redemption, but by Christ's role in creation itself. Mankind was incorporated into the first Adam, the sinner, in view of its incorporation into the second Adam, the redeemer. Adam was the type of the one to come (Rom. 5:14). The 'mystery of Christ' is God's unique plan of creation and redemption (Eph. 3:4-12).

(iii) Christ is the *principle of cohesion* of the whole universe (Col. 1:17). In him all things not only hang together, but form an harmonious whole, a cosmos (*sunestōken*). This is precisely because all was created according to his likeness (Cf. Wisdom in Job 28 and Sira 42:15-43:33).

Colossians 1:17 gives a more optimistic view of the universe than I Cor. 1:20f (the sinful world) or even I Cor. 7:31 (the *schēma* or present form of this world is to pass away).

(iv) Christ delivered sinful man (Col. 1:20) by his act of obedience and love: at the cost of his life-blood.

His hour of suffering is similar to that of a woman in travail, he is the first-born of a new creation, a birth which will make possible the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:23).

This liberation affects the whole world, which is groaning and awaiting the parturition of a new cosmos (Rom. 8:19-22).