

# The Passion of Jesus: A Test Case for Providence

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In this essay I should like to raise the question: In what sense could we say that God's providence was active in the last events of the life of Jesus, that is to say at Gethsemane and on the cross? I will proceed in three steps. First, I shall characterise Jesus' encounter with evil. Second, I shall reconstruct the meaning attached to his life and to his relationship with the Father. Third, from the clash of evil and meaning represented in the passion of Jesus, God will be portrayed as absent-present in the midst of human suffering.

Before engaging in our reflections, a methodological note is in order. When we examine New Testament texts reporting Jesus' words and actions, we find out that 'the accounts are not mutually consistent either in detail or in the interpretation they offer.'<sup>1</sup> Each of the scriptural narratives or comments on the passion not only does not attribute the same words to Jesus, but casts the saving event into a particular theological vision.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, most exegetes try very carefully to avoid concordism.

Next, the Gospel narratives are not 'historical' in the sense we moderns ascribe to this adjective. Surely they have an historic basis, but each of them tells a story the purpose of which is to highlight what it entailed for the faith of believers several decades after the resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament texts are not meant to give us some information about the inner psychology of Jesus. The details and dialogues presented are not directly biographical, but they are part of a narrative whose organizing principles are, in a sense, closer to those of a novel.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, indispensable though it is, a purely exegetical study cannot yield verifiable answers regarding the actual thoughts and feelings of Jesus, and the way he may have experienced God's providence in his passion.

None the less, can we simply ignore the fact that Christian faith has always wanted to understand what were the basic attitudes of Jesus during his passion? It is important to recognise that the question itself is an intelligent and hence a legitimate one for theology. Of course, one cannot establish the precise character of the ideas and sentiments of

Jesus *taken one by one*. Instead, with due respect for the constraints of historical methodology, systematic theology must go further than exegesis and aim at delineating a general perspective in which the elements make sense *in relation to one another*. In so doing, it can draw not only upon the resources of exegesis, but also on the insights of spirituality, psychology and philosophy. Therefore, in this essay I shall endeavour to construct an intelligible presentation of the subject matter, according to the requirements of biblical scholarship, Catholic tradition, and conceptual coherence.

## 1 Jesus and Evil

In this section, I should like to examine to what degree Jesus was struck by evil.<sup>4</sup> An important fact to notice is that he was not faced with evil in an individualistic way. The synoptic gospels situate his personal fate in the broad context of an imminent collective catastrophe. Such a catastrophe was to be eschatological, inasmuch as its resolution would bring about the last era of human history. In his response to the women who wept for him on his way to Golgotha, Jesus took for granted the communal character of that ordeal as he voiced his concern for Jerusalem (Luke 23:28-31).<sup>5</sup>

On their way to the Mount of Olives, Jesus predicts the fall of all his disciples and applies to himself Za 13:7, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered' (Mk 14:27).<sup>6</sup> Feuillet points out that in the Bible the verb *patassein* (to strike) is often used to express the divine punishment inflicted upon a *group*. The idea of an ordeal to come is evoked by the symbol of the cup (14:23; see 10:38-39, wherein the cup is associated with baptism). He also draws attention to the connection between the 'must' of the passion (8:31) and the 'must' of the eschatological judgment (13:7). The same should be noted in regard to the 'hour' (14:35). The word recurs in 14:41: 'The hour has come; the Son of Man is delivered up (*paradidotai*) into the hands of sinners.' The verb *paradidotai* comes from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 53:6 and 12. For Feuillet, the passion of Jesus is seen by Mark in the light of the innocent and suffering servant's song of Isaiah 53.<sup>7</sup>

Several authors underline the important difference between the passion of the martyrs of Israel and the passion of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> The martyrs of Israel die with fortitude, in defiance of their persecutors, 'conscious of their righteousness in the sight of God',<sup>9</sup> confident as they are that they will be resurrected by God. Of course Jesus also shares this hope in the general resurrection of the dead.<sup>10</sup> But in contrast to the strength of many Jewish martyrs (also a characteristic of Christian martyrs, who 'went calmly and in faith to their death'<sup>11</sup>), Jesus shows signs of

weakness both at Gethsemane and on the cross. This aspect is plainly disclosed not only by Mark but by all the New Testament narratives or comments on the passion, including John (see 12:23-34; note the objection raised by the crowd, which rests on the predominant Jewish understanding of messiahship as excluding human weakness). The texts thus seem to portray Jesus as less courageous than the martyrs. In the Roman empire, anti-Christian polemicists often utilized the Gethsemane sequence in order to show contempt for such a dubious hero.<sup>12</sup>

Feuillet attributes the weakness of Jesus to three factors,<sup>13</sup> the first one being the fear of physical suffering and of dying. However, if this were the only dread noticeable in the Garden of Olives, Jesus would have been a rather mediocre martyr, one who had not even reached the level of stoic wisdom. Therefore, Feuillet rightly adduces other elements. His second factor is the experience of death as a sinful separation from God. This second factor does not really differ from his third one, which he bases on the clues I have already mentioned. He calls it 'the messianic trial' (*l'épreuve messianique*), which is more than a personal suffering because it places Jesus in the broad context of a cosmic event. At Gethsemane, Jesus was not only aware of his own defeat, but he could see his defeat as a part of the awful consequences of sin which affect the whole of the human race. This is what Ben F. Meyer calls 'the eschatological ordeal', which was 'the revelation of evil'.<sup>14</sup>

We should not underestimate the fact that in addition to being utterly unjust, his death on the cross was also rather banal. For the Roman soldiers, this execution was but another one among the hundreds that had taken place. It must have been extremely humiliating and demoralizing for 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' (Lk 24:19) to be crucified by a group of soldiers in a perfunctory way, and then slowly to suffocate in the presence of a few friends 'looking on from a distance' (15:40). The easy victory of the forces of evil must have given rise to a feeling of futility in the soul of Jesus. His doubts could have been well rendered by the question: 'My God, my God, *why* have you forsaken me?' (15:34).

Jesus' revulsion in the face of evil was aggravated by his special relationship to God. Moltmann speaks of 'a unique fellowship' between Jesus and his Father, 'a fellowship with God which is not mediated through the covenant, the nation and tradition, and must therefore be termed a direct fellowship.'<sup>15</sup> He perceptively observes that the dereliction of Jesus is most significant because it affected a human being who was most intimate with God. Although I do not accept Moltmann's trinitarian speculations regarding the separation between the Father and

the divine Son on the cross, I agree with his profound remark that Jesus' abandonment was a unique form of dereliction.<sup>16</sup> *For the one who was so intimate with his Father*, it was absolute anguish to be plunged in the dark night of sinfulness with all its consequences, and to be immersed totally in the great ordeal that was afflicting the human race.

This insight of Moltmann's is close to one we find in Aquinas. As Jesus was suffering in solidarity with humankind, whose sins 'he ascribed, so to speak, to himself', his acute sensitivity 'apprehended most vehemently all the causes of sadness'. Moreover, 'this grief in Christ surpassed all grief of every contrite heart, because it proceeded from a greater wisdom and love.'<sup>17</sup> In other words, the more holy someone is, the more this person is likely to suffer.

## 2 Jesus and Meaning

In order to be able to talk about Jesus as trying to decipher the meaning of his life, we must say a few words on a person's identity and basic intention. According to Hans Frei,<sup>18</sup> when we wish to understand an individual, we ask the question, 'What is he like?' and we have recourse to 'intention-action' description in order to form judgments regarding that person's identity. This identity manifests itself in the shape of self-continuity from past to present. One can also make sense of the changes that take place in an individual's states, properties and acts, because the focus of self-referral remains the same.

Furthermore, there is no separation between the identity and the responsible behavior of an agent. 'For a person is not merely illustrated, he is *constituted* by his particular intentional act at any given point in his life.'<sup>19</sup> Frei recognizes the discrepancy that may obtain between the intention and action. A person is nevertheless 'the unity of a significant project or intention passing over into its own enactment.'<sup>20</sup> Moreover, many things happen irrespective of someone's intentions. In this case, they enter into one's identification by virtue of one's response to them. Finally, we do not have a direct access to the intentions of an agent as if they were located and hidden in the mind independently of one's conduct. Therefore, in the case of people belonging to the past, we find their intention enacted in the stories that report their acts.<sup>21</sup>

If we consider the personality of Jesus, it is paramount to bear in mind that such a remarkable figure in human history surely had a profound insight into his mission. His basic intention is conveyed by the theme of the reign of God. Ben Meyer treats this topic in a more detailed way than Frei does.<sup>22</sup> He contends that Jesus' first goal was the restoration of Israel, which would have repercussions on the welfare of all the nations. First in the wake of John the Baptist and soon in his own unique manner, Jesus

focussed his whole ministry upon this aim. The proclamation and the enactment of the reign of God, which constituted Jesus' central concern, is indissociable from his intention of restoring Israel. This is confirmed by the riddle of the temple being destroyed and rebuilt.<sup>23</sup>

The reference to the kingdom recurs as Jesus approaches and reacts to his impending death. According to Chapter 14 of Mark, as Jesus and his disciples are celebrating the passover, he declares that one of them will betray him. Jesus ritually symbolizes his passion by giving them the broken bread and the cup, and by saying 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many' (14:22–24).<sup>24</sup> At this stage of the narrative, Jesus sums up the meaning of his impending death. The context remains one of hope. Jesus expresses his certitude about the coming of the kingdom and his full participation in it: 'Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (14:25).<sup>25</sup>

Another aspect of Jesus' displaying the meaning of his mission has to do with the kind of prophet or messiah his practice exemplifies. In 8:11–13, Mark recounts that the Pharisees seek from Jesus a sign from heaven, to test him (*peirazontes*, tempting him). But Jesus categorically — and fatally — refuses to give such a sign, which would clearly demonstrate that he has been sent by God. In fact, Jesus did perform many signs, but his exorcisms are too ordinary (see Mt 11:2–6, which reports the doubts of John the Baptist and Jesus' reply). The miracles of Jesus do not suffice to have him pass the test that competent Jewish authorities are entitled to have him take.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly Jesus dies without giving or being given 'a sign from heaven'.

According to several exegetes, Jesus actually attempted to impart to his disciples his understanding of messiahship.<sup>27</sup> The temptation pericopes and the passion predictions indicate that he ruled out an interpretation and practice of messiahship based on human power. In Matthew 4:1–11, for example, Jesus' threefold reply to the tempter testifies to his resolution not to command, but to be obedient to God.

Likewise, in Matthew 16:13–23, the recognition of Jesus' messiahship by Peter is immediately followed by a sharp conflict of views between the master and the disciple. Jesus demonstrates a keen awareness that his sufferings are a 'must' (*dei*). In an article which focusses on Mark and Luke, Jürgen Roloff regards this 'must' as one of the two principal grammatical modes in which the sense of God's design is rendered, (in reference to Mk 8:31, 9:12, and Lk 17:25). The other mode consists in making Jesus the subject of a sentence in the passive voice: 'The Son of Man is delivered up [that is, by God] into human hands' (Mk 9:31; see 14:4, and Lk 24:7).<sup>28</sup>

Frei stresses the significance of Jesus' obedience. He writes:

It is striking that, in all four Gospels and in the other writings of the New Testament, it is the motif or quality of obedience that is stressed in regard to the person of Jesus. By contrast, there is, for example, very little mention of his faith.<sup>29</sup>

According to Frei, by being obedient to the mission conferred on him by God, Jesus 'becomes who he is in the story by consenting to God's intention and by enacting that intention.'<sup>30</sup>

Gerald O'Collins distinguishes a maximal, a minimal, and a moderate view with respect to Jesus' knowledge of his mission.<sup>31</sup> The maximal view obliterates the fact that Christ's human intelligence was engaged in a process of learning and reflection. The minimal view strikes out deliberate purpose on the part of Jesus at the end of his life and makes of him a totally passive victim. Taking what he calls the moderate view, O'Collins rightly states:

There could have been much more meaning in his death than he fully and clearly realized when he accepted that death. Nevertheless, we normally expect at least part of the value of important human actions to stem from the conscious intentions of the primary agent.<sup>32</sup>

The extent to which Jesus ascribed a salvific efficacy to his death is a much disputed matter among exegetes and theologians.<sup>33</sup> But Jesus' conviction that his death had a meaning in God's design is, to my mind, incontrovertible. Such meaning has to do with the manner in which evil must be reversed. This is exemplified in texts such as Mt 5:39 ('Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also'), and 5:44 ('Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'). In the light of those texts, I would make the following twofold contention: As a human being Jesus did not fully understand nor thematise exactly why and how the passion made sense; he nevertheless possessed sufficient apprehension of meaning to be able to maintain that his passion was part of a drama in which God would provide a resolution to the problem of evil.

Many authors discussed by Rossé<sup>34</sup> remain unclear as to whether Jesus *felt* rejected by God or actually believed he was being rejected by God.<sup>35</sup> Rossé suggests the latter and rests his case on the witnesses of mystics. However, since he does not unravel this fundamental ambiguity, he misreads Tauler and John of the Cross.<sup>36</sup> He fails to realise that a stress on the obedience of Jesus is incompatible with imputing to him the belief that he was rejected by his Father.

Bultmann argues that, since Jesus' activity was misconstrued as a political one and he had to suffer the death of a political criminal, it could have been 'a meaningless fate'. He writes: 'We cannot tell whether or how Jesus found meaning in it. We may not veil from ourselves the possibility that he suffered a collapse.'<sup>37</sup> This remark forces us to ask: Was Jesus the mere plaything of fate, or was he an intelligent and free agent who lucidly and willingly faced his approaching death? I think the New Testament's insistence on the obedience of Jesus — and particularly Mk 14:36, 'Not what I will, but what thou wilt' — excludes the possibility that Jesus might have found no meaning in his death and therefore might have believed that God had rejected him.

In addition to such biblical evidence, it is difficult to imagine that salvation could have been wrought by God through a man who, having lost all traces of the meaning of his life and death, would not have retained his lifelong central intention and would have not been able fully to consent to God's design. How could we admit any coexistence of obedience and rejection in the passion of Jesus? The former implies meaning and integration, whereas the latter implies meaninglessness and disintegration.<sup>38</sup>

When the Bible talks of the Father 'abandoning' Jesus, this verb can be construed as meaning, on the one hand, that Jesus was *rejected*. Given the fact that the legitimate religious authorities of the time had pronounced him to be a false prophet, Jesus may indeed have *felt* rejected by God. But in the light of our preceding considerations, it does not make sense to think that he believed he had been rejected. In this respect feeling and belief may have remained in excruciating tension, with the latter more at the centre of his soul than the former. On the other hand, the abandonment can mean that Jesus was *not protected* from his enemies, that God let him fall into an abyss of suffering.<sup>39</sup> According to this second sense of abandonment, Jesus may be said to have both *felt and believed* that he was abandoned, namely that he had been 'delivered up' to the powers of evil (Mk 14:41).

### 3 God's Absence-Presence

Now that we have illustrated how Jesus integrated evil and meaning in relationship to his Father, we are in a position to show what kind of providential God his passion 'veils-unveils'. I shall argue that such a God can be spoken of in terms of 'absence-presence'.

If we interpret Mark in light of the Psalms, the absence of God means the non-intervention of God. This absence is often felt and set forth in the Psalms, as when the suppliants complain of being attacked

by their enemies and of not being protected by God. According to Xavier Léon-Dufour,<sup>40</sup> it is the sadness caused by the absence of God, as expressed by the righteous sufferer in Psalms 42:6-11 and 43:5, that is evoked in Mk 14:34, when Jesus says to his three intimate disciples: 'I am deeply grieved (*perilypos*), even to death.' The same Greek word (*lype*) recurs in John 16:6.20-22, to designate the kind of sorrow experienced by the disciples who come to terms with the fact that Jesus is about to leave them.

As Jesus is hanging on the cross, both the onlookers and the chief priests mock him and urge him to save himself and come down from the cross (15:29-32). Later, in response to the cry of Jesus, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' one of the bystanders says: 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' But no help comes from God, either directly or through the agency of Elijah.

The evidence we have gathered so far in no way implies that we should opt unilaterally for an absent God. By taking the phrase 'absence of God' to suggest solely distance, indifference or powerlessness, we would fail to do justice to divine revelation. Such a description runs counter both to Jewish Scripture and to the New Testament. A sense of proximity, care and omnipotence is conveyed by the words of Jesus, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible' (Mk 14:36). In fact, there is a complementarity between God's absence and God's presence. Two biblical strands are deepened and woven together in the passion-resurrection of Jesus: the psalmists' theme of the non-intervention of God and the Deutero-Isaiah's doctrine of God's mastery over human history.

Frei shows the interplay of divine and human agency in the paschal drama. On the one hand, once Jesus submits to arrest, the power to act passes to what Erich Auerbach calls the 'historical forces'.<sup>41</sup> The Jewish authorities, the crowd, and Pilate are active. On the other hand, the Gospel of John indicates that another Agent is also at work. As principal representative of the historical forces, Pilate has received his power from above (see John 19:10-11). Both the power of the historical forces and the power of God increase in proportion to the decrease of Jesus' agency, which becomes powerless. However, in the adverse circumstances devolving upon him, Jesus does not merely passively await the dreadful fate which confronts him. As he enters his passion, he experiences a transition from power to powerlessness, but he retains his intention and remains active by opening himself to the initiative of his Father.

To connect this powerlessness of Jesus with God's presence, Frei introduces the motif of supplantation and yet identification. God



identifies himself with the powerlessness of Jesus whose initiative has been supplanted. However, the supplantation does not exclude every form of action in Jesus.

We cannot simply say that the narrative pattern [of the passion and resurrection of Jesus] points us to the conclusion that where God is active, Jesus is not, and vice versa, or that where Jesus' identity is manifest, God's is not.<sup>42</sup>

The predominance of God's activity over that of Jesus reaches its climax in the resurrection. Proclaimed though it is, this divine intervention is nevertheless invisible. Jesus alone appears in the resurrection narratives. As was the case during the passion, the action of God remains hidden. The life and death of Jesus are vindicated by a divine power that has been imperceptible throughout.

The Father's presence to Jesus does not consist in putting his divine power at the disposal of Jesus. The temptation narratives make it clear that Jesus refuses to use divine power in order to warrant his own success. The Creator who establishes worldly contingency and human freedom respects contingency and freedom to their utmost consequences. However, because it is continually sustained by God's creative causality, human freedom does not amount to absolute independence. In his unique relationship to Jesus, the Father empowers the humanity of his Son to be totally responsive to the historical situation, in complete fidelity to the idea of God which Jesus is called to exemplify.

Both in Jesus' ministry and in Jesus' passion, the Father who has sent his only Son into our midst manifests himself as being on our side, as having a share in our plight marked with evil, suffering, sin, hopelessness and lovelessness. Through Jesus, the prophet rejected by the influential people who set the norms for society, God reveals himself as standing in intimate association with the despised, the outcast members of the human race. Thanks to the shocking fate of Jesus, God gives the lie to the self-righteous who think that he does not care for the weak, the unproductive, the immoral or the defeated.

In the passion of Jesus, we learn that the Father abandons the sufferers, since he does not directly protect or rescue them. But we also learn that in another sense he does not abandon them. In the light that the resurrection sheds on the passion, we realise that the Father is active through the Holy Spirit. Concerned for the innocent struck by evil, the Holy Spirit helps them to believe that some good will emerge from the ordeal. Thus, during those dark hours when Jesus lost his life, the providential presence of God let itself be felt paradoxically, both by

permitting the 'historical forces' to play their role and by sustaining Jesus' act of self-gift.

## Conclusion

Such sustenance should be seen not as having little significance, but, on the contrary, as implementing the maximum of agency on the part of God. As disclosed in Jesus, God's providence in our world proves to be humano-divine. Never operating in some isolated and magical way, the redemptive power of God supports the freedom of those who open their being to transcendent love and compassion. Like Jesus, those who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit can embody God's attentive and active presence as they care for others and help them.

The trinitarian character of this revelation is noteworthy in the mosaic on the pediment of the church of the Nations in Jerusalem. It depicts both Jesus in the Garden of Olives, who does not see the Father, and the Father who is nevertheless there, right above him. The Holy Spirit remains invisible.

- 1 David M. Stanley, *Jesus in Gethsemane* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 7.
- 2 See Raymond E. Brown, *A Crucified Christ in Holy Week. Essays on the Four Gospel Passion Narratives* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1986).
- 3 See Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 103–104. For a recent response to Frei, see David Tracy, 'The Gospels as Revelation and Transformation: A Tribute to Sebastian Moore', in William Loewe and Vernon J. Gregson (eds.), *Jesus Crucified and Risen: Essays in Spirituality and Theology in Honor of Dom Sebastian Moore*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 195–210.
- 4 For an abundant bibliography on this topic, see Lorraine Caza, 'Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?' *comme bonne nouvelle de Jésus Christ, Fils de Dieu, comme bonne nouvelle de Dieu pour la multitude* (Montreal: Bellarmin, and Paris: Cerf, 1989), 519–546.
- 5 See Pierre Grelot, *Dans les angoisses l'espérance* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 219.
- 6 Biblical quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version, with occasional modifications of mine, based on the Greek text.
- 7 See A. Feuillet, *L'agonie de Gethsémani. Enquête exégétique et théologique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977), 200–205.
- 8 Martin Hengel, *La crucifixion* (Paris: Cerf, 1981), 172 and 202; Jürgen Moltman, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 145–146; Gerard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), Ch. 3. Moreover, according to Xavier Léon-Dufour, Jewish texts highlighting the redemptive character of the violent death of the just were not written prior to the end of the first century C.E. and thus could not have shaped Jesus' self-understanding. See 'La mort rédemptrice du Christ selon le Nouveau Testament', in *Mort pour nos péchés* (Bruxelles: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 3rd ed., 1984), 34.

- 9 Moltmann, 145.
- 10 As Grelot points out, 190–191, and 195, n. 20. See also George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1972.
- 11 Moltmann, 146.
- 12 See Hengel, 199.
- 13 187–213.
- 14 *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 205 and 218; see 205–209.
- 15 149 and 147; see 146–151.
- 16 See Moltmann, 149–153.
- 17 *Summa theologiae*, III, 46, 6 (corpus and ad 4).
- 18 *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 40–44 and 90–93.
- 19 44; emphasis in the text.
- 20 92.
- 21 Frei distinguishes between ‘intention-action’ description and ‘self-manifestation’ description (see 43–44, 45 and 91). I could not figure out what the latter kind of description really added to the former, until I came across a perceptive remark by Ronald F. Thiemann, who convincingly argues that the ‘self-manifestation’ description should be simply regarded as belonging to ‘intention-action’ description. See *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 182, n. 1.
- 22 Es 128 and 133–137.
- 23 See 181–185. The author goes back to this theme in ‘The “Inside” of the Jesus Event’, in Matthew L. Lamb (ed.), *Creativity and Method* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1981), esp. 207–210.
- 24 Heinz Schürmann thinks it is probable that Jesus instructed his disciples as to the salvific nature of his death. See *Comment Jésus a-t-il vécu sa mort?* (Paris: Cerf, 1977), Ch. 1.
- 25 See John Galvin, ‘Jesus’ Approach to Death: An Examination of Some Recent Studies’, *Theological Studies*, 41 (1980) 719–720. 26 See *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*, footnote to Mt 16:1. See also the warnings against false prophets in Dt 13:1–5, Jr 23:9–32,
- 27 See Meyer, 185–197.
- 28 See Jürgen Roloff, ‘Anfänge der soteriologischen Deutung des Todes Jesu (Mk. X.45 und Lk. XXII.27)’, *New Testament Studies*, 19 (1972–73) 38–64, es 39–43.
- 29 105–106.
- 30 107. Thiemann (117) confirms Frei’s thesis as he writes that Matthew depicts Jesus ‘as the obedient Son of God, i.e., the one who purposefully enacts his own intentions in conformity with the intentions of the Father’ (his emphasis).
- 31 *Interpreting Jesus* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 79–92. 32 79
- 33 See John Galvin, ‘The Death of Jesus in Contemporary Theology:

- Systematic Perspectives and Historical Issues', *Horizons*, 13 (1986) 239–252.
- 34 See Rossé, Chs. 5, 7 and 8.
- 35 For this distinction I am indebted to Ruth Burrows, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1977) 36.
- 36 See 78–83.
- 37 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', in Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (eds.), *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1964, 24. Eberhard Jüngel adopts Bultmann's position in *Death: The Riddle and the Mystery* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1975), 105.
- 38 For the connection meaning/integration and meaninglessness/disintegration, see Herbert Fingarette, *The Self in Transformation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).
- 39 See Max Zerwick, *Analysis Philologica Novi Testamenti Graeci* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1953), at Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34: The verb *engkataleipo* (I abandon) means 'relinquo in aliqua mala condicione.'
- 40 *Face à la mort, Jésus et Paul* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 128–129.
- 41 In Ch. 2 of *Mimesis* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1957), to which Frei refers on 116.
- 42 124–125.

## Translations and Liturgical Tradition

Patrick Gorevan

The perennial question whether translation is, in fact, possible is rooted in ancient religious and psychological doubts on whether there ought to be any passage from one tongue to another. So far as speech is divine and numinous, so far as it encloses revelation, active transmission whether into the vulgate or across the barrier of languages is dubious or frankly evil .... [thus] the belief that three days of utter darkness fell on the world when the Law was translated into Greek (George Steiner, *After Babel*).<sup>1</sup>

Such reflections may have a place when it comes to the translation of liturgical documents. They may even be required reading before the awesome task be undertaken. It would be indeed unfortunate if the next English version of the Roman Sacramentary in English were to spark off power cuts all over the English-speaking world!

Perhaps we need not worry. Recent articles in *New Blackfriars* by