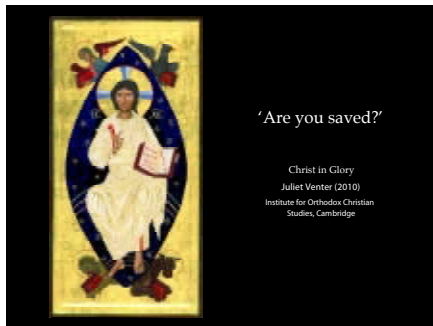


# Salvation in Christ

By Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia

## Safety in numbers



### *Visual Aid 1:*

### *Icon of Christ in Glory: 'Are you saved?'*

Some years ago I was travelling by railway train, a dangerous place to be, and a man came and sat opposite me. After staring at me for some time he said to me, in a low but clear voice, 'Are you saved?' How did I reply? How would *you* reply to that question? I won't tell you at this moment what my reply was, but I may tell you at the end of my talk.

My subject tonight, then, is salvation in Christ. If we look in the New Testament what we find is not a single way of understanding the saving work of Christ, not a single, systematic theory, but we have a whole series of images and symbols set side by side. They are symbols of profound meaning and power, yet for the most part they are not explained but left to speak for themselves. If we want to understand the work of Christ, it is better to follow what the New Testament does and to have a number of different images in our mind. We should not isolate any single image of Christ's work, but we should combine them together. Our best motto is: 'Safety in numbers'.

This evening we shall look together at six possible models of salvation. This list is not exhaustive; it would certainly be possible to add other models as well. We should not see these models as alternatives, but should work with all of them; for each one reveals part of the truth to us.

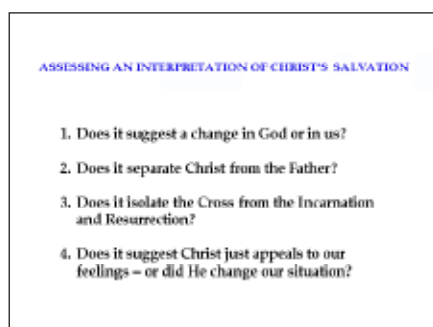
This leads me to recall the first time that I travelled to America half a century ago, as a student in 1959. In those days you had to be very rich to go by air, and so I went by boat, on one of the Cunard Liners, the Queen Elizabeth. The journey lasted five days, and the ticket included not just the sleeping accommodation, but also the meals. To my immense satisfaction I found that at mealtimes the menu was not divided up into a limited number of courses. You were given a huge card mentioning all kinds of things that you might eat, and you could have as many courses as you liked. At breakfast, for example, you could have both porridge and fruit-juice and cereal, and then both smoked haddock and bacon

and eggs, if you felt like that in the heaving waters of the mid-Atlantic. In the evening the people at my table were very unimaginative, and just had three courses, soup, meat or fish, and then pudding. I worked out at least seven courses that I could have: melon, then the hors d'oeuvres, then soup, fish, meat, cheese, the sweet, and perhaps one or two other things as well. I can remember walking up and down on deck each afternoon for over an hour in order to get up a good appetite for the evening. This Cunard system of feeding was excellent for me as a hungry student, wanting to get my money's worth for my ticket.

Let's apply the system of the Cunard menu to tonight's topic, and include in our spiritual meal all the different items on our menu of salvation. Of our six models, let us not say 'Either/Or' but 'Both/And'.

Underlying all six models, there is one fundamental truth. Jesus Christ, as our Saviour, has done something for us that we could not do alone and by ourselves. We cannot save ourselves; we need help. As our Lord affirms, 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). In one of my favourite books, *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* by M.R. James, the author recounts in 'A School Story' how the boys in class were being taught to write Conditional Sentences in Latin, that is, sentences beginning with the word 'if', expressing a future consequence. The master told them each to write down a Conditional Sentence of their own invention. The boys handed in their bits of paper, and the master looked at the top one. At once he made an odd noise in his throat, and rushed out of the room. The boys wondered who had made a grammatical error so awful as to upset the master in this alarming way. The bit of paper on top read: *Si tu non veneris ad me, ego veniam ad te*, 'If you don't come to me, I'll come to you'. And strangely the handwriting was not that of any of the boys in the room.

How the story continues – what it was that the schoolmaster so greatly dreaded and how it eventually came to him – I shall not tell you; you must read the story for yourselves, and I do not want to spoil it for you. Let us simply apply the words on the bit of paper to the work of Christ. We could not come to God, so He has come to us. We could not by our own efforts cross over the abyss which sin has created between us and heaven; so God in Christ has crossed over the abyss and drawn near to us.



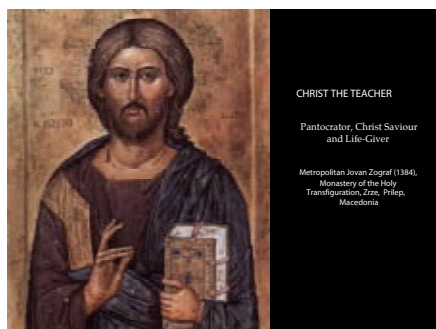
### *Visual Aid 2:* *Assessing an Interpretation*

In regard to each model of salvation, let us ask four questions:

- 1 *Does the model in question envisage a change in God or in us?* Some theories of Christ's saving work seem to suggest that God is angry with us, and what Christ has done is to satisfy God's anger. But that cannot be right. It is we who need changing, not God. As St. Paul said, 'God was in Christ, *reconciling the world to Himself*' (2 Corinthians 5:19 [*Revised Standard Version, note*]). It is the world that needs to be reconciled to God, not God who needs to be reconciled to the world.

- 2 *Does the model separate Christ from the Father?* Some theories seem to suggest that God the Father is punishing Christ when He dies on the Cross. I remember as a student in Oxford hearing that great evangelical preacher Billy Graham say, 'At the moment when Christ died on the Cross the lightning of God's wrath hit him instead of you'. I didn't find that a very happy way of thinking of Christ's work. Surely we should not separate Christ from the Father in that kind of way, for they are one God, members together of the Holy Trinity. As St Paul states, in the words that I quoted just now, 'God was in Christ'. When Christ saves us, it is God who is at work in Him; there is no separation.
- 3 *Does the model isolate the cross from the Incarnation and the Resurrection?* We are to think of Christ's life as a single unity. So we should not think only of the Cross, but we should think of what went before the Crucifixion, and of what comes after.
- 4 *Does the model presuppose an objective or a subjective understanding of Christ's work?* Does Christ's saving work merely appeal to our feelings, or did He do something to alter our objective situation in an actual and realistic way?

## Model 1: TEACHER

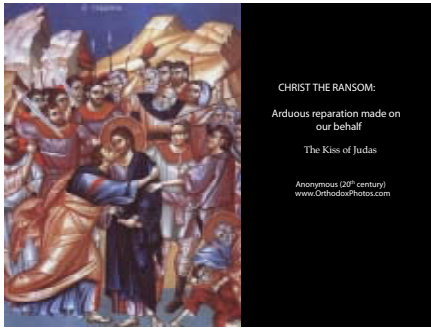


*Visual Aid 3:  
Icon of Pantocrator,  
Christ Saviour and Life-Giver*

First of all, we may think of Christ as teacher, as the one who reveals the truth to us, who brings us light and disperses the darkness of ignorance from our minds: 'He was the true light that enlightens everyone coming into the world' (John 1:9 [*New Revised Standard Version, note*]). He saves us by teaching us the truth about God. This was exactly the way in which His disciples thought of Him at the beginning when they called Him 'Rabbi', which means teacher. Later, of course, they realized He was not just a human teacher but something far more. This first model was adopted in particular by the group of second century writers known as the Apologists, the most famous of whom was Justin Martyr.

With regard to our four questions, we can say of this first model:

- 1 Yes, the change is in us, not God.
- 2 No, there is no separation between Jesus and the Father; Christ's teaching is the teaching of God.
- 3 No, the Cross is not isolated; Christ's teaching role embraces His whole life, all that He said and all that He did and was.
- 4 So far, so good. But difficulties arise over this fourth question. Christ opens our minds by His teaching, but does He then leave us to carry out His teaching simply by our own efforts? Has He actually changed our objective situation? More specifically, we do not merely need to be instructed, but we need to be saved from sin. So this first model embraces part of the truth, but not the whole, for it leaves out the tragedy and the anguish of sin.



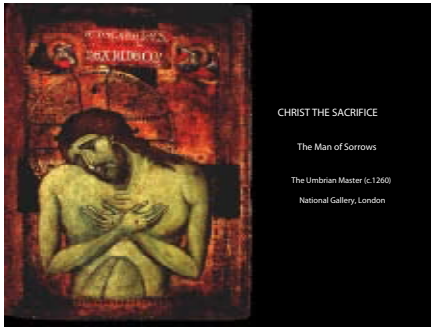
*Visual Aid 4:  
Icon of the Kiss of Judas*

In this second image of Christ and His work, we may think of Him as paying a ransom on our behalf: ‘The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45). The point of this metaphor is that previously we were enslaved to sin, but now we are liberated: ‘Christ has set us free’ (Galatians 5:1). But this act of liberation on Christ’s part is enormously costly. The ransom that Christ pays on our behalf is nothing less than His own life, laid down for us on the Cross. It was no easy task to set us free; an act of arduous reparation was required.

Let us remember that this is only an image or metaphor, not a systematic theory; and let us therefore not attempt to press the metaphor too far. It is wise not to ask: *To whom* is the ransom paid? In fact, the New Testament does not actually ask that question. If we say, ‘the ransom is paid to God the Father’, then we are in danger of separating Christ from His Father, and of thinking of the Father as angry and vindictive, and demanding payment. Surely God is not like that: He does not require payment, but forgives us freely. Should we then say that the payment is paid to the devil? That is an answer that the Fathers, Greek and Latin, have often given; but it creates major problems. It seems to suggest that the devil has rights or claims upon us, and that cannot be true. The devil has no rights; he is a liar. The essential point of the ransom metaphor is not transaction or bargain but liberation. It is better not to ask who is being paid, but to stick to the basic point: Christ has set us free.

Applying our four questions to the ransom model, we can respond:

- 1 No problem: the change is in us, not God.
- 2 Again, no problem, so long as we do not think of Christ as paying the ransom to the Father. But if we do apply the ransom metaphor in that way, then there will indeed be a danger of separating the two.
- 3 Certainly, the ransom model concentrates mainly on the Cross, but it need not do so exclusively. It is the whole life of Christ, from His Incarnation to His Ascension – and including the Transfiguration and the Resurrection – that has set us free.
- 4 Here lies the major strength of the second model, compared with the first. In setting us free, Christ has indeed altered our objective situation.



### Visual Aid 5: *Icon of the Man of Sorrows*

Here we enter deep waters. For us today the idea of sacrifice has lost much of its meaning. But in the worship of peoples in the ancient world, whether Hebrew, Greek or Roman, sacrifice was everywhere taken for granted. In the Old Testament there are many different kinds of sacrifice, yet nowhere do we find a definition of what sacrifice is and how it works. In the New Testament Christ is seen as fulfilling the sacrifices of the Old Covenant more especially in two ways:

- i 'Christ our Paschal lamb has been sacrificed' (1 Corinthians 5:7); 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). Here Christ is seen as the Paschal Lamb, eaten by the Jews at the Passover in memory of the Exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 12). Christ's death on the Cross and His Resurrection is the New Passover.
- ii 'He is the atoning sacrifice (*hilasmos*) for our sins' (1 John 2:2). This recalls the sacrificial ritual on the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), when the people were sprinkled with blood to cleanse them from their sins (Leviticus 16:23, 27-32). In a similar way the blood of Jesus, sacrificed for us, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement is recalled in particular when our Lord institutes the Eucharist, saying: 'This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Matthew 26:28).

To understand the meaning of sacrifice, let us hold fast to four ideas:

- a A sacrifice is fundamentally an *offering* or *gift* made to God.
- b The true sacrifice is to offer to God, not an animal or some object, but *ourselves*. Sacrifice means self-offering: 'In burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God"' (Hebrews 10: 6-7, quoting Psalm 40:6-7).
- c Many people think that the essence of sacrifice lies in the death of the sacrificial victim, lamb, goat or calf as the case may be. But the true purpose of sacrifice is *not death but life*. If the victim is slain, that is not because its death has value as an end in itself, but so that its life may be offered to God. According to the understanding of the Old Testament, the life of an animal or human being resides in the blood; and thus by the pouring out of the victim's blood, its life was released and made available, so as to be offered up to God.
- d A sacrifice, in order to be truly a gift or offering, must necessarily be *voluntary*. That which is taken from us by force, against our will, is not truly a sacrifice.

Now we can apply all this to the sacrifice of Christ:

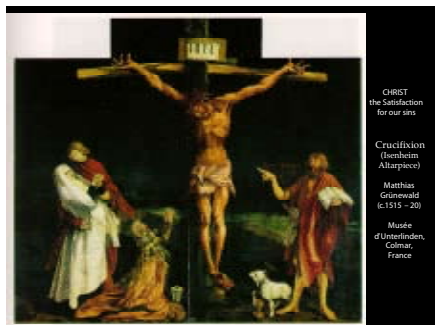
- a Christ, as sacrifice, is offered up to God.
- b Christ offers Himself in sacrifice.
- c When He dies on the Cross, it is that we may have life. This is made transparently clear, when His death on the Cross is followed by His life-creating Resurrection.
- d Christ was not under any compulsion to die, but He freely laid down His life on our behalf: 'I lay down my life for the sheep ... No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (John 10:15, 18). If Christ had not gone voluntarily to His death, His Crucifixion would have been simply a miscarriage of justice, an act of violence, a murder. But because He lays down His life willingly, His death becomes a life-creating sacrifice for the sins of all the world.

Underlying the whole notion of sacrifice as voluntary self-offering, there is one all-important factor: *love*. Why does Christ lay down His life? Out of love: '... having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end' (John 13:1); 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (John 3:16). Love, then, is the key to the whole idea of sacrifice. Sacrifice is voluntary self-offering, inspired by love – love to the uttermost, love without limits.

Recalling our four questions, we may say: there is indeed a danger of stating the 'sacrifice' model in such a way as to suggest that the change is in God, not us (question 1), that Christ is separated from the Father (question 2), and that the Cross is to be isolated from the rest of our Lord's life (question 3). But this danger is largely avoided if the element of love is emphasized. In that case, Christ's sacrifice is seen as an expression of God's unchanging love; the sacrifice of love alters us, not God, and there is no separation between Father and Son. Moreover, the whole of Christ's life, from the Incarnation onwards, is a sacrifice or offering to God; so the Cross is not isolated.

Closely linked to the idea of sacrifice, there are two other ways of thinking about Christ's saving work:

### Model 3, variant (1): SATISFACTION

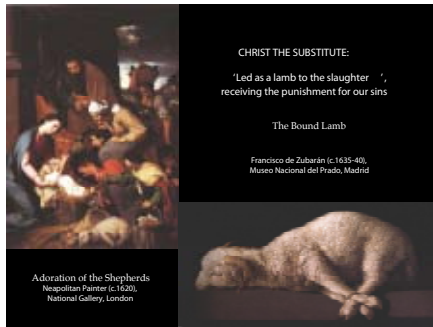


*Visual Aid 6:*  
*Grünewald, Crucifixion*

Anselm (c. 1033–1109), Archbishop of Canterbury, interpreted Christ's sacrifice in terms of satisfaction. His theory of the atonement has been widely popular, not only in the West but in the East, primarily because it possesses a firmly 'objective' character (see question 4). He applied to the atonement the principles of the medieval feudal society in which he

lived. Human sin, he argued, has offended God's honour; satisfaction must be given to the Father in recompense for His offended honour, and this satisfaction has been rendered by Christ on our behalf. For all its popularity, this theory has two grave disadvantages: (1) it interprets salvation in legalistic categories, rather than as an act of divine love; (2) the notions of honour and satisfaction, while reflecting medieval feudalism, are not to be found in the Bible.

### Model 3, variant (2): SUBSTITUTION



#### *Visual Aid 7: Christ the Substitute*

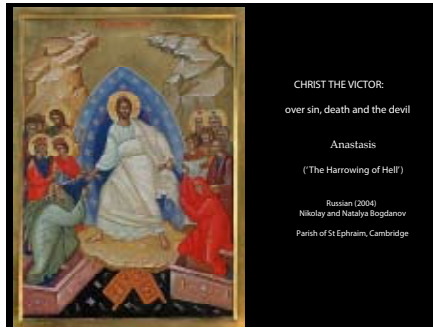
Unlike variant (1), the idea of substitution – that Christ bears our sins in his own person and suffers instead of us – does indeed possess firm Biblical roots. Christ is here seen as fulfilling two Old Testament prototypes:

- 1 He is like the sacrificial *scapegoat*, on whose head were placed the sins of the people, before it was driven out into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22).
- 2 Christ is the *Suffering Servant*, described in Isaiah 53:4-7 (compare Acts 8:30-35):

*'Surely He has born our infirmities and carried our sorrows ...  
He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities,  
upon Him was the punishment that made us whole, and by His wounds we are healed ...  
The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all ...  
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53:4-7).*

Jesus, then, when He suffers and dies on the Cross, is taking our sins upon Himself and enduring the punishment that we deserve to undergo: 'For our sake [God] made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Now in this substitution model it is clear that the change is in us, not in God (question 1); but we must be careful not to understand the model in such a way as to separate Christ from God, as Billy Graham unfortunately did (question 2). Also there is a danger that the idea of substitution may turn Christ's work of salvation into a transaction that is somehow external to us, in which we are not directly and immediately involved. Jesus does indeed suffer for our sins, but we need to be associated with His act of sacrificial suffering and to make that act our own. It is legitimate to say 'Christ *instead of me*', but we should balance that by saying, 'Christ *on behalf of me*', and also 'Christ in me and I in Him'. Substitution language should be combined with the language of indwelling.



### *Visual Aid 8: Icon of the Anastasis*

Here Christ's work of salvation is seen as a cosmic battle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Christ is victor over sin, death and the devil. This victory is summed up in the last word that He spoke on the Cross, '*Tetelestai*' (John 19:30), which is usually translated 'It is finished'. But this is not to be seen as a cry of resignation or despair. Christ is not just saying, 'It's all over. This is the end', but He is affirming, 'It is accomplished. It is fulfilled. It is completed'. For other examples of the victory *motif*, see Colossians 2:15: '[God] disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it ([through the Cross])'; and also Ephesians 4:8: 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive' (quoting Psalm 68:18 [in the King James Version]).

The Father who particularly uses the idea of victory is St Irenaeus of Lyons at the end of the second century. If you want to see the idea of victory lived out, then think above all of the Paschal Midnight Service, with its constant refrain, *Christos anesti ek nekron*, 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death'. Think also of the marvellous sermon attributed to St John Chrysostom, read at the end of matins or at the liturgy, with its overwhelming sense of triumphant joy. The same note of victory is found in Latin hymns for Pascha: 'Death and life have contended in that combat tremendous. The Prince of Life who died reigns immortal.'

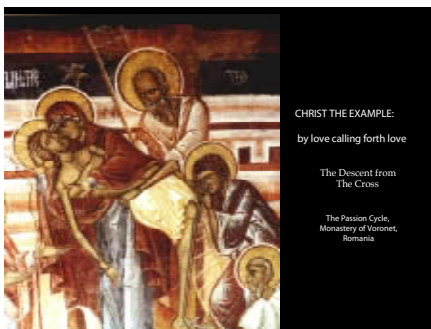
There's a traditional story told from the early days of persecution in Russia that illustrates the theme of Paschal victory. An atheist lecturer came to a village, and all the inhabitants were assembled to listen to him. He explained to them at great length that there is no God, and he said at the end, 'Are there any questions?' At the back of the audience the parish priest stood up and said, 'I'd like to say something'. The atheist lecturer, sensing trouble, told him: 'You must be very brief. I will only allow you half a minute.' 'Oh', said the priest, 'I don't need nearly as much time as that. What I wanted to say is this: "Christ is risen!"' All the audience shouted back, "He is risen indeed". Then the priest turned to the atheist lecturer with the words, 'That's all I wanted to say!' Such is our answer to the world's misery: The risen Christ is victor over darkness and despair.

The great advantage of this victory model is that it holds together the Cross and the Resurrection. They are seen as a single event, an undivided drama. Already when Christ dies on the Cross it is a victory, but the victory is at that moment hidden. When the myrrh-bearing women come on the third day to the tomb and find it empty, and when Christ appears before them, once more alive (Matthew 28: 9), then the victory is made manifest.

This victory model has, however, a difficult side. It can sound militaristic. It seems that the saving work of Christ is being understood in terms of superior force, of coercive power. So we need to say that the death and resurrection of Christ are indeed a victory, but a victory of a very unusual kind. What we have on the Cross is the victory, not of superior force, not of military might, but of suffering love. On the Cross Christ is victorious through His weakness, through His self-emptying, through His *kenosis*, to use the Greek term. So a victory, yes, but a *kenotic* victory.

This becomes clear when we link the cry of Christ on the Cross, ‘It is finished’, *tetelestai* (John 19:30), with what is said by the Evangelist before the account of the Passion, ‘Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end’ (John 13:1). The word for ‘end’ here is the noun *telos*, which comes from the same root as the verb *tetelestai*, ‘It is finished’. Now everything in St. John’s Gospel ties up together. When I was at school our history master had a favourite phrase. He used to say in his curiously high-pitched voice, ‘It all ties up, you see. It all ties up’. That’s a good way to teach history and it’s also a good way to study the Bible. So when Christ says ‘It is finished’, *tetelestai*, the Evangelist intends us to think back to what was said four chapters earlier, ‘Having loved His own, He loved them *to the end*’, *eis telos*. From this we understand exactly what is finished on the Cross, what is fulfilled: it is the victory of love. Despite all the suffering physical and mental inflicted upon Him, Jesus goes on loving humankind; His love is not changed into hatred. We are to see the victory then not as a military victory but as the victory of suffering love, unchanging love, love without limits. As the Protestant theologian Karl Barth said, ‘The Christian God is great enough to be humble’. And that’s what we see above all in His victory on the Cross. God is never so strong as when He is most weak.

## Model 5: EXAMPLE



### *Visual Aid 9: Icon of the Taking Down of Jesus from the Cross*

Just as the ‘satisfaction’ model of the atonement is associated with a particular Latin writer, Anselm of Canterbury, so our fifth model is likewise associated with another Latin writer, Peter Abelard (1079–1142/3), Anselm’s younger contemporary. Abelard sees Christ’s life and sacrificial death as the supreme example of love in action. Love, so he maintains, is deeply attractive, and in this way the love of God shown in Christ’s life and death evokes the response of love in us. As is said in the Anglican hymn that I used to sing as a child:

*Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved,  
and we must love Him too.*

Christ’s love, made manifest supremely on the Cross, acts as a spiritual magnet, drawing us all to Him: ‘I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ (John 12:32).

A great many Western Christians in modern times have been attracted by this fifth model, because it moves completely away from the notion of God as angry, jealous, vindictive, and blood-thirsty. It moves away from legalistic categories like satisfaction, which many people today find inappropriate. It moves away from the militaristic imagery of a battle. Instead, it interprets God and His salvation in terms of love. It does not separate Christ from the Father, because the love that Christ displays is God's love (question 2). It does not isolate the Cross from the rest of Christ's life, because the whole of Christ's life is an example of love (question 3). But the difficulty comes in with question 4. If Christ has merely set us an example, does that mean we have then to follow that example by our own efforts? Has Christ objectively changed things?

There is a story told of the great Scottish commander, Robert the Bruce, in the thirteenth century, that illustrates this difficulty. Fighting against the invading English, he was repeatedly defeated. One day, after a severe reverse, he was sitting alone in a room and he thought, 'It's no good, I must give up. No point in going on fighting'. Then he looked and saw a spider that had fallen out of his web and was trying to get back again. It kept pulling itself up by the thread on which it was hanging, and it kept falling back, but it went on trying, until at last it managed to get back into the web. Robert the Bruce applied the lesson to himself: he decided to go and fight the English just one more time, and on this final occasion he defeated them.

Now the spider may have encouraged Robert the Bruce by setting him an example, but it did not actually change anything in his outward, objective situation. So we are to ask: has Jesus on the Cross done no more for us than the spider did for Robert the Bruce? Has He just set us an example but nothing more? Does he just leave us to follow His example by our own efforts, relying on our own strength? Surely that's not enough. We need His help, the help of His grace.

This criticism, however, based on the story of Robert the Bruce, totally misconceives the scope and dynamism of love. Love is creative. It's not just a subjective feeling. If you love somebody with all your heart, then you change the world for them. Love is an objective energy in the universe. If a child has been loved by its parents in infancy, that will change the whole way in which he or she experiences the world later on. Because of the love of the parents, the child will have a courage, trust and hope that she or he would not otherwise have. By the same token hatred is also an objective force. If a child has not been loved by its parents but has been rejected, that will mark his or her life afterwards, and that child when it grows up will find it more difficult to trust and love others because it has not been loved itself.

From this we see how love is a creative, enabling force. Our love alters the lives of others. And if this is true of our human love, it is much more true of the divine-human love of Christ our Saviour. By loving us He does not just set us an example but He changes the world for us, giving us a meaning and hope that we could not otherwise discover. So the love of another for me infuses into me a transfiguring force, a transformative power. Love enables, just as hatred depotentiates. That is true of our inter-human relationships, but it is much more true of the love poured out upon us by the Son of God. Where love is concerned, the subjective/objective contrast breaks down.

If we now try to join together models 3, 4 and 5, we can discover a common theme that unites them together; and that is the theme of *suffering love*. What makes Christ's death a redeeming sacrifice is precisely that He offers Himself willingly in love (model 3). The victory of Christ is nothing else than the victory of *kenotic*, suffering love (model 4). And the example of this suffering love alters our lives and fills us with grace and power (model 5). Models 4 and 5, interpreted as we have tried to do, are simply two sides of the same coin: His victory is nothing else than the example of His unchanging love, and the example of His love is itself the victory. Joining these three models together, understanding each in the light of the other, we reach a firm and convincing doctrine of the Atonement.

## Model 6: EXCHANGE



*Visual Aid 9:  
The Exchange of Gifts*

To appreciate this, my final model, we may think of Christmas. What do we do each December? We send each other greetings, we exchange presents. And that is exactly the meaning of the feast of the Incarnation that we celebrate at Christmas. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, there occurred the greatest and most wonderful of all possible exchanges. He took our humanity – our gift to Him, offered through the Blessed Virgin Mary – and in exchange He enables us to share in His divine grace and glory.

So in this sixth model salvation is understood in terms of mutual sharing, of reciprocal participation. As St Paul expresses it, speaking metaphorically in terms of riches and poverty: 'Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9). The riches of Christ are His heavenly glory; our human poverty means our fallen condition, our alienation and brokenness. Christ shares in our brokenness - in our anguish, our loneliness, our loss of hope – and so we are enabled by way of exchange to share in His eternal life, becoming 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4).

St Irenaeus of Lyons expresses the same point in more direct terms: 'In His unbounded love, He became what we are, so as to make us what He is'.<sup>1</sup> St Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373) is yet more succinct: 'He became man, that we might become God'.<sup>2</sup> We could also translate the phrase: 'He became incarnate, that we might be ingodded', or 'He was humanized, that we might be deified'.

This sixth model encourages us to think of salvation as *theosis* or deification: salvation is not just a change in our legal status before God, it is not just an imitation of Jesus through moral effort, but it signifies an organic, all-embracing transformation of our created personhood, through a genuine participation in divine life. Equally this sixth model can be spelt out in terms of *healing*. St Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), or Gregory

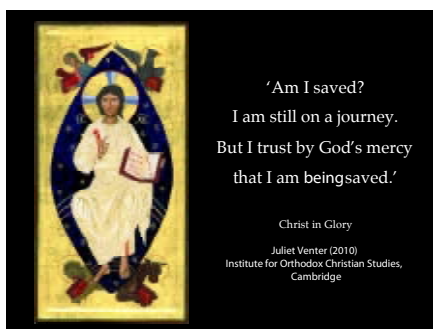
the Theologian, as he is known in the Orthodox Church, affirmed with reference to the Incarnation, ‘The unassumed is unhealed’.<sup>3</sup> Christ, that is to say, has shared totally in our humanness – He has taken up into Himself our human nature in its entirety – and in this way He has healed us and transfigured us.

This sixth model presupposes a change in us (question 1) (it also presupposes a change in the second person of the Trinity, in the sense that, by becoming incarnate, while Christ has not ceased to be true God, He has also become truly human). The sixth model holds closely together Christ and the Father (question 2). Also, and most importantly, it treats Christ’s ‘economy’ as a single unity (question 3): Incarnation, Transfiguration, Gethsemane, Golgotha, the Resurrection, the Ascension are all seen as essentially connected. And it is fully ‘objective’ (question 4).

As I insisted at the beginning, my six models are not mutually exclusive; we are to make use of all of them. Equally, my list of six is not exhaustive: I am sure that you can find other models in the New Testament.

There are other aspects of the Christian doctrine of salvation that I have not mentioned tonight. In particular, salvation is not solitary but social. We are saved in the Church, as members of it, and in union with all the other members. We are saved more specifically through the sacraments of the Church, above all Baptism and Holy Communion. This will be the subject of future addresses by others in the present series.

### ‘Are You Saved?’



#### *Visual Aid 11:*

#### *Icon of Christ in Glory: ‘I am being saved.’*

It remains for me to tell you how I replied to the man in the train, when he asked me, ‘Are you saved?’ I might have answered, ‘Yes, I am saved’. But might not that have been somewhat over-confident? Long after his conversion on the road to Damascus, St. Paul expressed the fear that, ‘after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified’ (1 Corinthians 9:27). God is faithful, and He will not change; but we humans, as long as we are in this life, retain free will and so, up to the end of our life, we are in danger of falling away. As St Antony of Egypt (251-356) warned us, ‘Expect temptation until your last breath’.<sup>4</sup> I am on a journey, and that journey is not yet completed.

So, perhaps should I have answered the man, ‘No, I am not saved’. But that doesn’t seem very satisfactory. He could have replied, ‘Well, what do you mean by going about dressed in black like this? If you’re not saved, you’ve no business to be a clergyman.’ Possibly, then, I should have answered, ‘I don’t know’. But that is surely a very feeble answer. He could well have responded, ‘If you don’t know, you’d better go and find out’.

Thus I thought the best way of answering was to say, ‘I trust by God’s mercy I am *being saved*’. In other words, let us use the present tense, but in the form of the *continuous* present: not ‘I *am* saved’ but ‘I am *being* saved’. Salvation, that is to say, is a process. It is not just a single event, but an ongoing journey, a pilgrimage that is only completed at the moment of our death.

So that was my answer to the man in the train, but if you can think of a better answer, please let me know.

*Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia*

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- 1 *Against the Heresies*, V, preface.
- 2 On the Incarnation, trans. R.W. Thomson, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, Early Christian Texts (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1971), p. 54.
- 3 St Gregory the Theologian, *Letter 101, to Cledonius*, 32, ed. Paul Gally (Sources Chrétiennes 208: Paris, 1974), p. 50, tr. Hardy and Richardson, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, p. 218.
- 4 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Antony 4 (PG 65:77A).