

Why the Christian Story Endures

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There are stories that keep on meaning, for days, weeks, even years. What they mean to us grows as we grow, putting our emerging concerns into words we could not find for ourselves. This seems impossible if we think of stories as texts in books. How can the meaning of a story possibly change? But stories are no more black marks in books than a Mozart sonata is black notes in a score. Like music, stories are interactions. There literally is no story without events going on in someone, and what can go on evolves as he or she grows. We are regularly surprised to find ourselves interested in stories we used to consider boring. Or, with the classics, we return to the well, as it were, to draw more deeply from the same words. So when we understand what makes any story endure, we can expect to understand not only their structure, plot and character development. We will also understand ourselves, at touch points that move as we grow.¹

The Christian story has endured for more people, and for a longer time, than any other story we know of. Why is this? Some Christians will immediately respond, 'Because it is true!' But that doesn't explain why children are captivated by the story. Children go for drama, even fable, not truth. Nor does mere truth move people to die for their faith. Martyrdom requires a courage beyond truth. Those who are not Christian may respond, 'The Christian story is just a myth that fools the simple-minded with illusory promises.' But that doesn't explain the tremendous influence Christianity has had in founding universities and teaching people to think for themselves. This is no nursery tale.

1. *The Evolution of our Interests*

Still, not many Christians can explain what it is about the Christian story that so absorbs them. Those Christians who do understand will have noticed a persistent need in themselves, will respond to the Christian story more intelligently, and will tell it to others in ways that meets similar persistent needs in them. So it will be worth our while to look for what in the human heart makes the Christian story so tenacious. Moreover, if stories endure because their meaning grows as their hearers grow, then perhaps we should first set the stage to the drama of enduring stories by describing the typical way our interests evolve.

Plots

When we are young, we are preoccupied with striking a balance between controlling our environments and letting our environments control us. We put on hats against the cold, but not the kind of hat that other kids will laugh at. We rely on what our parents tell us, but only to a point. Because we perceive life as a struggle to master our surroundings and seize opportunities, we like stories with riveting plots because we can follow characters as they outwit the forces of nature and push back against social expectations. Our interest in plots continues as we age, but often takes second place to newer interests.

Character

As we grow, our interests may shift toward character. Having met the limits of our ability to control our environments, we awake to our inner conduct, in both our failures and our successes. We are less inquisitive about practicalities and more about subjectivities. In stories, we want to hear protagonists put into words what it means to be the person they find themselves to be – words that will give us company in our search for depth. Now our interests focus on being authentic, being persons of integrity.

Wisdom

As we mature, our interests may broaden to encompass a universal viewpoint. Having fallen short of a mastery, not only of our surroundings, but of our own character as well, we realize that this is true of everyone. Each of us plays a few roles over the span of a lifetime, and each of our lifetimes seems like a subplot of a larger, collective history. But this larger story of the race eludes us. It dawns on us that while we have been the psychological center of our lives, our lives, in turn are only ripples in the ancient river we call Life. Like Copernicus, we stand outside of where we are. We envision the universe first, populated by people who assume, as we have, they're in the exact middle of things. We did not have to be, but here we all are. Why are we thus and so? The more urgently we feel the question, the more mysterious the answer appears. Now the issue is awe, wonder, and mystery. We search for wisdom.

Interesting stories carry their appeal all along this ascent of our personal development in ways that escape our notice. Young readers who praise a plot are often oblivious to the influence that character development has on them. Likewise, adults who praise character development unknowingly feel, along with the characters they identify with, those deeper concerns about all of human life that their wiser elders contemplate.

Good writers know the experience of having a question without being able to formulate it. Masters of the craft provoke these unformulated questions in

their readers without spelling them out explicitly. In this sense, they know more about what their readers are interested in than their readers do.

2. *Mystery*

As our interests evolve from plot to character to wisdom, it gradually dawns on us how mysterious life is. Life has a bright side and a dark side. On the bright side, there's the mysterious ways that people hope against hope or fall in love with the most unlikely people. Transcendent mystery is beyond their comprehension, having more meaning than they could ever exhaust. On the dark side, there are the mysterious ways that people eat and breathe hatred, usually for others, but not infrequently for themselves. Iniquitous mystery is beneath their comprehension, having no meaning that could ever justify it. But, aside from extreme cases, most of us shape our lives without knowing for sure which is which. Am I growing in integrity, or just hoping for recognition? When I give in to others, am I being generous or stupid? Abstractly, while all the movements of human souls occur in this field of bright and dark, concretely, the field lies gray under an overcast sky. So, as we follow the journey of characters in an enduring story, we may achieve certain revelations here and there about our own lives, but for the most part we do nothing more than see a mirror of our own journey in this fog of mystery.



Events

The most powerful stories narrate concrete events. It is the concrete events, far more than abstract reflections, that stir the movements in us toward the transcendent and away from the incoherent. To understand what makes any story enduring, we need a general term for the kind of events that good writers know will touch a reader's heart. Although we referred to life itself as 'mysterious,' we can gain some fruitful precision if we call such events 'mysteries.'² These are not detective mysteries, where we find out in the end who killed grandmother. Rather, when we read about these events, we experience questions whose answers are never finished. The events we are calling mysteries are the impenetrable but very concrete struggles for power, for authenticity, and for wisdom that draw the reader deeper. The stories that speak of mysteries in this sense symbolize for us, in palpable, concrete terms, our touch with the transcendent mystery that both draws and frightens us, as well as the iniquitous mystery that, in its own way, draws and frightens us as well.

In most religions, the idea of 'mystery' is associated with perplexing truths, as when certain religious doctrines are called 'mysteries.' Or it is associated with highly unusual events such as miracles or visions. Yet such theophanies, astonishing though they be, are neither the exclusive nor the normal way in which we experience mystery. They may seem 'mysterious,' but they are not necessarily 'mysteries' in our sense if all they stir in us is amazement at what we cannot explain. The point about religious teachings about salvation is not simply that we cannot understand; it's rather that we feel drawn toward what we already love despite our lack of understanding.

In the origins of any religious community, doctrines about salvation are rooted in historical events that wakened wonder in the religion's founders. The engendering historical event itself was someone's saving encounter with transcendent mystery in that time and at that place. When it comes to passing on the tradition, Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others come back to the stories of the events. Israel praises God by telling stories of what God has done to save them from false gods and political enemies. Muslims tell of Mohammed's journey to Mecca. Christian Evangelists tell stories about the mysteries in which Christ confronts diabolic forces. Christian tradition hands on stories of saints overcoming odds. Each believer can tell of a personal vocation, recalling the path abandoned as vividly as the path chosen.

Among secular narratives, we are touched by the story of an antinuclear demonstrator speaking so gently to belligerent police officers you would think they were family. Or we read a poignant fiction to a friend in the hospital, knowing very well that it says something absolutely true about life's real struggle in a way that chatting about housekeeping or holidays never could. Each of the events we are calling mysteries holds ever more meaning and can be told and retold without exhausting it. Mysteries, in this sense, are always about what religions call salvation and redemption because they save us from meaninglessness and redeem us from despair.

Fundamentalists are impatient with stories about mystery because they prefer certitudes. In their anxiety over unanswered questions, they seize on answers that belittle the questions. They slice some moral from the heart of a story or enshrine some pithy line on a poster. But such reductions of good stories into lessons can never exhaust their meaning. Flannery O'Connor made the point: 'When you can state the theme of a story, when you can separate it from the story itself, then you can be sure the story is not a very good one.'³ What is more, the same event can be a wellspring of many good stories. Even the best stories never exhaust the possibilities of meaning in the events they depict. Events that beg a telling stand halfway between what Scholastics call the categorials and the transcendentals. They are more than we can categorize, and yet fail to slake our thirst for transcendent

mystery. Like good liturgies, they span the chasm between human reckoning and divine mystery.

Most human events are never told out loud in stories. This does not mean that only certain events bear sufficient mystery to warrant a story, leaving the rest of life just obvious—although we often act as though this were the case. We think of certain 'religious' events as so extraordinary that we expect the normal laws of physics and history to have been abrogated for a brief, astonishing moment. We then call certain events 'divine interventions,' as though we had been, up to that point, surrounded by the plain and clear and not really living in a universal darkness packed with divinity but masked by ambiguous color, sound, movement, and smell.

The good writers do not describe human events as 'rooted in mystery,' as 'reaching toward transcendence and away from self-collapse.' They may never have heard of such dry, abstract expressions. What guides their writing is an expectation that there is profound meaning in the ordinary. They assume that all events carry incomprehensible depths. Events bring reality upon the mind, but the reality passes on, leaving the mind with more questions than answers, beckoning, as it were, for the mind to follow, like an apostle called. In the hands of good storytellers, events are words of invitation, pointing toward a salvation, because they reveal life as a tightrope, hinting, however dimly, at a saving direction for the next step.

Hearing the Story

Part of the power of mysteries lies in the fact that hearing the story of the event can become another mystery. That is, the event of *hearing* about someone turning toward the transcendent and away from iniquity can initiate a similar turn in the hearer.

For example, the Christian ideal of chastity has been carried on through stories. As Paul preached the past events of Christ's Paschal mystery, hearers encountered the living God in their present and turned toward chastity. Augustine, having heard the Good News and of the chastity of early Christians, turned toward chastity. Millions of Christians since then, having heard the Good News and of early Christian chastity, and of Augustine's chastity, turned toward chastity.

It is in this fashion that mysteries reproduce themselves, as the 'event' of an original saving encounter expands into an ever-broadening and all-encompassing story of God encountering souls in flesh and blood. The mysteries of faith, then, are not finished events. They are open events. The journeys of Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed live on, not merely as a model for imitation but also as stories whose meaning shapes how generations upon generations thereafter understand their journeys.

I have been speaking as though the original historical event—the 'mystery'—occurred before any story of the event emerged. But is there really any event we can properly call historical in which the people involved did not already have some understanding of what was going on? And do they not understand their experience in dramatic, rather than abstract, terms? Some may imagine Moses on Sinai encountering God before he told anyone else the story. But unless Moses understood the 'event' as a story, his experience would have remained just experience, without any understanding of it as a story.

The story, then, is already present in any historical event. An event literally would not mean anything to the people involved if this were not the case. This story-making activity is present in all significant historical events, not merely religious ones. But what this says about religious mysteries in particular is this: In claiming that God has encountered humanity in this time and place, we must recognize that the original story-making activity is intrinsic to the encounter. That is, God cannot begin to mean anything to us except as protagonist or antagonist in a story. Any properly human effect God can impress on flesh depends very strictly on storytelling.

Faith, Charity, Hope

Right from the beginning, then, what we call religious experience is always more than just experience. It is also a matter of a story, as a kind of wrapping for the person having the experience, and a vehicle to invite others to a similar event in themselves.

The problem is, we have plenty of stories, and they often contradict each other. Husbands and wives tell contradictory stories about the same vacation. So religious experience, even when interpreted by a story, is not an automatic breakthrough to clarity, vision or wisdom. When those who claim to have deep religious experiences call them 'ineffable,' they mean that it's very difficult to put into words that avoid misunderstanding. We recalled above how events may be either a transcendent or an iniquitous mystery, and it's often difficult to tell the difference. So how is it that we discriminate between stories that will be actually saving and not self-destructing?

In the 5th century BC, Heraclitus noted three ways that human reason transcends ordinary, practical reflection.⁴

We hold certain values as sacrosanct, even though we cannot logically demonstrate their worth.

We hold certain people as beloved, even though we did not come to love by any rational analysis.

And even when we reasonably conclude that the odds against improving a situation are insurmountable, we press on all the same.

In the 1st century AD, St. Paul often referred to the gifts of faith, charity and hope as inner movements that link us to the divine. If we consider the subjective occurrences that these gifts bring about, prescind from any explicitly Christian references, we find they are practically identical to those noticed by Heraclitus. We experience faith as seeing transcendent worth within the general fog of ordinary life. We experience charity as transcending our solitary selves and becoming part of a 'we.' And we experience hope as a confident desire that we will transcend what appears to be rigid limits on our well being. If by 'transcendent mystery' we mean any event in which humans transcend the insistent pulls of malice and become selves liberated beyond themselves, then we can expect to find the subjective occurrences of faith, charity, and hope at their core. These are exactly the movements of the soul which respond to divine mystery and away from the collapse of the soul, neither of which we can rationally produce or explain.

This response to the incomprehensible divine mystery, in turn, is the most radical meaning of the experience of love that drives and suffuses all our loves. This draw, this seeking, is an affective movement that urges us toward fuller meaning, toward wanting to live in the real world and withdrawing from the make-believe. It charges our hearts with charity toward others, but not finally resting in love of this or that person, because we love others well only by letting this, our deepest love, continue to overflow without any restriction on whom we will love. It sparks our creativity by stirring our imagination and hopes, and even when our efforts prove futile, this love does not quit hoping.

What makes a story endure, then, is that we like seeing how others work out this struggle that we feel deeply but find difficult to put into words. Adults, interested in character, feel a familiarity with characters trying to be reasonable but hearing two voices, one toward what is unreasonable and the other toward what is higher than mere reason. They are drawn to characters whose transcendent eye sees fresh value and whose inherited eye often sees only the routine and the obvious. They identify with characters who feel the pull toward self-security and the opposite pull toward engaging others. We recognize ourselves in characters who want to quit—and want *not* to quit.

For the young, interested in plots, not every enduring story has to be a success story. The story of Othello can shake them just as thoroughly as the story of Prospero. Both are about salvation. But just as long as they can sense that these movements of the soul toward transcendent love are at stake in a story, they are on tiptoe to see its outcome.

For life's veterans, interested in God's view of things, stories fill out their view that all history is the effort of humans to transcend the humans they happen to be. They no longer ask about the meaning of life. Rather, in any story that seizes their interest, they contemplate and savor the poignant experiences that validate their understanding of life as a struggle for authenticity.

3. History, Fiction, Emblem

We noted earlier that the meaning of a story depends on how the reader's interests have evolved from plot to character to a universal viewpoint. For a second perspective on the total field of stories, we can consider whether the reader takes the story as an historical account, a piece of pure fiction, or an emblematic/mythical condensation based on some historical event. Still, despite the differences between history, fiction and emblem, in stories that endure we usually find the same spirit, the same goal. Whether their authors are spinners of yarn or meticulous historians, they touch some part of human life that gets involved with mystery.

History

While sociologists, anthropologists, and psychological theorists look for patterns or laws at work over a number of different actual events, historians look for what is unrepeatable. They link events into a chain unnoticed by all the participants. And despite the popular saying that those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it, the better historians present chains of events as entirely unique. The strange turnings of a community's development just stare their readers in the face, repudiating anyone who might say, 'I told you so.'

We humans are, all of us, idiosyncratic. We are odd, even to ourselves. No one of us understands much of what he or she has done, still less what to do at life's next turn. Besides, when our private purposes are thrown together with the purposes of others, the outcomes go beyond the purposes of any one of us.

Hegel marveled how this conglomeration of individual intentions produces results that nobody intended. But rather than consider whether there are aspects of history involved in both iniquitous and transcendent mystery, he thought we should imagine a 'Cunning of Reason' working its logic above time to drive historical advance. Today, the canons of critical historiography require that respect be paid to the uncategorizable, the grotesque, the queer, the fascinating. Readers should be profoundly moved at the potentialities that lie within the reach of humankind—and not just of the horrors of genocide but also the surprising emergence of forces that heal enmities and build saner societies on mutual trust.

In the manuals that explain how historians do their work, we find a distinction between the 'history' written in a book and the 'history' that the book is about. Historians investigate actual history and produce written histories. Now there is more to this distinction than meets the eye. Everywhere in written histories, we can find world leaders and people for whom self-importance is all-important. After all, they aspire to 'go down in history,' meaning in the books and in the memories of ordinary men and women. But the actual history that goes on under the eye of the historian moves as much along the paths of people whose self-importance is not so important. The 'Will of the People' is surely a larger factor in the unfolding of a culture's history than are the individuals intent on shaping that will. But even though high-visibility men and women influence history, the historians aim at far more than lists of who did what. They aim to see the difference between the drivers of historical progress and the drivers of historical decline. To do so, they expect that progress results not from glory-seeking narcissists but rather from authentic persons. They expect that decline results from unauthenticity, whether in the famous egoists or in the secret ones. This is what actual history is all about. It is a drama where billions of people play a part and everyone is trying to write the script as the scenes unfold.

Fiction

Fiction writers also concentrate on the unrepeatable, but they do so in a way that complements the work of historians. The fidelity of historians to making sense of evidence severely limits any account of the inner intentions, fears, and hopes of all the individuals that constitute a populace. The evidence of any individual's interiority, after all, is stubbornly ambiguous. We even render our innards ambiguous to avoid an embarrassing truth, presenting both a persona to others and an ego to ourselves that mask who we really are. Fiction writers can sail right over that limit and freely construct inner worlds that give some sense to outer behavior. Because the story ought to be plausible, they have only their own inner experience as the major resource for making that sense, or for validating the fiction of others. However, their inner experience does not render the story predictable. On the contrary, the best writers know on personal authority how surprising their own spirits spirit can be, whether with malice or with grace.

So we say there is truth in fiction. But by 'truth,' we do not mean an accurate reporting of evidence, nor even a plausible explanation of events that occurred on day X in place Y. Truth in fiction is about the *possibilities* of the human soul. Truth in profound fiction is particularly about the soul's mysterious possibilities, which is the same as saying that fiction rings 'true' when it deals with the soul's stretching toward self-transcendence and with how people negotiate their faith, charity, and hope. Fiction may eschew

these terms, but is it not the case that fiction makes palpable the human struggle to discern value amid chaos, to reach beyond the self to another, and to endure life's troubles?

Emblem

Lying halfway between historical accounts and fictional accounts, and overlapping both to some extent, there is a third major kind of story. I am thinking of what cultural anthropologists call the 'myth.' But since this term often connotes sheer fiction, perhaps it would be better to speak in terms of an 'emblematic story' and give a technical definition.

An emblematic story is an actual event understood as an instance of an archetypal event.

For the sake of brevity, let us simply refer to this kind of story as an emblem.

We rely on emblems to convey complex events in simple terms. For example: Russia 'Declares War.' His parents were 'Lost at Sea.' She was 'Born Again.' Couple finds 'Buried Treasure.' Lincoln 'Freed the Slaves.' He was 'Possessed by the Devil.' These expressions point to actual events, but draw upon our store of archetypes for their meaning.

Like fiction and history, emblems too can touch mystery. To understand how unique this touch is, it will be helpful to compare emblems with histories.

A history is an event understood as something new. It cannot be summed up in headlines and capital letters. It is full of context, names and places, interruptions, dead-ends, and ambiguity. In contrast, an emblem is a portrayal of an event as though its archetype occurred before. It will contain familiar patterns and clear lessons. Here are some common examples.

A Christmas dinner, as it is actually being eaten, is a history. But it quickly passes into an emblem, joining all the Christmas dinners gone before and anticipated in years to come.

The day Mother and Dad met was likewise briefly a history but soon an emblem.

Liturgy is meant to be an emblem. It should take history and lift it up to purified form, inserting the everyday into the eternal.

Newspaper headlines are usually emblems, and in the for-profit-only newspapers, the stories beneath them are too. Headlines in the more serious papers are less often emblematic, and their stories try to fill in the entire relevant context.

Emblems leave us in quite a different frame of mind than histories. Emblems suppress questions about what the people involved thought about the matter

as it was unfolding, while histories provoke these questions. Emblems reinforce old lessons. Histories do not so much teach a lesson as temper enthusiasm, qualify judgments, delay reactions, wait upon wisdom to respect the impenetrable.

Honoring Mystery

Fiction, histories and emblems each has its own way of honoring the events we are calling mysteries.

Fiction honors the inner struggle for authenticity by laying out the peculiar way various characters deal with life. No matter how the plot unfolds, readers resonate with this inner work, watching how a man dismantles and rebuilds what he thinks is important in life, or listening to a woman win—or lose—a debate with herself about her worth on this planet. Fiction doesn't

offer comforting answers, but it does make palpable those questions for which readers had no words.



In contrast, emblems honor the mysterious by oversimplifying, which carries with it the hope that beneath its complexities life actually *is* simple. Emblems do not explain anything; they serve as symbols for the realities that lie hidden beneath what appears on the surface. As symbols, the same emblem can apply to different historical events, pointing to a simple mystery underlying them all.

Written histories, for their part, honor the mysterious by respecting all the data, which carries with it a reverence for the particular and the unique. They describe events as pieces

of eternity with puzzle-edges, honoring the mysterious by fitting what pieces it can, but leaving plenty of gaps. So we are left wondering what the picture on the puzzle box looks like.

History, in that sense, is an ongoing inquiry, as is fiction, while emblems are finished answers. Histories are conjectures about public events. Fictions are not conjectures but suppositions. They are not public but private. Emblems are complete stories, leaving us satisfied that we understand something about life.

Emblems overlap history to the extent of asserting that some main event really occurred, while retaining a central dramatic narrative whose details may not be true. In the Christian Gospels, we find narratives whose literary

forms lie in this overlap, with some leaning toward the historical and others toward the emblematic.

Mark's Gospel, for example, leans toward the historical. We find details that are never followed up: Jesus' mother and relatives try to reach him; Jesus commands a cured blind man not to enter his village; a young man is stripped of his linen cloth and runs naked out of the story. Mark is not interested in telling us how things turned out for these people because his objective is not to inform but to challenge. He wants to confront readers with the very question that confronted the original witnesses: 'Who is this, that the wind and sea obey him?'

On the other hand, John's Gospel leans toward the emblematic. The man born blind reappears, as do Mary, Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene. Each of the five miracles in John comes to a nice finish. We are not left wondering, 'What happened *after* that?' The miracle-stories are signs of something mysterious *above* that, something that recurs in the lives of all who seek God.

Jesus' story of the Prodigal son is pure fiction, portraying the inner wrestlings of a father and his two sons in a drama of forgiveness. Yet it overlaps the emblematic when we consider that Jesus told this to the people he considered unforgiving hypocrites. That is, his telling of the story was a real event of confrontation designed to make the Pharisees quake at the thought that they will be excluded from God's banquet of forgiving joy: not because the Father will exclude them but, so long as they prefer law over forgiveness, they effectively exclude themselves.

So each kind of story packs its own brand of dynamite. The historical accounts of salvation leave us with an overwhelming sense that something profound really happened in human history, and that our normal expectations can be blown apart at any minute. Emblematic accounts give us an assurance that what happened is of enduring significance, that the ordinary contains the extraordinary. Fiction lays open the soul for us to find company in how each of us negotiates the forces of the soul.

4. Emblems of Evil

Alternatives

If we read the letters of Paul chronologically, we find that his emblems of evil evolved. As a Pharisee, he clung to the notion that observance of the Law protected him from involvement with evil. Essentially, it was a denial of the evil that the heart can hatch even within the Law. As a convert to Christ, he realized that only the free gift of God can liberate anyone from evil; no rational, human institution has such power. At that time, however, he expected that God would somehow abolish evil by an Apocalypse arriving on

some actual day of the week and inaugurate some completely new evil-free existence. Eventually, as a Christian apostle, he settled into a dialectical emblem of evil, in which the work of overcoming evil would be carried out by absorbing its worst, forgiving its perpetrators, and building up the Body of Christ through mutual care.

These three approaches form a pattern of alternatives that continues throughout history. In any historical period we find institutions that deny evil, institutions set up to abolish evil, and institutions aimed at healing the broken body of societies.

Emblems of Denial

Just as Saul of Tarsus had looked to the Law to deny that evil had a hold on him, many people today look to Science to deny that their troubles may result from sin. In a popular contemporary pair of denial emblems, Freud has forgiven the guilt of the individual over wrongdoing; it is Neurosis that deserves the blame. Likewise Marx has forgiven the guilt over social evil; Economic Forces deserve the blame. The Day of Reckoning for human living has become the Psychological Depression for the individual and the Economic Depression for the community.

This 'scientific' approach expects that all problems have explanations and that once investigators hit upon a correct explanation, the solution to a problem will be obvious. Redemption comes with psychoanalysis or socio-economic analyses, in which the root of evil presumably will be uncovered, followed by an intelligent therapy or social reform. These remedies have become overwhelming personal and social emblems that isolate individuals from evil by way of a Law, here, the scientific laws of psychology and economics.

The clear and intelligible teaching of the Christian churches for centuries has been that evil in its raw form has no explanation. Certainly there exist problems that admit explanations, but any such explanations must end where the irrational disobedience of one's better judgment begins.

Emblems of Abolition

At the opposite extreme of this denial lies affirmation, followed by confrontation and abolition. This is the cowboy emblem of good guys killing bad guys. Like some extreme forms of belief in Satan and the Apocalypse, this emblem gives evil a reality it would not otherwise possess. A reified evil has to look, feel and smell like something. People imagine that they can 'see' the Devil, 'smell' malice, 'feel' the forces of evil in particular situations. Then, in the name of goodness, the lofty-minded deem certain individuals, certain nations, and certain economic institutions as Evil, plain and simple. From

there, sabotage, torture, murder or genocide become virtue for those brave souls carrying out this mad apostolate.

In our day we have witnessed the power of this emblem in those countries that support capital punishment, as well as in any country that has ever justified killing its neighbors by declaring them evil. Islamic Fundamentalists come to mind, but so does the response of the former U.S. president, George W. Bush, who declared North Korea, Iran, and Iraq an "Axis of Evil," as if to justify some terrible abolition he has in mind for them.

Emblems of Healing

The Christian tradition holds strongly to the idea that, although we are tempted, we remain free. Emblematically, that puts the source of evil outside of us. No one is evil by nature. We often suffer from the evil of others, and from the analogous 'evils' of poor health or addiction, but there remains a gap of liberty between our realization of what we ought to do and our decision to do it.

This explains, in part, why the story of Satan endures. It reminds listeners that they are tempted; they do carry out what they know is wrong; they do act against their better selves. Overcoming evil is an ongoing struggle. One does not ignore it, nor abolish it, but deals with it through a healing dialectic of absorption, forgiveness and fresh starts.

Then, to avoid attributing equal power to Satan as to God, the Christian tradition also holds strongly to the idea that Satan's 'power' is not by a surplus of strength but by a deficit of goodness. The effects of a Satan are always some kind of omission. Emblematically, while divine stories point to the mysteriously infinite dimensions of Beauty, Intelligibility, Truth, and Goodness, Satan skips chapters here and there for malicious purposes.

This view resonates with the experience of even non-religious adults. When we have turned away from our love of transcendent mystery, we discover that we first suffered from some spiritual myopia. In our perception of other people, of ourselves, or of the true value of worldly goods, we overlooked portions of the transcendent mystery of persons and the fruits of the earth.

Every significant event is capable of being told in at least two different stories—as a story of Chaos or Cosmos, of Despair or Hope, of Sin or Grace—and which story a person chooses depends on his or her ability to recognize the movement of transcendent love within. This takes time to learn, both in each person's life and in the lifetime of a culture as it enlarges its deposit of wisdom. Unfortunately it is usually by our mistakes that we learn to discern among these movements. Ignatius of Loyola has said that we can tell the Devils by their trails.⁵ That is, we learn to discriminate true

stories from false ones only after we have already believed the false ones for a time.

5. The Christian Emblem of Redemption

This raises the question, How does one tell the difference between a true and a false story of the struggle for transcendence? Christians rely on the Christian story against which they measure the adequacy of any other story about life.

The Story of Christ and Spirit

The Christian story tells of a man in whom colleagues recognized an intimate, familial relationship to God and an extraordinary moral depth, a man who led them in loving others without regard for social status, a man whose hope for a kingdom of justice and peace never died, despite having been abducted, tortured, impaled with spikes, and left to die, abandoned by the very colleagues who he had hoped would carry on his mission. And this man, who himself had absolute faith in God, absolute charity toward even his enemies, and absolute hope that sin's bondage would be broken within history, was raised up by God and given the name to which every knee shall bend.

The story has a Part Two. This man promised another savior, the Spirit of Love. By his promise, anyone open to transcendent mystery would experience a flood of love beyond anything they could cause in themselves. This love would show itself as faith, charity, and hope, the powers that link them to the divine. Faith would give them moral vision, seeing the better path far more clearly than by any philosopher's map, and the insight that death is not the enemy of their lives. Charity would give them a selfless love for the neighbor. Hope would sustain them in the face of what others may call disaster.

The Christian story is part history, part emblem. The story of Christ's life is history—the kind of history that leaves the sincere hearer shaking in wonderment over the limitless authority and the equally limitless kindness of this man. Likewise the story of the disciples' believing, preaching, and establishing churches is history.

The story of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Spirit is an emblem. It holds out for the imagination a vivid picture of God's fidelity, raising Jesus from the dead as a pledge of a Resurrection that awaits anyone who believes. It describes an outpouring of the Spirit of Love, now as flames, now as wind, and now as a woman groaning in childbirth.

An Emblem of Redemption

Some Christian readers may be uneasy with the suggestion that the stories of the Resurrection of Christ and the Descent of the Spirit are emblems and not history. They may point to the clear attestations of an empty tomb, and to the patently physical aspects of Jesus' person. Luke describes what looked like flames licking over the heads of the disciples gathered in a second-story room.

At least these post-crucifixion stories are not presented as fiction. Their authors clearly intend to be witnesses about what actual people did in actual times and actual places. But there is little warrant for calling them history in the post-19th-century sense. The various accounts differ widely on the sequence of events. All the appearances are complete stories. They have none of the loose ends that historians include. They all present Jesus as 'appearing,' not as 'coming back' along a time line extending from his birth to the Ascension without any mortal break. Luke's reference to tongues of flames is an emblematic reference backward to the flaming coal that a seraph touched to Isaiah's tongue so that he might preach, and forward to the tongues of these suddenly multilingual preachers. John describes the gift of the Spirit symbolically as the last breath of Jesus on the cross, and the first breath of Jesus after sending the disciples.

There are accounts composed several decades after the death of Christ that depict him eating, walking along a road, and insisting that Thomas put his finger into his side. These physical depictions may have been needed once the early churches realized that the Second Coming was either a delayed historical event or an emblematic interpretation for all of history. In either case, these communities faced a question that Christians ever since have faced: What do we tell the kids? How do you tell a story of God lifting up Jesus after his death, and sending the Holy Spirit to guide the church, without ranking it with fairy tales and still leaving open the deeper understanding that life itself would require of them as they grow up? The answer was to give them stories rich in imagery as a foundation for a faith that would, under the tutelage of wise pastors, mature to a faith that believes without seeing.

Whether appealing to an adult's need for meaning within history, or to a child's need for pictures, the stories surrounding the Resurrection present it as the work of the Father, not of Jesus. Practically all the texts say Jesus 'was raised,' rather than 'rose.' Early proclamations were as often 'Jesus is Lord,' as 'Jesus was raised.'

There is an even more important difference that lies in the intention of the storytellers. They knew that historical accounts are just information; readers of historical accounts may grow in knowledge but not commitment. Christian

teachers who insist that the biblical authors intended to give what we call an historical account of the Resurrection and Descent fail to understand how much more powerfully an emblematic story can provoke conversion. Typically, when the story is presented as history, it underscores the fascinating: a dead man now alive, appearing in a room with locked doors, testing the doubting Thomas, cooking fish, and eventually sailing upward into the sky. But fascination pushes audiences back, while emblems pull them in. Emblems are demands; the hearer must think twice before rejecting them. We know of no other literary tool that more powerfully and more enduringly meets the human need for a story about transcendence.

The emblematic features of the Christian story meets this need not only throughout the evolution of any individual's interests, but also along the line of tradition as each generation tells the story to the next. Accounts of Jesus' appearances after his crucifixion are clearly intended not only to show how the faith of the disciples was tested and found true but to test every later listener as well. The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead would not be a saving act if there were no one who was saved in the act of believing it. This was true of the disciples and it remains true for anyone thereafter who hears the story. It can be known as a saving act only if the hearers of the word experience the fruits of transcendent love—faith, charity, and hope.

The Media of Word and Love

The Christian saving story makes its demands along two media—one obvious, the other almost too close to notice. Along the obvious medium, the Christian story addresses those who hear the story through the words passed on to Christian communities through history. It is the story the first disciples told among themselves, and eventually to anyone willing to listen. It is the story carefully handed on from generation to generation. The medium is the spoken and written word. Along the less obvious path, the Christian story makes its demand through the immediacy of the heart. The story presents the Spirit of God in human hearts searching for the word of transcendence. When it finds that word, it can lead one down paths not found on the maps of logic and cunning. And when it finds anyone corrupting that word, it will erupt in prophetic accusation. This medium is the inner eruptions of love.

The Christian story, then, the story within which Christians journey toward transcendent mystery, is the story of men and women following God's two leads—Christ's example of a life of self-giving that fears not death and the voice of the Spirit in search for life to the full.

But this is not only the Christian story. In all religions, there are the two saving movements of words in history and love in the heart. Judaism and Islam also trace their origins to historical events that were written down.

Hinduism, Buddhism and many other religions have historical origins, although what was written down was less a narrative of events and more a list of teachings and cosmic speculations. In either case, there are words, the words are passed down in history, and the words mean absolutely nothing unless someone is moved by an inner love to pay attention.

So it is difficult to imagine any religion's story of salvation that would not implicitly reveal the double nature of this reach. And to the degree that any religion holds that our double reach toward the divine is simultaneously the divine's double reach toward us, then there is a basis for Christians to meet minds with members of other religions. Any stories of salvation that depict historical men and women exemplifying transcendent behaviors, and that point to the inner resources of love beyond mere reason and ethics, will resonate with the very experiences upon which Christians based their doctrine of God's salvation—a doctrine that implicitly reveals God's double self-giving nature. ⁶

6. The Christian Emblem of History

We have been considering how individuals might understand themselves within the Christian story. We found that the Christian story invites a personal connection with the historical Jesus, understood emblematically as raised up and sitting at the right hand of God, as well as a personal acceptance of God's Spirit. But we also noted how spiritual maturity usually brings one to the further question about human history itself. If God comes to creation through Word and Spirit, and if the burgeoning character of creation shows itself in the human race as history, then we might ask whether all of history itself is kind of a story.

The question is not academic. It is not only philosophers who wonder, 'What's it all about?' Our familiar experience of negotiating the pushes and pulls on our spirits begs some overall story to give it meaning. We know first-hand that the results of these negotiation make up our small contribution to history. But is there some pattern? Some overall structure to history itself?

We find some philosophers proclaiming that what is going on in the global community is a progressive integration, while others think it is a slow disintegration. That is, some think history itself is gradually improving and others think it is gradually decaying. Surely there are stories of the rise and fall of cultures within history, but will all of history coalesce into one great epic of rising—or falling?

To answer this question, it will help if we pose it in a way that more clearly connects a story to what happens in people who consider it. Northrup Frye, one of the masters of literary criticism, explored a connection between plot

structures and what happens in readers. He identified two fundamental events in us that good stories resonate with—our *desires* and our *dreads*. These combine in possible four ways, which in turn make for four corresponding plots.⁷

Comic. In the comic, or lyric, plot, human desire feels itself overcoming the forces of human dread. Its happy characters are blessed with luck and with the delightful surprises of springtime, where the dread of winter is melting away.

Romantic. In the romantic plot, desire has mastered dread, and it does so not by luck but by the courage and strength of the story's characters. Romantic stories are summertime stories.

Tragic. In the tragic plot, dread begins to mount over the forces of desire as otherwise strong characters are trammled by their own situations and by the growing forces of determinism. It is autumn, or more symbolically, Fall.

Ironic. In the ironic, or satiric plot, dread reigns supreme over desire as all hope seems lost. Winter has set in and characters can only wait for something like spring's comic surprises.

To take a few examples from the Bible, the story of Philip in the *Acts of the Apostles* visiting the eunuch in the carriage is comic; it begins with a lucky meeting and ends on an upbeat, full of hope in future developments. The Song of Songs falls into the romantic category, not because it's about erotic love but because it portrays all human desires as fulfilled and all dread as banished. Luke's story of the Rich Young Man is tragic; he comes on the scene with strength, but his own history proves to be his weakness. We do not know his future, but it certainly bodes spiritual disaster. Ecclesiastes ('Vanity of vanities; all is vanity') is irony; dread reigns over desire; nothing can be counted on as absolute.

These plots can also shape our personal stories. As we grow, the interplay of our personal desires and dreads tends to gel into a plot that many take to be the unwritten story of their lives. So we have the lyrical optimists, confident of better days ahead; the romantic stars, mastering all they touch; the tragic heroes, burdened with a fated sadness; and the ironic philosophers, musing perpetually over unanswerable questions.

History's Plot

Turning, then, to our question of whether all of history is some kind of story, we can consider Frye's four options.

Many Christians regard history as a comic morality plot—the good we desire is winning over the evil we dread. This is a dangerous view. It assumes that

things simply must improve because of the strength of our desires for a God who will not abandon us to our dreads. The untamed inner tension between the mundane and the transcendent is dismissed as a temporary condition, a confusion that religious enlightenment can dissolve. Such explanations of our disquiet usually name some element of humanity as The Enemy.⁸ Many religions, for example, treat sexual desire as The Enemy to the romantic plot of God's plan. Similarly, the medieval world thought of monarchy as the only redemption of anarchy⁹ and took the Ptolemaic hierarchies in the sky as its cosmological emblem of order. Recently, however, we have seen some healthy reactions to these naïve assumptions. A growing number of people have come to regard their sexual experiences and their social pluralisms not as emblems of evil in themselves but merely as the stages whereupon a more fundamental struggle for meaning takes place.

There are other Christians who think of history as a romantic opera. Human living is good. 'Every day, in every way, things are getting better and better.' Conversion is realizing that evil is only a mental figment, something we have practically abolished. They don't exactly 'sell' this view, because it's essentially free. All you have to do is believe, and everything will be as it should be. Still, they typically evangelize by selling something—the simple solution of a 'Sunny Acres Nudist Camp,' or 'The Power of Positive Thinking,' or 'Zebra Liver Extract' and the like.

The notion that history is basically tragic can be found in some of my Irish forebears and my African American fellow citizens, crushed, as they were, by repeated failures to escape oppression and misfortune. So they 'offered it up,' clung to the suffering Jesus, and talked of a next life as if it were the only liberation open to them. All redemption is in heaven; earth is just a test.

Finally, there are the ironic Christians. Despite what they say, they deeply believe that nothing really makes much difference. These are the men and women who go through the motions. Spiritual sleepwalkers, they are oblivious of how the Spirit in them searches for the Word. Some have no qualms about embezzling on Monday after church on Sunday. Most are quite happy to keep religion out of politics, seeing nothing to be gained. God is an idea, or an It, to them, not a You whose power in them works infinitely more than they can ask or imagine.

Perhaps this much is clear. No single type of plot can serve as a framework for a Christian view of history. It is mainly the young who need a plot. Eventually, we are drawn on to focus on character, and then on to a universal viewpoint on all of creation. We are in the middle of the 'history' that cannot be jammed into any preordained plot. From an empirical point of

view, we might say that history remains full of mystery, but from a theological point of view, we can say that history is *the* field of mystery.

Opinions are opposed on this issue, originally within each person. The tension of having to live within an order whose ultimate shape escapes us leads every adult to a fork in the road: Shall I act as though there really is no such overarching order to human history, or shall I trust that there is such an order, albeit one which I cannot grasp? Some obey merely the order at hand, spending their lives in reaction to the known demands that surround them, and suppressing their wonder about larger issues. Others will believe in an ultimate order, in a real and concrete integration of all history in which the merely happenstance and the unfortunate blind alleys bear real, though hidden, meanings. But to choose this path is to live in hope—the determination to go on making history without reducing history to a mirror of one of its stories.

History's Geometry

If a theology of history must look beyond story-plots for its order, it should equally look beyond geometric images. The famous linear view of history, which Jews and Christians regard as a liberation from a Hellenistic cyclic view, is a naive and dangerous alliance between living history and dead geometry. In the linear view, the key events in history are laid along a time line. But the line slopes upward. Civilizations rise and fall, but historians record the events so that great achievements may not be lost and old errors may not be repeated. This view schematizes what comic plots anticipate: In the long run, things simply must improve. Prosperity and great cultural foundations are the simple consequences of hard work and human commitment—and the only consequences worth thinking about.

But what happened to those who paid the costs? Among the elements that make up our great cultural foundations we find racial slavery, mass robbery, institutionalized lying, and rivers of blood. I think of the underpaid Romanians who made the shirts I wear, the Native Americans from whom was taken the land I stand on, the American soldiers who died to keep alive a democracy infected by a myth of American moral superiority. The linear view has no answer to the questions posed by history's victims. The significance of their lives lies blasted on charred and bloody soil—soil the progressivist regards as just so much fertilizer.

An equally dangerous alternative to the linear view of history is what we might call the vertical view, in which all human events are regarded as linked straight up to divinity. Men and women are portrayed as searching for meaning, as being drawn toward an interior conversion that liberates them from illusion and compulsion. The question here is 'Do I love God and neighbor now?' The present moment is all that really counts.

This vertical view, counts St. John the Evangelist and St. Augustine among its proponents. Until the mid-19th century, this ahistorical view was not seriously contested because philosophers and theologians had no idea of how to understand history in its own right. By default, the vertical view is oblivious to the reality of social and cultural progress within history. It inhibits the further question, 'What difference will it make to your loved ones if you are obedient within?' Questions are ignored about what we have produced, what care have we taken for our progeny, and what social structures will better ensure the moral and physical health of our children. History is reduced to our mental sequencing of present moments, not a reality in its own right. The Children of Darkness are continually delighted to hear that the Children of Light can so easily be ripped off because they profess no interest in the future.

In any case, all our story-plots and geometric images collapse when we consider how vulnerable the human race is to annihilation. Currently, scientists believe that earth has been habitable for about 4.5 billion years but has only 0.5 billion years left. The sun will burn up its own hydrogen, become an expanding red giant, absorbing Mercury and frying Earth. Long before that, however, our atmospheric carbon dioxide will fall below the critical level to sustain plants. Our lungs could probably adjust to lower levels of carbon dioxide, but we'd have nothing to eat. More immediate dangers lie in nuclear rampage and bio-terrorism. In atomic physics, there lurk enormous potentials for undermining the eco-system on which we depend. Only recently are we becoming alarmed at the potentials in genetics for poisoning the molecular chains that can support sentient, intelligent animals. It could end tomorrow. One day it will be true that 'It will end tomorrow.' We don't wait to see how our story will turn out tomorrow because we, its authors, must live today.

History's Nature

There is another way to ask the question about the overall shape of history. Instead of looking for some story plot or geometric diagram, we can pose the question within a more comprehensive philosophical perspective. Rather than ask, 'What *must* history be?' we can ask, 'What in fact is the *nature* of historical process?' It is a question for understanding, not imagination. It is a question about the intelligibility immanent to all historical process, not about certitude or predictions.

When Bernard Lonergan explored what we do when we know anything, he articulated four distinct meanings to the term, *nature*, that may apply when we ask about the nature of history. That is, when we ask about the intelligibility, or order, or inner coherence, of anything at all, we can expect

that the intelligibility we're looking for will be one of four possible kinds. He names them: classical, statistical, genetic and dialectical.⁷⁰

Classical Nature. Given what we have discussed already, we can say that the intelligibility immanent to historical process is not the classical intelligibility of cyclic theories of time and history, which preclude any creativity and progress.

Statistical Nature. Nor is it the statistical intelligibility of the vertical views, which regard only particular instances and not the human order as a unity changing over time.

Genetic Nature. Nor is it the genetic intelligibility of the upward sloping, progressivist views, which disregard the mystery of iniquity and the enormity of its consequences.

Dialectical Nature. Rather it is the dialectical intelligibility of an ongoing struggle between authenticity and unauthenticity.⁷¹ That is, the nature of historical process is, at its root, the interplay between love for transcendent mystery and love for iniquitous mystery.

This is an insight into the innermost workings of history. It gives us a way to think about the challenge of living within the mysteries of evil and redemption. It maps directly onto the healing emblem of evil that represents our engagement with evil more accurately than emblems of denial or abolition. While we cannot comprehend either transcendent mystery or iniquitous mystery, we can comprehend the process by which we are pulled now toward the one, now toward the other. This insight is not a story. It explains how the inner events by which we are drawn, or pushed, into our futures constitute historical process. Anyone can verify these events for themselves and see the connection between them and the way the common future of the race emerges.

From a theological perspective, to recognize the dialectical nature of human history casts light on the expression, 'God's plan,' without reducing it to some mechanistic or superstitious or fated view of life. The plan has struggle at its heart. Love of the dark will collapse the human spirit, distort its understanding, plunge it into an illusory world. Love of the light will free the human spirit, illumine its understanding, and lead it to a vision of the reality of love and its power to bring peace among us.

7. Discerning Saving Stories

Although all cultures canonize some of their literature as expressions of their collective spiritual judgments, reading their stories requires discernment. The people who wrote the stories, after all, may not have known the difference between a child's need for pictures and an adult's need for

emblems of the mysterious. They may not have worked out for themselves the real difference between the satisfaction of a settled conscience and the satisfactions of mere excitement, sensual titillation, economic security, or a big name. Worst of all, they may have despised the transcendent ascent of their wonder toward divine mystery.

Belonging is Believing

Cultural etiologies—stories that appeal to the past to explain why its people lives the way it does—are particularly powerful in shaping a people's priorities. They merge a people's awareness of who belongs and a people's beliefs about the moral structures of their world. So, for children at least, what they believe about right and wrong depends entirely on to whom they belong. Teenagers discover the difference, and expend great energies on finding a balance between belonging and believing. Only gradually do young people scrutinize their inherited stories, learning as they go a difference between a fidelity to one's tradition and a fidelity within.

A Dialectical Attitude

In most cases of profound stories told by the wise, their contemporaries were so immersed in their traditional values that they failed to see new greatness among them. Although a culture regularly criticizes its own literature, great literature has the power to criticize its own culture. Only those who have maintained a dialectical attitude toward stories get the point. They listen to all fiction, emblems, and histories with an ear for what the teller thinks about meaning, about values, and about the pull toward transcendent mystery and its opposite. Discernment among these two pulls is essential for listening to any story.

There are no recipes for telling the difference. This is about love, after all. One learns it by trial and error. Still, when a story resonates with transcendent love in its hearers, when they act in self-transcending ways, there's no mystery about what this action looks like. Doing something transcendent means going beyond ourselves in the fundamental ways we are spiritual. Here are some examples.

People guided by transcendent love care as much for others as for themselves. They care especially for what is finest in others—the same transcendent love that they value most in themselves.

Being open to mutual love, they are open to truth, rather than in some shared illusion. They see no other foundation for living together than to live in the real world together.

Being open to truth, and wanting to improve real life together, they are open and eager to understand. They ask pertinent questions. They are intelligent about what goes on.

Asking pertinent questions, they take everyone's experience seriously. They pay attention to the details and do not project their ideas onto the data.

The Criteria of Dogma

Besides these effects of transcendent love, and emerging from them, there is another criterion by which enduring stories can be tested for their transcendent worth. It is the criterion of saving dogma. Unfortunately, the term, dogma, has suffered badly from applications to religious trivia made by leaders more anxious to show off their authority than to understand their own transcendent experiences. In its essence, saving dogma is any judgment people make that is relevant to their concrete experience of the tension between transcendent mystery and iniquitous mystery.

Saving dogmas may be judgments of value:

It is better to suffer evil than to do evil.

This man, or woman, is worth following.

Saving dogmas may also be judgments of fact:

God comes to humanity.

God's coming is double—both via words and deeds in our history, and via flooding our hearts with love for all that is or can be good.

These dogmas are realizations that occurred in the men and women whom a community calls its spiritual forebears. They function as limit tests for stories. Stories that contradict them are considered not merely a present threat to cherished beliefs but, what is more to the point, a repudiation of those very men and women whose experience of transcendent love led them to name these limits for their progeny.

Conclusion

We can now propose an answer to our question, Why does the Christian Story endure? It endures because it commands its listeners to consider, with utmost and ongoing seriousness, what is happening in their hearts and in their history. The command itself is a liberation from one's habits of self-delusion, self-justification, and self-aggrandizement—none of which ever gave anyone any real peace. The command forces any hearer to take a

stand on the questions that recur to people of any or no religion throughout history, questions such as:

Is sin, rather than death, the worst thing that can happen to me?

Is it really better to turn the other cheek?

Should I stand up for what I believe?

Is the entire universe really in God's kind hands?

Can I trust the love in my heart?

Can I trust the example of Jesus as I lead my life?

Is what happened to Jesus in the Resurrection what will happen to anyone who lives out the same pattern of self-giving love?

Will the face of God one day fill me with gladness?¹²

Even when I cannot tell the story of my transcendent labor pains, does the Spirit of Love in me plead in perfect prayer?¹³

One could answer Yes to all these questions today, but should life wound the heart tomorrow, the only way Christians can reclaim their Yes is to hear the Christian story again, as a new someone, with a newly scarred heart.

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- ¹ I am following the approach of Critical Realism, pioneered by Bernard Lonergan. In *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), he proposes that to give an explanatory account of anything we know, we must include an account of what goes on in us as knowers. See the introduction to *Insight*, pp. xvii-xxx, or Volume 3 of *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) pp. 11-24.
- ² This definition of 'mysteries' has been inspired by Quentin Quesnell's definition in his 'Beliefs and Authenticity,' in Matthew L. Lamb, ed., *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), pp. 173-183.
- ³ *Mystery and Manners*, eds. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1957), p. 96.
- ⁴ Paul is the only biblical author who speaks of faith, hope, and love as a triad (1 Cor 13:13). Yet this triad may be considered "classical" (and not specifically "Christian") because they were earlier conceived as events beyond human reason in the work of Heraclitus, as reported by Eric Voegelin. Within the full scope of knowledge, Heraclitus speaks "not only of *cognitiones rationis*, but also of *cognitiones fidei, amoris, et spei*. See Eugene Webb, *Eric Voegelin: Philosopher of History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 115. Further evidence of possibly Greek philosophical origins is that Paul introduces the triad with a Hellenic-wisdom meme, "I will show you a more excellent way." "Classical" is also appropriate because for two millennia theologians expounded on the meaning of this triad of virtues without adding a fourth or combining any of the three. For Aquinas, see *Summa Theologiae* 1-2, q.62.
- ⁵ 'When the enemy of our human nature has been detected and recognized by the trail of evil marking his course and by the wicked end to which he leads us, it will be profitable for one who has been tempted to review immediately the whole course of the temptation. ' *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, trans. Louis J. Puhl (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1959), para. 334, p. 148.
- ⁶ This double approach of God is the experiential base on which Christians affirm the trinitarian doctrine that God is a source of both Word and Spirit.
- ⁷ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 158-239.
- ⁸ These reflections on gnosticism and the more authentic alternative of living in the tension between the mundane and the transcendent have been inspired by the works of Eric Voegelin. In particular, see *Order and History IV: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), p. 9.
- ⁹ For an analysis of the danger of regarding monarchy as the only alternative to anarchy, see Matthew L. Lamb, 'Christianity Within the Political Dialectics of Community and Empire, *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 1/1 (Spring 1983) 1-30, esp. p. 11.
- ¹⁰ For a summary view of these four kinds of anticipated intelligibility, see Lonergan's *Insight*, pp. 485, 607, or Volume 10 of *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, pp. 509, 560.
- ¹¹ See Lonergan's 'Healing and Creating in History,' in F.E. Crowe, ed., *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.* (New York: Paulist, 1985), pp. 100-103.

¹² Acts 2:27-28. Luke cites these words of David as being the words of Jesus.

¹³ Romans 8:22-27