

# LO!

## I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

(Apoc 21, 5)

By DAVID M. STANLEY

WHEN THE editor of THE WAY graciously asked me to write some reflections ‘on the quality of newness effected amongst the people of God by the gift of Christ’s Spirit in resurrection and pentecost’, I found myself suddenly and surprisingly confronted with a problem. What is really new about christianity? The question appeared the more disconcerting as I reflected upon it. After all, a christian ought to be ready with a response to that question; he should be able spontaneously to provide a theological answer, as profound and complete as his own experience of christian existence. The following pages are simply an endeavour, then, to articulate for myself and the reader what appeals to me, in consultation with the inspired theologians of the New Testament, as the more striking facets of this quality of newness in the christian message and the christian life.

The citation which serves as title for this essay is significant, I believe, because it forms the opening words of the only speech attributed to God the Father in the entire book of revelation written by the seer of Patmos.<sup>1</sup> It is significant, I feel, because it delineates the author’s presentation of God in this prophetic book in which God is characterized as Creator and as Father. As Creator, he is ‘Lord of all’ (*Pantokratōr*);<sup>2</sup> for all that springs into being does so by an act of God’s free determination. God is not only source of that ‘Spirit of life’ that effects the resurrection of the just;<sup>3</sup> he is also source of that revelation, transmitted to Jesus Christ,<sup>4</sup> to be communicated to the seer as the Word of God,<sup>5</sup> the mystery of God.<sup>6</sup> God is moreover Judge<sup>7</sup> as Creator, the ‘One who comes’.<sup>8</sup> God is, on the other hand, repeatedly acknowledged as Father of Jesus Christ, ‘Son of Man’,<sup>9</sup> ‘the Lamb’,<sup>10</sup> and – at the final consummation – of the entire chris-

<sup>1</sup> Apoc 21, 5–8.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc 4, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc 11, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Apoc 1, 11; 5, 6–7.

<sup>5</sup> Apoc 1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Apoc 10, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Apoc 14, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Apoc 1, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Apoc 3, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Apoc 14, 1.

tian people;<sup>1</sup> his role as Father makes him the newly covenanted God of the christian people: in the past, through Jesus' work of ransom,<sup>2</sup> and in the future, by the as yet incomplete work of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Our citation-title moreover echoes a theme found in Paul, a theme – as we shall see – which dominates his entire theology. For the moment it will be sufficient to recall Paul's remark, in speaking of the redemption in Jesus Christ: 'the ancient order has passed out of existence: lo! it has become new'.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not John's insight into the meaning of the divine operation within history can be said to stand in fact in direct dependence upon Paul's thought (which may well be doubtful), it does appear to derive from an axiom characteristic of the theology of the Second Isaiah: 'Lo! I am making something new, which even now is springing into being'.<sup>5</sup> Thus the prophet depicts the unprecedented nature of the divine action, working for the restoration of the chosen people in the promised land and the termination of the babylonian captivity. This great act of divine power and condescension in the second half of the sixth century B.C. becomes the paradigm for the New Testament author of the Apocalypse, inspiring his description of the Father's culminating act of judgment in the renovation of the christian people.

#### *Aggiornamento in twentieth century dress*

Before however we attempt to discover, amongst the inspired writings of the New Testament, the authentic qualities of christian newness, we may profitably pause to reflect upon the present state of 'up-dating' (for such is the english equivalent of John XXIII's famous term *aggiornamento*). On the negative side, one sees two attitudes emerging as the result of whatever up-dating the Church has accomplished in the scant five years since Pope Paul authoritatively closed Vatican II on December 8, 1965. There are those who, impatient of the delays in institutional renewal that so frequently appear to them as deliberate obstructionism, speak of a betrayal of the mandate issued by the Council. There are others, with a nostalgic glance at what has been, to their mind, destroyed or lost, who are profoundly disturbed and filled with fear as they uneasily contemplate what the future ominously holds in store for the Church. And who can deny that, among the members of all

<sup>1</sup> Apoc, 21, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc 1, 6; 5, 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc 21, 3-8.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor 5, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Isai 43, 18.

religious families – to confine ourselves here to the charismatic branch of the life of the Church – representatives of both groups have begun, for differing reasons, to lose hope in the survival of the institutes they have dearly loved and to which they have given their lives? It is surely then imperative that we devote ourselves with despatch, if without precipitousness, to the investigation of what is authentically new about our christian existence.

*'Old' and 'new' in the new Testament*

We may make a beginning by investigating the New Testament usage regarding the terms for 'old' and 'new', in order to discern the variations in attitudes which the sacred writers display towards the conceptions represented by these terms.

While in the classical greek language a distinction was made between the two words for 'old' (*archaios* denoting what is ancient and venerable: *palaios*, what is simply old, sometimes outmoded), such a distinction no longer appears in the greek of the New Testament. Thus Paul can speak, in the text already cited,<sup>1</sup> of the 'ancient' (*archaia*) being superseded by 'the new' (*kaina*), yet he contrasts the 'new Man' (*kainos anthrōpos*) with the 'old (outmoded) Man' (*palaios anthrōpos*).<sup>2</sup> What is significant however is that New Testament usage, as will be presently seen, carefully preserves the distinction between the new as immature, untested, lacking perfection (*neos*), and the new as unprecedented, inexplicable except in terms of the divine intervention (*kainos*).

What attitude does the New Testament evince towards 'the old'? A saying of Jesus reported in the common synoptic tradition would seem to indicate the impossibility of reconciling the new which Jesus brings with the old religious attitudes of judaism.<sup>3</sup> The logion indicates the impossibility of such a combination in two brief parabolic illustrations: the impracticability of sewing an unshrunk patch on an old coat, and the infeasibility of storing new wine in old wineskins. Yet Luke appends a connoisseur's remark about the superior quality of old wine, which might of itself appear to be an *apologia* for the old order of things.<sup>4</sup> Taken in the context, however, such an intention seems unlikely, and it may be construed as a warning against nostalgia for old *mores* and religious practices.

With Matthew, however, a different attitude to the old religion is discernible in his somewhat puzzling remark about 'the scribe

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor 5, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Mk 2, 21-22; Mt 9, 16-17; Lk 5, 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Eph 4, 22-24.

<sup>4</sup> Lk 5, 38.

who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven'.<sup>1</sup> What is puzzling is the evident admiration of the evangelist for this converted jewish doctor of the Law, inasmuch as 'he brings forth from his store the new and the old'. And this is the context of Matthew's presentation by a series of parables of Jesus' teaching on 'the kingdom of heaven', where so much, if not all, is directed to the creative novelty of Jesus' doctrine. Perhaps the saying is to be understood in the light of the characteristically matthean logion that Jesus 'has come not to destroy, but to fulfil'<sup>2</sup> the religion of Israel by bringing its prophetic promise to completion. Yet it must be admitted that the evangelist's attitude stands in sharp contrast with Paul's antipathy for 'the old' which we must now examine more closely.

### *Paul and the old religion*

Here, as we begin a study in contrasting approaches to the christian mystery, it may not be inopportune to recall the significance for all christians of a question recently agitated among certain New Testament experts: the problem of the canon within the Canon (of inspired christian books). Some scholars, and notably the learned Ernst Käsemann of Tübingen, have selected, in the list of sacred books traditionally received as inspired by the christian Church, only those which support a certain (modern and critical) conception of the gospel. The rest of the traditional canon they reject as savouring of 'early catholicism'. It is not my intention to offer a critique of the hypothesis, but to draw attention to a phenomenon which *in practice* concurs (unwittingly, no doubt) with this theoretical selectiveness, which of course fulfils the classic definition of heresy – the omission or rejection of certain truths of the faith. Perhaps all of us, and particularly those engaged in promoting the work of *aggiornamento*, practice an analogous selectivity: I mean, we tend to accept only those authors or those sections of the New Testament which appear to underwrite our own views of 'the pure gospel', the while ignoring others which might contradict our viewpoint. No doubt one can discover amongst the pauline churches those like the community of Corinth which might seem to have existed as unstructured, pre-eminently charismatic, and unencumbered by any *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*, such as (whatever the meaning of these terms descriptive of Church order) certainly administered the church of Philippi, or those 'set over' the community of Thessalonica.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mt 13, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 5, 17.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess 5, 12.

I trust that such a *caveat* will not be construed as a sign that I am opposed to up-dating, or to structural revision, or to any form of creative renovation in the Church or its religious families. I simply feel it is essential, if the heresy of restricting the canon of the New Testament is to be avoided even in practice, to hear out *all* the views of *all* the sacred writers of the apostolic age on our question of the element of newness in christianity.

The antithesis between the old and the new, which without any doubt was present in the teaching of Jesus, as we have seen, appears if anything in heightened form in the theology of Paul. The most radical opposition, on his view, lies between the former pagan life of his corinthian converts and the new life in Christ. Thus he contrasts 'the old yeast of malice and evil' with 'the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth';<sup>1</sup> the 'old man' has been crucified in christian baptism<sup>2</sup> yielding place to a totally new self that can 'walk in newness of life';<sup>3</sup> the 'old man' has been put off like an old garment and the christian has been garbed with 'the new Man' (Christ) 'who is being renewed unto perfect knowledge after the image of his Creator'.<sup>4</sup>

Paul is seen also to adopt a strikingly different attitude towards the old mosaic dispensation from that evinced by a writer like Matthew. He is keenly conscious of his call to be a 'minister of a new covenant, not (characterized) by the letter, but by Spirit; for the letter kills — it is the Spirit that gives life'.<sup>5</sup> The mosaic institution Paul can qualify as 'the dispensation of death carved in letters upon stone'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the familiar phrase 'the old covenant' may well be original with Paul.<sup>7</sup> The converse of all this is, of course, the radiantly new quality of the christian existence, designated (after the mosaic paradigm) 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'.<sup>8</sup> It is 'a walking according to the Spirit',<sup>9</sup> a life-style dominated by the twin concerns for 'life and peace'.<sup>10</sup> The christian is a man truly possessed by 'the Spirit of God' or 'the Spirit of Christ', or simply, by the risen Christ.<sup>11</sup> It is this dynamic indwelling which renders the Law (indeed, all law) irrelevant to christian living, since the Spirit makes the christians actually 'sons of God', endowed with 'the spirit of sonship', not 'the spirit of slavery forcing (you) back into fear'.<sup>12</sup>

On Paul's view, the new quality of his christian life stands in opposition to his former religious accomplishments as a pharisee, for

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 5, 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> Rom 6, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Rom 6, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Col 3, 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor 3, 6.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor 3, 7.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor 3, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Rom 8, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Rom 8, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 8, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 8, 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 8, 14-15.

it springs from justification 'by faith apart from the works of the Law'.<sup>1</sup> He contrasts that old existence with his new-found life in Christ, in writing to the philippian church: 'Whatever was a gain for me, I have come to consider loss with respect to Christ'.<sup>2</sup> He continually thinks of this new life as discontinuous with the old:

with respect to him, I have suffered the loss of everything, and count all as refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in union with him, not endowed with a justice of my own making from the Law, but with that through faith in Christ, the justification from God springing from faith'.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Paul discerns a certain element of discontinuity within his practice of the christian life, 'forgetting whatever is behind me, pressing on to what still lies ahead'.<sup>4</sup> He presents a similar view of Israel's sacred history in writing to the galatian churches. Into the dialectical process of promise and fulfilment, the regime of the mosaic Law was intercalated as a kind of *bloc erratique*, 'added with a view to transgressions',<sup>5</sup> and it testifies unambiguously to its own ephemeral and relative character.<sup>6</sup> When Paul asserts that the 'entire Law has been fulfilled' (in the command to love one's neighbour), he is thinking chiefly of its termination,<sup>7</sup> not of its survival in a transcendent form (as Matthew does, for instance, in his celebrated series of antitheses).<sup>8</sup>

Paul's attitude towards the earthly history of Jesus exhibits this penchant for discontinuity: 'for even if we had known Christ according to the flesh, we now no longer know him thus'.<sup>9</sup> And this same viewpoint characterizes his relationship with all his christians: 'if anyone be in union with Christ, he is a new creation'.<sup>10</sup> Religiously speaking, nothing in a christian convert's past life is of any significance: 'neither circumcision counts for anything, nor does the lack of circumcision: what counts is a new creation'.<sup>11</sup> As we hope to show presently, this concept of creation, applied metaphorically to christian existence, is the hallmark of pauline theology, setting it in stark contrast with the theological approach of the school of John.

One final remark must be appended about Paul's sacramental theology. The dominant characteristic of christian baptism, to his mind, is once more the element of discontinuity of which it is the efficacious sign. It is before all else a being 'baptized into the death'

<sup>1</sup> Rom 3, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Phil 3, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Phil 3, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Phil 3, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Gal 3, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Gal 4, 21-31.

<sup>7</sup> Gal 5, 13-15.

<sup>8</sup> Mt 5, 21-47.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 5, 16.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor 5, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Gal 6, 15.

of christ Jesus,<sup>1</sup> the finality of which is ever present to Paul. 'For the death he died, he died to sin *once for all*'.<sup>2</sup> This same discontinuous quality is distinctive of Christ's glorified life, for Paul never allows his reader to forget how vastly different the resurrection of Jesus is from that of Jairus' daughter, or the widow's son, or that of Lazarus. 'The life he lives (now), he lives unto God'.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the ethical imperative, which springs from the christian reception of baptism, demands the preservation of the newness of this new life, cutting it off ruthlessly from the old existence,<sup>4</sup> 'the old man with its *mores*';<sup>5</sup> the christian has now 'put on the new Man who is (constantly) being renewed unto perfect knowledge after the image of his Creator'.<sup>6</sup>

How does Paul present his theology of the eucharist? As a sacramental fellowship, a 'participation in the blood of Christ', and 'in the body of Christ',<sup>7</sup> it exhibits a creativity and newness, in that participation 'in the one bread' makes of the individual members of any christian community 'one body'.<sup>8</sup> In addition, it makes a peremptory demand upon the convert to eschew the worship of idols: 'you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons: you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons'.<sup>9</sup> The eucharist, for Paul, possesses an essentially forward-looking orientation, even while it is a remembrance (*anamnēsis*) of Jesus' death,<sup>10</sup> for it is also the re-presentation in mystery of his resurrection. 'As often as you eat this bread and drink from the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'.<sup>11</sup> By his comparison of the eucharistic liturgy to the kerygma or preaching ('proclamation'), Paul indicates that it is a kind of sacramental anticipation of the triumphant second coming, which, effecting as it must such a profound 'transformation' in man<sup>12</sup> and also in the material creation,<sup>13</sup> is the supreme event of discontinuity.

Thus, as the reader will have begun to suspect, all the major pauline theorems regarding christology, the theology of the christian life, and the sacraments, coalesce to form a theology of *discontinuity*. This emphasis upon this aspect of the quality of newness in christian life best characterizes pauline thought; and contrasts him clearly, as we shall now discover, with other New Testament writers – not only Matthew, but especially John. One does indeed catch an occasional echo of this pauline theme in a thinker like the author of

<sup>1</sup> Rom 6, 3.      <sup>2</sup> Rom 6, 10.      <sup>3</sup> Rom 6, 10.      <sup>4</sup> Rom 6, 12-23; Col 3, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Col 3, 9.      <sup>6</sup> Col 3, 10.      <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 10, 16.      <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor 10, 17.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 10, 21.      <sup>10</sup> 1 Cor 11, 24-25.      <sup>11</sup> 1 Cor 11, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Phil 3, 20-21; 1 Cor 15, 48-57.      <sup>13</sup> Rom 8, 18-21.

Hebrews, who celebrates the superiority of the religion established by Jesus over that of Israel. The glorified Christ 'in the present dispensation has obtained a transcendently excellent ministry, by as much as he is mediator of a better covenant enacted upon better promises'.<sup>1</sup> This writer cites the famous oracle found in Jeremiah,<sup>2</sup> in order to conclude with the observation: 'by speaking of a *new* covenant he renders obsolete the first one: what becomes obsolescent and aged is close to disappearance'.<sup>3</sup> Such a viewpoint undoubtedly derives from Paul.

### *John's theology of continuity*

At the risk of sounding repetitious, I should like to recall the point made earlier about the necessity of avoiding the temptation of constructing a programme of *aggiornamento* for the Church or for any religious family upon a 'canon within the Canon'. Thus to rely solely upon Paul's theology in up-dating the Church or any religious institute (and one must admit it offers a certain appeal with its emphasis upon discontinuity) is to run the risk of producing a one-sided ecclesiology or a theology of the religious life lacking in historical perspective. To restrict oneself to a theological viewpoint where the emphasis is principally upon new beginnings or to construct a dialectic of the religious life based upon a theology of history (like that of Paul, governed by death and resurrection where things proceed by crisis almost to the exclusion of any developmental and organic process) is surely tantamount to choosing only a part of that 'following of Christ as proposed by the gospel', which the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* of Vatican II insists should 'be regarded by all communities as their supreme law'.<sup>4</sup>

A few years back, Père Pierre Benoit, O.P. read a brilliant paper as his presidential address to the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, in which he compared and contrasted the theological characteristics of the two greatest New Testament theologians, Paul and John.<sup>5</sup> I mention this article here simply to acknowledge my own indebtedness in the present study for many of its masterful insights.

In contrast with Paul, who finds God's relationship with man most aptly described as a 'new creation', John (we use the name as a convenient tag to designate the group of disciples of John, son of

<sup>1</sup> Heb 8, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jer 31, 31-34.

<sup>3</sup> Heb 8, 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2, a.

<sup>5</sup> Benoit, P., 'Paulinisme et Johannisme', in *New Testament Studies* 9 (1962-63), pp 193-207.

Zebedee, who wrote the Fourth Gospel, the johannine letters, and the Apocalypse) characteristically views this divine relationship with the human race as revelation. The prologue to John's Gospel presents the divine Word, seen as already operative in the creation and in the Torah (Law of Moses) as God's self-revelation. When 'the Word becomes flesh'<sup>1</sup> as Jesus Christ, the reader has been alerted to the continuity between this new and definitive self-revelation of the God 'no man has ever seen'<sup>2</sup> and the Old Testament. Moreover, this evangelist takes pains to stress, in his narratives of the post-resurrection appearances, the continuity obtaining between the Jesus of the earthly life and the glorified Lord. Thus John draws the reader's attention to the *recognition* of Jesus by Mary Magdalene,<sup>3</sup> to the showing of his wounds by Jesus to the disciples<sup>4</sup> in order to help them recognize him, and particularly, with the doubting Thomas, Jesus' insistence that the place of the nails and his pierced side be explored.<sup>5</sup> In the opening vision of the exalted Son of Man in the Apocalypse, the awesome Lord of history helps the seer of Patmos recognize him by using a phrase so often found upon the lips of the earthly Jesus, 'stop being afraid!'.<sup>6</sup> In contrast with Paul, who met Jesus for the first time in his life upon the Damascus road enveloped in divine glory, John had 'known him according to the flesh'. And he never tires, in the gospel, of drawing attention to the sign-value in the events of Jesus' earthly history as *the* means to develop and deepen christian faith. On John's view, to 'behold the Son' in Jesus' expressed the whole finality of christian faith, for (as Jesus reminds Philip) 'the man who has seen me has seen the Father'.<sup>8</sup>

Here we might recall that the personality of the holy Spirit is more clearly delineated in the Fourth Gospel than anywhere in the writings of Paul. Except for the credal formula,<sup>9</sup> which Paul may well have received in the tradition, the holy Spirit as Person appears somewhat obscurely as 'the Spirit of God',<sup>10</sup> and, more frequently, as 'the Spirit of Christ',<sup>11</sup> with whom he seems at times to be almost identified.<sup>12</sup> Paul can assert that by his resurrection Christ has become 'lifegiving Spirit',<sup>13</sup> an epithet which in John contrasts the holy Spirit with the mortal flesh of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Only in the fourth Gospel is the holy Spirit referred to as 'he'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jn 1, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 1, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 20, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 20, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Jn 20, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Apoc 1, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Jn 6, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 14, 9.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 13, 13.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor 3, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 8, 9.

<sup>12</sup> 'The Lord is the Spirit': 2 Cor 3, 17.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor 15, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Jn 6, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 16, 8, 13, 14.

John's attitude to the mosaic Law evidences none of the disparagement or hostility found in Paul's writings, 'The Law was a gift (of God) through Moses', the prologue asserts;<sup>1</sup> 'graciousness and truth became a reality through Jesus Christ'. Thus does the fourth Gospel view the newness of the christian dispensation without depreciating the religion of Moses. John accepts the Old Testament view of the Law as the manifestation of God's will, addressed to man and soliciting his obedience in faith.<sup>2</sup> The Law and Moses, its author, give testimony to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Yet the Law is incomplete and imperfect in John's eyes: Nicodemus, 'the teacher in Israel',<sup>4</sup> illustrates the inability of those instructed in the Law to grasp Jesus' message.

One encounters a more sinister aspect of the Law as interpreted by the religious leaders who seek Jesus' death from Pilate.<sup>5</sup> In fact there are a few places in the fourth Gospel where John displays a hostility to the Law, akin to that found in Paul.<sup>6</sup> However, John's customary attitude is seen in the last part of the prologue, already cited:<sup>7</sup> the Law is a first communication of that divine 'graciousness and truth', imparted fully in the 'only Son', who has received it from the Father in 'plenitude'.<sup>8</sup> Jesus will bestow this gift only after his 'glorification' through death and resurrection, when he returns to the Father,<sup>9</sup> through the gift of the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Thus does John express the element of newness granted to the christian people.

It is instructive to observe how rarely, in all the writings ascribed to John, the terms 'old' and 'new' occur. In the Gospel, where 'old' is never used, the 'new commandment' of fraternal love is the single significant use of 'new'.<sup>11</sup> This expression recurs in the johannine letters,<sup>12</sup> where however it is also designated as 'the old (*palaios*) commandment'.<sup>13</sup> The author of the Apocalypse speaks of the 'new name' given to the christian,<sup>14</sup> of the 'new song' sung by the blessed,<sup>15</sup> of a 'new sky and new earth',<sup>16</sup> of the 'new Jerusalem'.<sup>17</sup>

The expression, 'a new sky and new earth' might seem to be presenting the pauline conception of the 'new creation'. When however one recalls the two quite distinctive ways in which these two great theologians conceive the eschatological reality, the divergence in their viewpoint is evident. Paul customarily takes a horizontal, or

<sup>1</sup> Jn 1, 17.<sup>2</sup> Jn 7, 19, 22-23.<sup>3</sup> Jn 5, 39, 46; 1, 45.<sup>4</sup> Jn 3, 10.<sup>5</sup> Jn 19, 7.<sup>6</sup> Jn 8, 17; 10, 34 'in your Law'; cf 15, 25.<sup>7</sup> Jn 1, 14-17.<sup>8</sup> Jn 1, 14, 16.<sup>9</sup> Jn 16, 5-7.<sup>10</sup> Jn 7, 37-39.<sup>11</sup> Cf Jn 19, 41 'new tomb'.<sup>12</sup> 1 Jn 2, 7-8; 2 Jn 5.<sup>13</sup> 1 Jn 2, 7.<sup>14</sup> Apoc 2, 17; cf 3, 12 'my new name'.<sup>15</sup> Apoc 5, 9; 14, 3.<sup>16</sup> Apoc 21, 1.<sup>17</sup> Apoc 21, 2.

chronologically successive view of eschatology, with the central event of Jesus' death and resurrection (after which a new, decisive departure is made in history) standing as effective sign of the discontinuity found in the historical process. Before this point stands the old world, product of the first creation, characterized by the Law, sinful 'flesh', slavery, rebellion, and death. The redemptive event ushers in the new creation, a world in which 'the last Adam', the risen Christ presides, characterized by the Spirit, by grace, freedom, life, and the loving service of God's sons.

John tends to conceive his eschatology in vertical terms. The world containing the eschatological reality is 'above',<sup>1</sup> co-existing with the unredeemed world where God's enemies, 'the inhabitants of the earth' dwell.<sup>2</sup> It is from this heavenly world that Jesus has come<sup>3</sup> and to which he ascends by death and resurrection.<sup>4</sup> It is through this return to the Father that Jesus reveals the divine mystery surrounding his own Person.<sup>5</sup>

John prefers to describe the new reality communicated to the christian as a new birth<sup>6</sup> whereby he becomes a 'child of God'<sup>7</sup> imbued with 'Life', or (which comes to the same) 'eternal Life'. This conception of a 'new birth' is different from Paul's 'new creation', in that it does not imply a total discontinuity with what went before. Where Paul thinks of the redeemed world as 'beyond', John envisages it as existing 'above'. I venture to suggest that this may provide the principal reason why the johannine writings (especially the fourth Gospel) devote little attention to the final judgment and the 'last things' generally, and place the accent rather upon 'realized' eschatology. Here too perhaps we have the explanation of John's notion of christian faith as a contemplative activity, a 'seeing' of the divine reality already in existence 'above'. I believe it is no accident that the word 'hope' (*elpis*) occurs but once in all johannine literature,<sup>8</sup> while the verb 'to hope' is employed in a single instance<sup>9</sup> to denote the jewish hope in Moses.

Johannine thought, as we have seen, does not ignore the quality of newness in the new people of God. Yet the sacred writers who belong to the 'school of John' present it in terms of a theology of continuity, in which the sacred history of Israel and its religious institutions play a significant role. This appreciation of 'the old',

<sup>1</sup> Jn 3, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc 3, 10; 8, 13; 13, 8, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 3, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 13, 1, 3; 14, 28; 16, 10, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Jn 8, 28; 12, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Jn 3, 3, 5-6; 8, 48; 18, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Jn 1, 13; 11, 32.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Jn 3, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Jn 5, 45.

which does not however overlook the need of renovation in Christ of the world and its religious institutions, must serve us, in our contemporary efforts at *aggiornamento*, to preserve equilibrium, which might well be lost through exclusive attention to Paul's inspired presentation of the gospel.

*Paul and John: the quality of Christian newness*

By way of conclusion we shall define more precisely that quality of newness which the risen Christ has bestowed upon the christian people; and in such an enterprise we can have no better guides than the two greatest theologians of the New Testament, John and Paul.

There is no doubt of the universal conviction on the part of all the inspired writers of the New Testament that the new element in christianity is the work of the holy Spirit, whose abundant pouring forth 'at the end of days' was already promised by the greatest of Israel's prophets.<sup>1</sup> This conviction appears from the beginning of the life of the young Church in the apostolic preaching.<sup>2</sup> Yet the specifically new element in the gift of the Spirit in the christian era consists in the fact that he is bestowed upon the believer by the exalted Lord Jesus, who mediates this gracious divine gift in a definitive manner. This theme is also basic to the good news of the gospel. 'Therefore, exalted at God's right hand and having received the promised holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out this which you are seeing and hearing'.<sup>3</sup>

Paul never tires of insisting upon this axiom, which he makes the pivotal point of his whole theology. It is to be seen as basic to his contrast between the first Adam and the risen Christ, who as the paragon of human perfection, 'the last Adam', is declared to have 'become life-giving Spirit',<sup>4</sup> whose image the christian is destined to bear.<sup>5</sup> Paul even dares to assert that the incarnate Son has had his own unique divine filiation enhanced through the resurrection of his humanity, since that humanity has thereby been fashioned into the perfect instrument for communicating the divine saving power which is the Spirit. 'He was constituted Son of God in power, in accordance with his Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from death'.<sup>6</sup> Now, on Paul's view, God's plan of salvation is most properly seen as the incorporation of man into the Father's own family: 'those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be made conformable to

<sup>1</sup> Ezek 36, 26-27; Jer 31, 31-34.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2, 16-21; cf Joel 2, 28-32.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2, 33.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor 15, 45.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 15, 49; Phil 3, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Rom 1, 4.

the image of his Son, in order that he (the Son) might become the eldest of a large family of brothers.<sup>1</sup> This deepening awareness of the believer's relationship to God as his Father, the goal of his christian existence, is created and deepened in man by the 'Spirit of the Father', who is also 'Spirit of the Son'.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, it is clearly indicated in pauline theology that any *aggiornamento* that cannot be seen as springing from the Spirit as given through the glorified humanity of Christ, in the sacraments or through the contemplation of the scriptures, cannot be found to be authentically new in any christian sense of that term known to Paul.

John is no less emphatic in presenting the same doctrine in his own manner. It is only by listening to the Spirit<sup>3</sup> communicated by the glorified Christ to her<sup>4</sup> that the Church can receive in faith and hope the revelation which the Father has committed to the exalted Lord for her.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the only genuinely christian 'spirit' is discerned by its profession of faith in the incarnate and glorified Son of God, who bestows the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> This bestowal of the holy Spirit upon those with faith in Jesus Christ is the direct consequence of Jesus' own 'glorification', which for the author of the fourth Gospel is inaugurated at Jesus' death.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, John can represent Jesus' dying breath as the first 'handing over' of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> For Jesus' death is the initial step in that 'going away' to the Father which is absolutely necessary in order that he may send that 'other paraclete'.<sup>9</sup>

This johannine teaching concurs fully with the teaching of Paul. Still John can, I believe, be said to make a significant advance over pauline theology, since he insists upon the paramount importance of the christian contemplation of the earthly mysteries of Jesus' history in a way all but impossible for Paul. For John regards these mysteries as signs for the christian through which his faith is deepened and sustained. Indeed this is John's declared purpose in writing his Gospel,<sup>10</sup> since there is no other 'Way' to the Father except this.<sup>11</sup> Thus, John would appear to suggest to us today, it would be naive, in fact dangerous, for any christian to seek to discover his Lord merely in other men, if this means neglecting the essential christian exercise of contemplating him in the New Testament. Authentic christian newness is mediated always by the risen Christ in the holy

<sup>1</sup> Rom 8, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc 2, 7, 11, 17, 29; 3, 6, 13, 22.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Jn 4, 2-3.      <sup>7</sup> Jn 7, 37-39.

<sup>10</sup> Jn 20, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Gal 4, 4-6; Rom 8, 14-17, 26-27.

<sup>4</sup> Apoc 6, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Apoc 1, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 19, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Jn 16, 5-11.

<sup>11</sup> Jn 14, 6-7.

Spirit, whose role is to 'take what is mine and declare it to you';<sup>1</sup> nor is there for John any other way to God, since, as Jesus here adds, 'all that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you'.<sup>2</sup>

The aspect of this mystery of christian newness which has appealed primarily to John is its continuity. John sees it first in all its fulness in the flesh of the incarnated Word of God, Jesus Christ, then communicated to the christian as the effect of Jesus' glorification. Paul, on the other hand, has dwelt upon the element of discontinuity as its most salient feature. Both facets of this newness are significant, both are necessary for christian living; and our twentieth century attempts at up-dating our christian life and our religious institutes depend, for balance and stability, upon the success with which we keep them both in tension.

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<sup>1</sup> Jn 16, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 16, 16.