

THE THEME OF THIS EVENINGS TALK IS

CROSSING THE KEDRON-----JOHN THE MYSTIC.

When John was seventeen he read Darwin, Einstein and Freud and realized that geological eras lasting millions of years, thorough the Azoic, Proterozoic,

Paleozoic, Mesozoic, Cenozoic and Quaternary eras actually existed.

He fell out of his Biblical story and lost his faith.

When you lose a cosmology, the God associated with it goes as well.

He could no longer be a Christian, but remained in touch with Christianity through literature and art, but not theologically.

He found the Christian story was culturally everywhere in evidence in Europe, as so much of European art is Christian.

He had to go in search of a great story or cosmology in which to live again. So he went on a pan-ethnic walkabout through the cultures of the world in search of myths and images that would speak, heal and comfort him.

He yearned to stand beautifully on the earth and found the Aboriginal, Sioux Indian and North American stories, articulated in myth and symbol, helped him to do so. These engrained in him a life long regard and love for nature and he became deeply concerned about man's alienation from this world.

John went through University and his teaching years in Manitoba an agnostic. During this time he saturated himself in the philosophy and literature of European ideas and culture. He became disillusioned with the western humanist tradition culminating in the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Neither philosophy nor literature was adequately answering the profound questions he was now asking about the great absolutes, life and death, good and evil.

So, at the age of 33 years, on Spy Wednesday, he gave up the whole academic world and returned to Inis Boffin, an island of the west coast of Ireland. Later he moved to the mainland where he worked as a gardener.

Having let civilisation happen to him and having been completely disenchanted with the carapace of culture, he stepped outside of it into nature to experience who he was in relation to rocks, stones, mountains and trees.

In a city, John felt one is always being mirrored in others peoples mirror images of you and those images can be distorting.

He found that, living in a landscape without fences, the fences between consciousness and unconscious in your own mind tend to go down and realised that solitude in wild nature could be terrifying.

He meditated on the mountains and by the rivers of Connemara.

One day he had an experience so vast that it shattered him to his core. His then world of the senses and the intellect collapsed.

In this experience he saw that other metaphysical realms existed. That you are infinitely larger than the image you had of yourself and your ego purposes.

Andy O' Mahony, in a radio interview 1985, asked John what effect this experience had on him. He said it brought him back to prayer.

What kind of prayer?
The Our Father and the Hail Mary.

John had no words to name this new birth that had taken place in him. In a sense he was like an embryo without a womb and was going through turmoil, tumult and upheaval.

He searched desperately for help and found it in the person of Fr. Norbert, a Carmelite monk, who became his lifelong spiritual adviser and confessor.

He listened to John's condition and, being the wise and holy man that he is, realised that John now needed the protection of a spiritual environment.

He arranged for him to spend a year in their Carmelite Monastery in Oxford. Here John participated in the formation and prayer life of the community as well as gardening for them.

From this time on prayer became an integral part of his life.

John realised that he needed the help of humanity and the protective insulation of rites and rituals- with the grace that flows from their divine source.

Now John found himself moving back into Christianity that he had earlier thought could no longer speak to him.

In the Carmelite day he found a rhythm of contemplation, silence, ritual and conversation. It sheltered and nourished him so powerfully that it remained a wonder to him for the rest of his life.

This was reflected much later in his plans for Sli na Firinne.

His understanding of Christianity was heavily influenced by the mystical tradition. It was the mystics of all the world religions who were now talking to John and who helped to appropriate his experience on the mountain.

In particular by St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and the Rhineland mystics, who became his lifelong guides.

He always felt that the mystics spoke best about what had happened to Jesus. One of his hopes was that the mystical way would flower in the heart of the Christian tradition.

He also found that when he was in deep trouble and needed Divine assistance he fell back into mother tongue which, for John, was Christianity.

When his trouble was at its deepest, it was Christ in Gethsemane and Good Friday who loomed large in his mind.

He found himself back with a tremendous story in the mystical journey of the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

He discovered that one has to go beyond healing in nature for final healing. Beyond creature, seasons in us and gender divide into Divine Ground for that final healing.

As he journeyed through the great avatars' and their teachings, he finally came to apprehend the monumental event that was and is the incarnation of Christ.

One of John's primary concerns was to honour the central intuition of Christ's Incarnation that Divinity and humanity belong together and can never be separated. He hoped that the bringing together of different cultural metaphors and myths would help achieve this realisation.

Later, the Redemption of Christ became an overwhelming passion in his life, especially during his final years.

Jesus crossing the Kedron and experiencing the Triduum Sacrum is the defining moment not just in individual human history but for the whole earth, as it completed the last stage of human evolution.

Metaphorically, John described the role of Jesus in the geological eras as laid down in the Grand Canyon.

He saw the religious leaders of the world, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, the Hebrew prophets and more, stand on the different levels or strata of the canyon. They watched as Jesus passed all of them as He descended to its very floor.

Here He was Grand Canyon deep in the world's karma.

At the bottom of the Canyon there is a mirroring piece of sand water with a rock pool.
This pool mirrors all of the earth and its psyche

He drank it and in so doing redeemed all of Creation—elemental, plant, animal and human life. He also had to deal with principalities and powers and their spiritual wickedness in usurping the Divine Plan.

In his earthly life, Jesus while in Gethsemane, came in touch most dreadfully with instinctive and animal life reflected in all the worlds' karmic energy.

He is all of the ages and all of nature.
It was as if all that is unconscious came to the surface in him.

Of this appalling suffering and mental anguish, He said that he was "sore amazed and sorrowful unto death".

Everything was redeemed by coming to the surface.
It was opened up to Grace and became Gracious and was reconciled to the Father.

The Good Friday experience on Golgotha is a profound and a total dis-illusioning—a total emptying of everything that one is.

Jesus looks down into the empty skull;
it is empty of everything that has humanly evolved—seeing hearing, thinking etc.
This is the moment of enlightenment, as there is nothing now resisting the Divine.
The Spirit of God moves upon Him.
Now we have Easter Morning.

The religions of the world agree that there is something wrong with humanity.

The Christian diagnosis is very profound.

It suggests that humanity exists in a chronic state of rebellion against Divine command.
That there was an order established divinely by God in which we had a place.

We refused to exist in that place that was assigned to us. We needed to climb to a higher rung on the ladder. Our sin is a repetition of the Luciferian sin.

The Hindu and Buddhist diagnosis suggests that we are deluded; we are illusioned. We are, in a sense, almost enchanted or hypnotised in the way a hypnotist can make you think that a stool is a cow and you get down and milk it.

The Hindus think that the world itself is an illusion, projected by one of their gods, Vishnu.

He is, if you like, the film projector who has projected the whole world out of his dreaming.

We Christians have forgotten all together that we have a Divine Source. That we have come from God and that we have been wandering in the world from time immemorial, totally charmed, enchanted and mesmerised by this world.

We also are in a state of radical illusion.

In a Hindu story, a man projects a snake into a rope he sees in the distance.

Christians project a world into Divine Ground.

We don't often experience Divine Ground.

What we experience is the world that we have projected into it.

Then the remedy is surely if you are a Buddhist or a Hindu that you have to de-superimpose the snake that you projected into the rope.

Christians have to de-superimpose the world that they have projected onto Divine Ground, so that the world does not stand between us and the Divine.

This world disappeared from Jesus on Good Friday. Even his God walked out on him. He was left in a terrifying dark in the nothingness. This no-thing-ness John called the "Rich Naught".

In so far as we are selfishly living for self, we are journeying to Gethsemane. In so far as we are dying to ourselves, we are journeying to Good Friday.

The Christian story is part of the evolving earth.

It is still undergoing evolution in Gethsemane and transcendence of evolution on Golgotha.

Religious formation, in its wisdom, is preparing us for this initiation.

By the disciplines it asks of us in relation to our mind, faculties and senses and helps us with the grace it gives us in the sacraments.

This is the safe path to higher knowledge.

It is an ordered training of the human faculties of thought, feeling and will.

It leads to the development of the latent spiritual faculties of our being and to successively higher levels of consciousness, clarity and judgement; and most important it does it safely.

For a sense-bound egotist to penetrate suddenly into the realm of spirit, could only produce a tragedy such as that of Nietzsche or Sylvia Plath.

Just as Jesus in Gethsemane took all that is not of God in creation up to Divine Grace to become Gracious, so also in the sacrament of Confession, through the power invested in the priest at ordination, He continues to do this for us individually.

Confession is a personal Gethsemane where we bring all our mis-deeds to the surface to be transmuted.

Where the Holy Spirit can eradicate the cause, core, record and memory of all sin or misqualified energy.

What an awesome gift this sacrament is!

On the cross on Good Friday He said "Forgive them Lord, for they know not what they do". All of creation was included in this forgiveness.

John saw the Good Friday experience as being hugely philosophical in its implications. Whoever practises philosophy and practises it finally to the very end will end up on the Hill of the Empty Skull.

Europe in the last three centuries in the persons of Newton, Kant and Hume has been journeying to a philosophical Golgotha.

It has evolved out of naive realism and the philosophical way of thinking.

That objects out there exist in the way we perceive them to exist.

That the world we live in is real and is real in the way we perceive it to be real.

The disillusioning that began with Newton had already, sixteen hundred years earlier, completed itself totally in Jesus on Golgotha, when the veil of the psyche was rent.

Philosophical Realism sees fire as pure energy.

Heat is the sensation of that energy impinging on my leg. I then project back into the fire my sensation of heat.

I project colour into a rose. The colour is not in the rose but in my eye or mind.

These are all sensations.

Taste is in my taste buds, not in the apple.

What is in the apple is juice that is tasteless. It is not taste.

So we have to withdraw all the things we have projected onto them. Heat colour, taste and that nature is as we experience it.

That experience of reality and reality are the same thing.

They are not.

Without proper guidance, experiencing this dis-illusioning can be shattering.

Coleridge experienced profound dejection because of it.
Nietzsche went mad.
Ishmael, in Moby Dick, came close to despair.
Arnold's Dover Beach began to lose the world.
Sylvia Plath committed suicide.

The solitude, loneliness, terror and fear, where even your God abandons you, is the last place you can stand without disintegrating- without ceasing to be.
If you do not have faith in God and are not able to pray, you are in serious trouble.

John always said "that not to pray is a calamity".

The saints went through this disillusioning in the dark night of the soul, where they experienced dereliction instead of falling into despair.

Even in their dereliction they turned to God.

This is where faith in God is imperative. It can be the difference between being released or not being released from that in us which evolves. They worshipped God with Gods abandonment of them.

They prayed the Good Friday prayer:

"I can't sense you in my senses.
I can't sense or know or name you God.
I can't find you inside me or in the world outside.
Yet I will worship you God. You exist. I trust I am being held by you".

Faith in God and prayer creates the bridge between the dereliction of Good Friday and the exaltation of the Resurrection.

Fenelon, a French mystic said:
God felt, God tasted and enjoyed is indeed God.

God in darkness, privation, forsakenness and insensibility is so much God that it is, so to speak, God bare and alone.

At this moment of total exultation, we can say with St Paul, "Death where is thy sting?".

The candles we quench in the Tenebrae ritual represent the quenching of my senses, faculties and mind.
This leads to a personal experience of dying to all that is human in us.
One needs tremendous spiritual help and support to transcend everything that separates us from God.

The following is a quote by Hallaj, a Muslim mystic:
"Between Me and thee is thy self experience. Cast it
from thee and I will veil thee from thyself.

John gave Jesus the highest philosophical divinity because of what happened to Him when He crossed the Kedron with his disciples and experienced the Triduum Sacrum.

Jesus moved from metaphysical to beyond mind and mental activity—thus completing the last stages of human evolution.
He now holds the pivotal role in the history of philosophy and is the person in whom philosophy found it's direction.

Going back through the evolution of human kind there has always been a consistent search by people to find the true meaning of life.

We know this from various sources.

The great myths of humanity have come down to us through different civilisations and deal mainly with the interaction between the spiritual, natural and human world.
In every age these myths spoke to the ordinary man pointing towards a bigger picture than just earthly existence.

The ancient mystery temples that existed from earlier times were, for millennia, the source of human spiritual and cultural development.
These centres were to be found in various places in Greece, Egypt, Babylon Assyria, Phoenicia, Jordan, Israel, Persia, and many more throughout the world.

Here we had temples of Orpheus, Melchisedek, Zoroaster, the Essenes of Palestine, the Therapeutae of Egypt where in pre-Christian times people in search of the divine found themselves attracted to these mysteries.

Modern society has discounted the wisdom of these ancient religions and how they fertilised the ground into which Christianity gave birth. What had been guarded in these temples was embodied in the historical tradition of the Gospels and in the community where that tradition was preserved.

Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian seer and philosopher and founder of the Waldorf schools worldwide, was an exceptionally gifted human.
From an early age he had the unique gift of being able to penetrate the realities behind the world of nature.

He could see into the deepest mysteries of man and the universe and was convinced of the absolute reality of the spirit world that lay behind and beyond the fields of sense perception.
Of this he had direct experience and continuous evidence all his life.

Although he was living at the time of the utmost complacent materialistic certainty in the outlook of mankind, he knew its triumphant conclusions were false.

Steiner saw in Jesus the embodiment and meeting-place of all the spiritual streams of humanity, and saw how the expectation of the Christ appears again and again in the great religions of antiquity.

The content of each of the world-religions is the exact expression of the stage in the process of spirit evolution, which mankind had then reached.

The redemption of human thinking is the completion of the spirit-initiation of mankind by Christ.

John also saw this completion on Easter Morning when he saw the ordinary as extraordinary and believed that a new way of looking and thinking about the world was initiated where you are at one with the spiritual essence of all creation.

They both saw Christ as the pivotal point in the whole process of the evolution of mankind—from its earliest beginnings to its far distant fulfilment, transcending and yet fulfilling the ancient religions of the past and working on forever into the future.

Christianity brought the content of the mysteries out of the obscurity of the mystery temples into the clear light of day in the person of Jesus.

With the coming of Christ the conditions for soul seeking the spirit had changed. Christian wisdom is a mystery revealed as knowledge to none, but as a content of faith to all. Faith must bring us to that, which knowledge alone, can never reach itself.

This is how Steiner experienced the Golgotha event.

Christ's deed was a cosmic redemption quite beyond the power of man to achieve. It was the defeat of the ultimate purpose of evil and the implanting of a new all powerful impulse into human evolution.

Christ sowed a seed of life that ensured the spiritual future of humanity against the twin corrupting powers of self sufficiency and materialism.

He brought the Kingdom of Heaven with a new certainty of life after death.

The full fruit of this seed has yet to ripen.

The New Testament describes the Roman world as "without God and without hope". It was at this moment in the evolution of mankind that Christ came into the world—the fulfilment of the prophetic vision of the Ancient Mysteries and the Jewish prophets.

Steiner saw us way back in the mists of time leaving God the Father.

At the beginning of our evolution we were totally aware of our spiritual origins.

Gradually over aeons of time we lost this vision.

He saw the role that three powerful beings played in usurping Gods plan for us - Lucifer, Satan and Ahriman.

Lucifer is a collective name for spirits hostile to the Divine Plan, who tempt mankind into spiritual independence of higher beings.

Later Ahriman, the collective name for hostile spirits who belong entirely to the material world, sought to establish a material earthly kingdom, in which Lucifer had already involved mankind.

Lucifer and Ahriman are the two opponents of mans spiritual evolution.

Satan tempts and deceives us into the misuse of our senses.

Through these forces we lost our human faculties in relation to our origin in the divine. These faculties went into decline and became obscured by many veils and ultimately by the veil of death.

Just as the Father is the essence of all creation - everything that is - so He is also the essence of death.

John would have been completely at one with Steiner here, as he too saw everything as being in Excelsis. This knowing was not just an unrealised abstraction but was borne out in the joyful inward experience of Johns own dying.

We have a false distorted image of death because of the Luciferian- Ahriman principle that has been infused into every phase of our life.

Steiner speaks of the unfathomable infinite majesty, power and perfection of the spirit of the Cosmic Christ who manifested in Jesus.

He took on to Himself the vast ages of misqualified energy, removed its source, suffered appallingly in so doing and redeemed us.

Steiner saw blood and its--vibrational quality as the outer instrument and expression of the ego. With its steady deterioration the ego fell, to an ever increasing extent, into error and illusion.

Darker and darker had the earth become, with the passing of time, up to the event of Golgotha where Christ's all powerful blood flowed.

It changed the whole vibration of creation with its essence; the earth and all thereon began to radiate with the light of hope and thus began our return evolution and its transcendence back to our dwelling place in God.

We are involved in the transfiguration of all beings into this God who finally attains to what they were from the beginning.

In order to reach this goal we must abandon absolute values in the relative world of nature and find our way to the Logos.

Let me conclude with John's words:

"To be baptised into Christ therefore, is to be baptised not into deadly death, but into death as a nativity into newness of life.

Sooner or later, somewhere along the Sacramental road we have set out on - that will mean a dying to ourselves and to the world.

To cross the Kedron with Jesus is to cross into the vast adventure of our return to God."