Prepared by the Spirit and Transformed in Christ: The Martyrdom of Alfred Delp, S.J.

by

Peter Plunkett Nguyen

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

© Copyright by Peter Plunkett Nguyen 2017
Prepared by the Spirit and Transformed in Christ: The Martyrdom of Alfred Delp, S.J.

Peter Plunkett Nguyen

Doctor of Philosophy

University of St. Michael’s College

2017

Abstract

This thesis argues that in contrast to a negative popular perception, Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by the Jesuit Alfred Delp, consists of a positive giving of self to Jesus for the sake of others. The martyrdom of Delp—executed on 2 February 1945—proceeded from his enduring dialogical encounter with the saving love of God in Jesus Christ, facilitated by the Holy Spirit, and experienced through the medium of prayer. The thesis explores the testimony of Delp in a period during which he was subjected to the tyranny of National Socialism and examines his essential writings, some of which have yet to be published in English, especially his meditations on the Heart of Jesus. The thesis’ methodological approach also involves dialoguing with the work of Bernard Lonergan, which elucidates the spiritual transformation in Delp, and the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, which sheds light on the issue of Delp’s salvific, liberating relationship with Christ.

Delp’s spiritual writings interpret the friendship with Christ made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of freedom that enables Christians to lay down their lives. His martyrdom is the fruit of an ongoing life-changing, prayerful dialogue with Christ enabled by the Spirit.
Delp’s witness unto death demonstrates that Christian martyrdom proceeds from the initiative of God and is the ultimate act of human freedom, which bears witness to loving friendship with God. Accordingly, prayer, as openness to transformation, is a work of the Spirit within the human person, not just a creaturely activity. Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by Delp, is the ultimate expression of human initiation into a saving relationship with Christ and a consequent concern for the well-being of others.
Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to my work. First, I want to thank my dissertation committee at the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto. My director Sr. Gill Goulding, C.J. offered incredible patience and wisdom in this process, assisting my incorporation of the writings of Alfred Delp, Bernard Lonergan, and Hans Urs von Balthasar into a single dialogue. Dr. Ephraim Radner encouraged me to concretize a theology of martyrdom by taking on the prison writings of Alfred Delp. Fr. Gordon Rixon, S.J. helped me to make sense of Lonergan’s theology over many bowls of pho during those long winter months in Toronto.

I am indebted to scholars who have influenced me over the past 18 years of Jesuit formation. Dr. Mark McIntosh introduced me to the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. Fr. Robert Imbelli deepened my love for von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics and theo-drama. Fr. John C. Haughney, S.J. introduced me to the theology of Bernard Lonergan. Fr. Khaled Anatolios’ course on the relationship between faith and reason inaugurated my spirit of inquiry on the reasonableness of Christian martyrdom.

Four Jesuits, in particular, impacted my maturation as a Jesuit. Fr. Brian Paulson, S.J., as vocation director, guided me into the Society of Jesus when I was young man, graduating from the University of Chicago. Fr. Mark Andrews, S.J., as novice master, helped to shape me during the first two years of the novitiate. Fr. Raymond Guiao, S.J., as formation director, encouraged me to pursue doctoral work. Fr. Brad Schaeffer, S.J. as provincial, accepted into the Society of Jesus and, as rector, oversaw my growth into a young priest in Boston.

Numerous members of the Regis Jesuit Community walked with me over these past few years. John O’Brien, S.J. allowed me to ask him countless times across the hallway about his own
prayer life as I tried to make sense of the Trinitarian dimension of Alfred Delp’s prayer life. Fr. Joseph Kozcera, S.J. provided steady and calm support over countless meals. Fr. Gerard Ryan permitted me to talk about my research with him over a few pints. Fr. Shane Daly lent me his ear, discussing Delp and his devotion to the Sacred Heart on our holidays in upstate New York. Fr. Monty Williams enlivened my mind and heart on the pilgrim dimension of Ignatian spirituality. Fr. Con Mulvihill, S.J., as rector, was a consoling, supportive presence during my last year in Toronto. Matthew Charlesworth, S.J. was a devoted brother who delivered drafts of my thesis while I was teaching in Omaha, Nebraska.

I want to thank a few members of my Facebook community and Creighton University community. Varuna Quiterio gave me critical evaluation on a particular draft and lightened my heart with his baseball insights in the midst of the writing grind. Dr. Artur Rosman faithfully alerted me to contemporary scholarship on martyrdom throughout these past years. With a critical and ardent union of mind and heart, Jean-François Garneau appraised my integration of Alfred Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus into the thesis. Dr. Zachary Smith helped me to recognize that I would be offering a unique insight on martyrdom and spirituality. To complete this project, Fr. Charles Kestermeier, S.J. and Ross Romero, S.J. gave to me that necessary final push.

I want to thank my jiu-jitsu community in Toronto: Nikki Almeida, Jodi Pudge, Wendy Chu, Camellia Koo, Paul Jonathon Saguil, Bonavie Tek, Cyril Pinchak, S.J., Alec Nickalls, Jason Tan, Dom Hanlon, and Elliot Bayev. During the difficult moments of the writing stage, I could work out my frustrations on the mats in a combative, friendly manner with you all.

Last but definitely not least, I want to thank my family for raising me in a faith-filled household. The pictures of the saints, martyrs, and the Sacred Heart throughout the home communicated to
me a message of security and interior freedom, knowing that we belonged to the Mystical Body of Christ, where past, present, and future relationships are redeemed. Your expression of popular piety has sown within me what Pope Francis would call a “theology of the people.”

_Cor Jesu, rex et centrum omnium cordium, miserere nobis._
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................iv  
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................vii  
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1  
  The Formation of the Christian Martyr ...................................................................... 1  
  From the Thesis Proposal to the Thesis Proper ......................................................... 6  
  Methodological Consideration ................................................................................... 13  
  Procedure .................................................................................................................... 17  
Chapter 1 The Case for the Christian Martyr ............................................................... 21  
  1.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 21  
  1.2 Psychological Studies of Martyrdom .................................................................... 22  
    1.2.1 C. A. Mounteer’s “Guilt, Martyrdom, and Monasticism” .............................. 22  
    1.2.2 Rona M. Fields’ “The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom” .............. 28  
  1.3 Treatment of Christian Martyrdom in Religious Studies .................................... 36  
    1.3.1 The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom .......................... 38  
  1.4 Theological Studies of Christian Martyrdom ....................................................... 44  
    1.4.1 The Philosophical Foundations of Karl Rahner’s Theology of Martyrdom .... 45  
    1.4.2 Karl Rahner’s Theology of Dying .................................................................. 47  
    1.4.3 Karl Rahner’s Theology of Martyrdom ......................................................... 52  
    1.4.4 The Foundations of Jon Sobrino’s Theology of Martyrdom ......................... 55  
    1.4.5 Jon Sobrino’s Theology of Christian Martyrdom ........................................ 60  
  1.5 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 68  
Chapter 2 The Transformation of the Self: Alfred Delp’s Faith and Ministry in Totalitarian Germany ......................................................................................................................... 73  
  2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 73
2.2 Lonergan’s Dynamics of Conversion ................................................................. 74
2.3 The Young Alfred Delp ......................................................................................... 78
  2.3.1 Intellectual Conversion: Resisting Nazi Ideology as a Young Jesuit .......... 82
2.4 Early Wartime Ministry and Moral Conversion .................................................. 92
  2.4.1 Solidarity with Helmuth James von Moltke in the Kreisau Circle .......... 95
2.5 Imprisonment and Religious Conversion .......................................................... 104
  2.5.1 Mediation of Christ in Prayer ................................................................. 112
  2.5.2 Delp’s Final Vows and the Kreisau Circle on Trial as the Law of the Cross .... 125
2.6 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 138

Chapter 3 Devotion to the Heart of Jesus as Spiritual Formation ............................. 144
  3.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 144
  3.2 Theology of Prayer and Standing under God’s Seal .......................................... 149
  3.3 The Heart of Jesus and Christological Incorporation ....................................... 160
    3.3.1 Balthasar’s Five Biblical Soteriological Motifs ..................................... 163
    3.3.2 The Heart of Jesus and Priestly Theology ............................................. 168
    3.3.3 The Heart of Jesus as Liberation from Sin ........................................... 180
    3.3.4 The Heart of Jesus as the Pattern of a Self-Sacrificing Life ................... 195
  3.4 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 205

Chapter 4 Prayer as Entrance into New Life ............................................................ 207
  4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 207
  4.2 Delp’s Meditation on the Spirit: Giver of Kenotic Life .................................... 208
    4.2.1 Delp’s Pneumatology in Dialogue with Balthasar’s Pneumatology ....... 215
  4.3 Pneumatic Existence ........................................................................................... 223
    4.3.1 Advent: The Spirit as the Forerunner ..................................................... 223
    4.3.2 The Spirit Renders Love Incarnate ......................................................... 228
Introduction

The Formation of the Christian Martyr

Since the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City on the eleventh of September 2001 and the attendant loss of thousands of lives, martyrdom has come to the forefront of the popular imagination in a critically negative fashion. The martyr is seen as someone driven by a combination of hatred, coercion, and fear that typically arises from disempowerment. The charges of despair and irrationality applied to modern-day Islamic extremism are also levelled at Christian martyrdom. Such charges have been made not just by popular writers, but also by scholars, especially in the social and medical sciences. For instance, a psychologist writing on Christian martyrdom in early modern Europe concludes, “In a religiously oriented culture, martyrdom is the logical culmination of this extreme despair; it is the final desire to crush the troublesome.” One historian writes that the rhetoric of Christian martyrdom that emerged after a brutal attack on Coptic Christians on 31 December 2010 in Egypt was belligerent and reflected a persecution complex. Such violent rhetoric, the historian argues, is constitutive of a Christian identity that understands itself to be in an incessant struggle against the rest of the world and sees itself as continually victimized. In sum, the charge against

the Christian martyr is that he is irrational and despondent—characteristics that clearly demonstrate a lack of freedom. Christianity shapes human persons, who struggle with the world, and the confrontation produces people who feel disempowered and despondent. This builds a persecution complex and leads to inhibited acts of martyrdom; it speaks to a definite lack of freedom. In light of such a charge, this thesis maintains that the task of the recovery and renewal of the understanding of the Christian martyr is of vital importance. It argues that in contrast to a negative popular perception, Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by Alfred Delp, consists of a positive giving of self to Jesus for the sake of others. The martyrdom of Delp proceeds from an enduring dialogical encounter with the saving love of God in Jesus Christ, facilitated by the Holy Spirit, and experienced through the medium of prayer.

Alfred Delp was a German Jesuit priest who was executed for high treason for being a leading member of an anti-Nazi resistance group. Delp’s witness is as dramatic and captivating today as it was during the Second World War. His words to his friends and family after his trial highlight his devotion to the Christian faith. In the mid-afternoon of 11 January 1945, after a two-day trial, the German People’s Court in Berlin, Germany, sentenced Alfred Delp to death for high treason against the Third Reich. According to the verdict, Delp was convicted, along with Helmuth James von Moltke, of being one of the foremost conspirators in the Kreisau Circle, an

4 Although this thesis is committed to gender inclusiveness, it utilizes masculine pronouns for the sake of readability.
5 The official verdict “Urteil des Volksgerichtshofes über die Kreisauer” by the German People’s Court can be found at the end of Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, ed. Roman Bleistein, vol. 4. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1984).
6 Helmuth James Graf von Moltke was the founding member of the Kreisau Circle. This was the name given to a group of men who opposed Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. The Kreisau Circle got its name from the group’s frequent meeting place—an estate in Kreisau that was owned by Moltke. Of the six members of the Kreisau Circle,
anti-National Socialist group. The court convicted Delp and Moltke of weakening Germany’s
defence through their clandestine meetings, discussions, and creation of plans to seize power in a
post-National Socialist Germany. Their activities, it was claimed, fostered a defeatist mentality
that aided the enemies of Germany. As a consequence, Delp and Moltke were judged to be
accomplices of Germany’s enemies. In particular, Moltke was convicted for being the lead
conspirator, and Delp was convicted for devising plans for a state that abolished private property
through the implementation of Catholic Social Teaching.

The prosecution had asked for the death sentence, and Delp was convinced that execution
would be his fate. He began to write his farewell letters to family, friends, and brother Jesuits. In
a letter addressed to Franz von Tattenbach, SJ, Delp wrote,

Now I really have to write you a farewell letter. I see no other possibility anymore. The
Lord wants a sacrifice. All these hard weeks have had as their purpose a training in inner freedom. Up to now he has kept me from breaking down and going into shock. He’ll also help me get through the final hours. He often carries me as if I’m a sleeping child. The trial was a big farce. . . . It was a gross insult to the Church and the Society. A Jesuit is and remains a degenerate. It was a retaliation for Rösch’s disappearance and my refusal to

who were tried on 9-10 January 1945, three were sentenced and put to death: Helmuth James von Moltke, Alfred Delp, SJ, and Franz Sperr. The other three, Eugen Gerstenmaier, Franz Reisert, and Josef Ernst Fürst Fugger, were given prison sentences. Their involvement in the Kreisau Circle was not seen as of such prominence as that of Moltke, Delp, and Sperr.

8 Ibid., 421. Alfred Delp’s responsibilities in the Kreisau Circle included the planning of a post-Nazi society based on Catholic Social Teaching. Delp used Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum and Pius XI’s encyclical Quadragesimo Anno to introduce Catholic Social Teaching to the non-Catholic members of the Kreisau Circle. In the trial the presiding judge, Dr. Roland Freisler, accused Delp of introducing and planning a communist post-Nazi German Society based on Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno. Quadragesimo Anno does not espouse communism, but Freiser seized on the encyclical’s suggestion that the right to private property is not absolute and that private property should be directed to the common good. It is important to note that the trial was in fact never a fair trial. The court was a pro-Nazi institution and Freisler was Hitler’s favourite judge.
9 Alfred Delp is referring to his imprisonment for seven months by the Nazis.
10 Agustin Rösch was Alfred Delp’s provincial (South German Jesuit Province). He was provincial from 1935 to 1944. Rösch missioned Delp in 1941 to be his representative in the Kreisau Circle. After the arrest of Father Delp on the suspicion that he was connected to the attempted assassination of Hitler’s life on 20 July 1944, Rösch went into
renounce my vows... What I experienced at the hands of the Gestapo I noticed here again: this intense onslaught of hatred against the Church and the Society. So now at least my work has achieved an authentic goal.\textsuperscript{11}

The German word for “training” used in Delp’s letter is \textit{Erziehung},\textsuperscript{12} which can also mean education and schooling. In this thesis, I have chosen to use the word “schooling” instead of “training” because Delp’s experience in a Nazi prison is analogous to St. Ignatius of Loyola’s experience of Manresa in Catalonia in 1522. In the Jesuit tradition, this experience has been perceived as a decisive stage in Ignatius’ spiritual formation.\textsuperscript{13} Ignatius tells the readers of his autobiography that at Manresa God “treated him at this time just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching.”\textsuperscript{14} Under God’s teaching, Ignatius’ mind was enlightened and his understanding was deepened. He was transformed from a soldier in the service of the Spanish king into a spiritual soldier of Christ and his mission was to serve under the standard of Christ the Eternal King.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly, Delp’s prison experience was a decisive stage in his spiritual formation. The notion of inner freedom in Delp’s farewell letter to Franz von Tattenbach alludes to the Ignatian charism of realizing the disposition to choose and do God’s will. This corresponds

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
hiding. He was arrested on 11 January 1945 by the Gestapo and temporarily detained at the Dachau concentration camp. He was sent to Berlin to be tried as a political prisoner, but escaped the war with his life as a result of the Red Army’s liberation of Berlin.
\footnote{Mary Frances Coady, \textit{With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany}} (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 166.
\footnote{Ibid., 57.}
\footnote{Ibid., 6.}
\end{flushleft}
to the Ignatian concept of indifference, according to which one is freed from inordinate attachments and passions to love God first and foremost.\textsuperscript{16}

Delp’s letter reveals the significant themes of inner freedom and the incompatibility of his identity as a Jesuit with the ideology of National Socialism. In a letter to his Jesuit brethren after being sentenced to death, Delp writes,

\begin{quote}
I must surrender myself completely. This is seedtime, not harvest. God sows the seed and some time or the other He will do the reaping. The one thing I must do is to make sure the seed falls on fertile ground. . . . If this is the way God has chosen—and everything indicates that it is—then I must willingly and without rancor make it my way.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

It is not just Delp’s commitment to God but his very self-understanding that brings him to this juncture.\textsuperscript{18} He understands that his self-identity\textsuperscript{19} as a Christian and a Jesuit is the offence for which he has been condemned. He is a man who has been asked to make a radical commitment of self to God. To finally give himself over to what he understands as God’s will for him, Delp must undergo a schooling in inner freedom. This point brings together two seemingly opposing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] The important reference point of Ignatian spirituality is the “First Principle and Foundation,” which asserts that all things of the earth are created for human beings, to help them attain the end for which they are created. The main purpose of the human person is to praise, reverence, and serve God. According to Hugo Rahner, “all created things are loved in so far as they are related to Christ Jesus the creator.” Anyone who acknowledges the distance between God and creatures, realizes that God alone can be loved with an ultimate love. See Hugo Rahner, \textit{Ignatius: The Theologian} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 24.
\item[18] Michael P. Jensen’s \textit{Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial} (London: T&T Clark, 2010) argues that Christian martyrs witness to both their relationship with Christ and their self-understanding. To deny Christ would be a betrayal of one’s religious faith and one’s self.
\item[19] The thesis’ use of the concepts “self” and “identity” requires some clarification. The word \textit{self} comes from the Latin \textit{ipse} and is understood to refer to a subject of consciousness, a being capable of thought and experience and able to engage in deliberative action. The word \textit{identity} comes from the Latin \textit{idem} and connotes sameness or similarity. In Paul Ricoeur’s \textit{Oneself as Another} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), the term \textit{identity}, when it is ascribed to the self, refers to the subject of consciousness that is constituted from horizons based on comparisons with others. In this thesis, \textit{self-identity} refers to the self that is reflexively understood, that is, the one who speaks self-consciously about himself in relation with others.
\end{footnotes}
notions: the formation of the self and the destruction of the self. The Christian martyr, as exemplified by Delp, freely chooses to work for justice and care for the persecuted—in a conversion of the heart that is formed by a relationship with Christ, facilitated by the Spirit, and experienced in prayer.

From the Thesis Proposal to the Thesis Proper

The thesis underwent a nuanced development from the thesis proposal, which sought to re-appropriate the understanding of Christian martyrdom by framing the act of martyrdom within the hermeneutic of Christological self-surrender. The proposal asserted that the witness of martyrdom is the fruit of the redemptive work of the crucified and risen Christ and that this understanding of martyrdom can be tested against the memoirs of a modern martyr—Alfred Delp, SJ. The proposal argued that the witness of the contemporary martyr is a radical imitatio Christi, which involves confronting the reality of evil. The thesis proper retains the proposal’s understanding of Christian martyrdom as a paradigm for a radical imitatio Christi. The thesis has grown, however, to accommodate Delp’s writings on prayer, the Holy Spirit, and devotion to the Heart of Jesus. This adjustment represents a honing of the thesis’ focus on Jesus Christ as the Trinity’s saving response to humankind’s sinful and wretched condition and the Spirit’s assistance in bringing men and women into a transformative and mature relationship with Christ in

---

20 In Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial, Jensen asks a similar question and explores the character of Archbishop Thomas Becket in T.S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral. Jensen, using Karl Barth’s theology as a framework, argues that Becket’s identity was formed in a surrender of self to Divine Providence. This self-surrender occurs at the end of Becket’s spiritual journey. As this thesis will argue, see Alfred Delp’s martyrdom proceeds from the encounter of the saving love of God, and Delp’s subsequent surrender of self to God occurs at the beginning of his spiritual journey.
prayer. Consequently, the thesis places strong emphasis on the Divine initiative to transform human persons and on Delp’s response to God’s call as a maturation and transformation of his very self. Delp’s martyrdom is the fruit of an ongoing life-changing, prayerful dialogue with Christ enabled by the Spirit. A radical *imitatio Christi* does not occur without the transformative love of God “poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).

For Delp, devotion to the Heart of Jesus proclaims the identity of God and the purpose of human existence. Delp wrote extensively on this devotion throughout his Jesuit life, and the devotion formed the basis of his prayer, especially his prayer in prison. Delp wrote that prayer transformed him during his imprisonment and is the most important service we can give to humanity. Approaching the thesis through the lens of prayer does not diminish the importance of either Delp’s self-surrender or the Trinitarian revelation, but rather illuminates Delp’s self-surrender as a fruit of the Triune God’s initiative to heal and liberate persons. The prayers of Delp, as encountered in his prison meditations, are constituted by a dialogue between God and the human person. Moreover, Delp’s prayers represent an appeal for a saving response from God. For Delp, the gift of Christ’s love is a response to sin and evil. Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by Delp, is the ultimate expression of human initiation into a saving relationship with Christ and a concern for the well-being of others.

Employing prayer as the interpretive key to understanding the martyrdom of Alfred Delp also leads to an examination of the work of the Holy Spirit, because Christian prayer, which brings a person into intimacy with Christ, is facilitated by the work of the Spirit—and Delp’s longest and final prison meditation is on the Holy Spirit. In this meditation, Delp speaks of the Spirit as that which leads him to encounter the healing and transforming love of Christ. Thus, the hermeneutic of prayer does not lessen the importance of self-surrender to Christ but rather illu-
minates it through the facilitation of the Spirit. The lens of prayer sheds light on the Divine ini-
tiative that offers what Delp describes as a saving “friendship” and is the origin of his martyrdom
as a spiritual journey with God. Six terms—prayer, transformation, person, the Heart of Jesus,
friendship, and self-surrender—need to be clarified at the outset.

The theme of prayer is significant in Delp’s writings. He describes prayer as the path to
ttrue freedom and the most important service he can offer other persons.21 Prayer as openness to
transformation is a work of the Spirit within the human person, not just a creaturely activity. En-
countering the saving love of God in Christ and being in relationship with God cannot be the re-
sult of human achievement because of the ontological chasm between the Creator and the crea-
ture. For Aristotle, the deepest friendship occurs between two equals,22 which in the pagan world
precludes the potential of intimacy between God and human persons. The possibility of friend-
ship between God and the human person within the Christian tradition, however, comes from the
Holy Spirit working through the prayer of the Christian person.23 It is true that human persons
cannot earn their way into a transformative relationship with Christ; rather, the Holy Spirit, who
is the Spirit of Christ, is poured out upon the person24 in prayer. The Spirit comes to make His
home in and change the person, who then becomes a friend of Christ: the Spirit gives and sus-
tains the love of Christ within Delp’s heart, making it ever more real and intensifying its signifi-
cance in his life. As a consequence of the work of the Spirit, Delp gains firsthand knowledge of

22 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002), 143-
162.
23 See Romans 8:26: “In the same way, the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray
as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.” (NAB)
24 See Romans 5:5: “And the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been giv-
en to us.” (NAB)
the Christological encounter, and the Spirit makes friendship with Christ a lived experience that is the source of his freedom. Accordingly, Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by Delp, proceeds from the initiative of God and is the ultimate act of human freedom, which bears witness to loving friendship with God.

Delp’s spiritual journey involves an encounter with God that leads to the transformation of his very self. God is not present to human consciousness in the way an object in the concrete world is said to be. Encountering God is like meeting a friend or a loved one, and the language used to describe this encounter is not so much “informational” as “transformational.” Furthermore, the encounter with the presence of God transforms the mystic’s life, and it invites the mystics to use their words and deeds to encourage others to open themselves to a similar process of transformation. The thesis examines this concept of spiritual transformation from the perspective of Bernard Lonergan’s theology of conversion. His analysis of conversion proceeds from a cognitional theory that explains the human person’s self-transcending drive for authenticity. Conversion may entail an increasing deepening or broadening, in which one world gradually expands by building on previous knowledge and commitments. It may also involve an overturning of previous understandings and judgments. What was real is now false; what was important is now insignificant. Delp’s conversion leads and commits him to the ideals of faith and justice at the cost of his life.

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., xvii.
The theme of friendship is salient in Delp’s spiritual writings as well. In Tegel Prison he speaks of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus as the offer of a friendship that seeks the world’s lost and wretched.  

29 In one of his earliest homilies, Delp articulated that Christian salvation is friendship with Christ.  

30 For Delp, Christ’s offer of self-sacrificial friendship enables us to respond by giving our lives to others. The concept of friendship elaborated in Delp’s homily is drawn from the Gospel of John, which refers to the giving of one’s life for others because one has been drawn into intimacy with Jesus Christ.  

31 The Gospel of John indicates that for Jesus, friendship is the most profound relationship of the human person with God and with others, because a “friend” is immediately understood as “one who loves.” This connection between friendship and a love on the basis of which one is willing to lay down one’s life for another is key for understanding Delp’s martyrdom. Because Jesus’ whole life is an incarnation of the ideal of friendship, the pattern of his life and death moves the saying of John’s Gospel from an idea to an embodied gift. The friendship that Jesus displays, one that leads him to lay down his life for humanity, is not only a model for human love and friendship. It becomes the source of Christian freedom and of a profound fellowship that gives rise to the possibility of giving one’s life for others. Christian freedom is a freedom of loving choice; it is the freedom to follow Christ. The discussion of prayer thus augments the thesis’ understanding of the fruits of Christ’s sacrifice on

30 Alfred Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Gesitleiche Schriften, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: J. Knecht, 1982), 158.
31 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give to you. This I command you, to love one another.” (John 15:12-17) (NAB)
the Cross and provides a framework for its account of the work of the Spirit in the life of the martyr.

The theme of the Heart of Jesus plays a salient role in Delp’s witness, because his strong devotion to the Heart of Jesus is the source of his first two prison meditations. The core of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is a dedication of oneself to Christ in response to his self-sacrificial love for humanity. The word devotion comes from a Latin word that means total dedication; it implies the giving of oneself to a greater purpose. In this context, it is necessary for the relationship to encompass the person of Jesus Christ because it would be misguided to worship the Heart alone without relating it to the whole Christ. The devotion refers to the Person of Christ with a special emphasis on His love, symbolized by His Heart.

It should be noted that the meaning of the word heart is drawn from the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. In the biblical sense, the word denotes the spiritual core of the person. The Scriptures consider the heart to be the primary organ of faith. “Heart” occurs 850 times in the Bible, either as the Aramaic leb/lebab or the Greek καρδία/kardia (which occurs 156 times). The heart symbolizes the centre of the person who lives in a conscious way; it is the “I” in the exercise of its capacities. It is the essence of a person’s primal and integral relations with others. As such, the heart represents rationality, the moral principle, and the source of affective life. The biblical heart is the innermost core of a person’s being, where the self makes decisions, experiences thoughts and emotions, and prays to God. With respect to Jesus Christ, His Heart is the symbol

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 11.
of God’s interior life, His thoughts, will, and love. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus enables Delp to encounter the all-encompassing element of Divine loving friendship. Thus Jesus’ love for human beings becomes the agent of radical change within Delp.

The theme of self-surrender plays a particularly strong role in Delp’s prison writings. In his prison meditations on the Christmas season, Delp describes the saints and martyrs associated with the season as persons who surrendered themselves to God. These are persons who made themselves available to God’s call and obeyed the mission that God gave them. Their openness and willingness to do God’s will indicate a commitment of self to someone greater than them. The commitment of a saint to God is a response to God’s love in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the commitment of one’s very self to the mission, according to Delp, brings forth genuine human fulfillment or selfhood. In his letters and spiritual writings, Delp uses terms such as dedication, self-surrender, self-giving, self-abandonment, and self-sacrifice to describe the particular Christian experience of emptying that took place in his life, especially during his imprisonment. The thesis connects this group of words to the term kenosis. In Christian theology, kenosis describes a specific self-emptying of Christ that includes His self-sacrificial death on the Cross for the love of humankind. This definitive Form of Divine self-giving establishes a kenotic disposition for discipleship that leads to a life of service.

This thesis construes the term personhood as being in relationship with another, and this concept of the person plays a prominent role in the study’s theology of Christian martyrdom. Relationship is integral to the person, because as Delp’s prayer life shows, his maturation and transformation do not occur without God’s self-giving love in Christ. Authentic human personhood is achieved when the self receives the fruits of Christ’s salvific love: in prayer, Delp is turned towards Christ, who gives him a sense of the goal of his existence. When Delp embraces his call
from Christ, he experiences an increasingly powerful apprehension of his very self, an innermost awakening to the core of his being, inasmuch as he receives the ultimate meaning of his existence from God. That is, what a person encounters in intimacy with Christ is the mission for his life. The person’s obedience to his mission becomes a mode of service. Obedience is not simply the extrinsic following of a command, but a profound coming into being as a person through the embrace of one’s mission. In obedience, a person becomes more himself by moving out of a merely individual existence. A person commits himself to God’s work in the world in Christ, because he understands that he receives the fruits of God’s saving love in Christ and responds in an act of self-donation to God for the sake of the world.

Methodological Consideration

This thesis argues that Alfred Delp’s prison meditations interpret the salvific friendship with Christ made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of freedom that enables Christians to lay down their lives. Delp’s experience with the resistance movement, the Kreisau Circle, and his imprisonment, torture, and trial were all parts of a spiritual journey that entailed a self-surrender to Christ. From his tertianship, Delp recognized that the way forward would proceed not from heroic actions based on his own prowess but rather from an ongoing lived encounter with Christ in prayer enabled by the Holy Spirit. Such a relationship would not be an occasion for escapist fantasy; it demanded conversion and surrender of his whole self to Christ. Surrender

of the self, in which human persons achieve their deepest identity consists not of the destruction of the self but the veritable realization of the self as created by God. Indeed, Delp wrote from prison that the practice of prayer is the key to “human liberty” and the path that “brings forth a new human being.” For Delp, prayer is always focused on Christ and mediated by the Spirit, who opens human hearts and brings persons into intimacy with Christ. The human person discovers his authentic self when he becomes friends with Christ by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s assistance.

The overarching method of the thesis is to employ prayer and the saving love of God in Christ as interpretative tools in the exploration of the inner freedom and the authentic self of the Christian martyr. The thesis examines Delp’s writings, including his prison meditations and letters, to explore how prayer transformed him and influenced his actions. This exploration, in turn, shows how prayer, which brings a person into a profound relationship with Christ, is facilitated by the work of the Spirit. I bring Delp’s writings into conjunction with his actions, which are described in his prison letters. This provides a whole narrative of the spiritual formation of the self for the sake of martyrdom.

The thesis engages the work of the Canadian Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan. It utilizes his writings on cognitional theory to examine what a human person does when he is religiously transformed. Lonergan offers an analysis of the cognitional structures and operations of the finite subject who is in relationship with God. In Lonergan’s view, we come to know Christ on an inner level and come to a perfection or fulfillment of self by the process of prayer. Intimate

37 Alfred Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ: Prison Writings, 80.
38 See Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis.
friendship with Christ, as with other persons, requires an openness to being changed or converted.\textsuperscript{39} Lonergan maintains that the law of the Cross\textsuperscript{40} is the process by which human persons undergo conversion, accordingly grow in holiness, and are drawn closer to unconditional love. The law of the Cross offers a paradigm for understanding a radical \textit{imitatio Christi} and an uncompromising response to a Divine call. Lonergan divides the Law of the Cross into three steps, embodied by the passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus, that turn evil into good. The first step is that sin incurs the penalty of death. The second is that this dying, if accepted out of love, is transformative. Third, this transformed dying receives the blessing of new life, and the act of dying becomes an act of self-surrender in God.

This methodological approach also involves interaction with the work of the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, which sheds light on the issue of freedom and the salvific relationship with Christ in Alfred Delp’s witness. According to Balthasar’s Christology, the Incarnation is the Triune God’s saving response to sin and evil, which obscure the innermost purpose of human existence. Delp’s appeal to Christ as saviour through the medium of prayer echoes this Christology. Balthasar explicates the saving love of the Triune God in Jesus Christ under five soteriological motifs centred on the Cross and Resurrection. The five motifs are as follows:

1. The Son gives himself, through God the Father, for the world’s salvation. 2. The Sinless One “changes places” with sinners. While, in principle, the Church Fathers understood this in a radical sense, it is only in the modern variation of the theories of representation that the consequences are fully drawn out. 3. Man is thus set free (ransomed, redeemed, released). 4. More than this, he is initiated into the divine life of the Trinity. 5.

\textsuperscript{39} Robert Doran, “What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by ‘Conversion’?” (Lonergan Research Institute, 2011).
\textsuperscript{40} Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Thesis 3 [Understanding the Mystery]” (Lonergan Research Institute, 2011).
Consequently, the whole process is shown to be the result of an initiative on the part of divine love.\textsuperscript{41} These five motifs of the Trinity’s saving love in Jesus Christ reveal “the kenosis of divine love” and indicate that human maturation is one of the results of this kenosis. As understood in the context of kenosis, God’s saving love in relation to finite persons is characterized by His self-gift in Jesus Christ. Such self-giving transforms human persons.

Moreover, for Balthasar, such self-giving is encountered in the person of Jesus, who is the focus of Christian prayer and in whom persons gain access to the Triune God. Christian prayer is Trinitarian because the human person’s capacity to pray is given to him by the Spirit, who is sent by Jesus Christ, the Divine-human mediator, who intercedes for human beings with the Father. The gift of the Spirit, who assists in human prayer, is the result of the fruit of the saving event of the Paschal Mystery. For Balthasar, in the event of the Incarnation and in Christ’s existence leading up to His crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus surrenders Himself to the Spirit, whom He receives from the Father. At the consummation of His mission, Christ breathes forth the Spirit to His Father and upon the world, and as the resurrected Christ, Jesus gives the Spirit as the fruit of His work of redemption on the Cross. Jesus entrusts His Spirit to the Church so that persons can share in the freedom brought about by His Resurrection. Delp understands his actions and the deepening of his friendships with his imprisoned colleagues in the Kreisau Circle in terms of the salvific friendship with Christ, which Delp encountered in his prayer.

Overall, the thesis utilizes Delp’s witness, memoirs, and meditations to explore the question: What shapes the Christian martyr? Delp’s personal writings (especially his prison memoirs and meditations) provide important material for the theological examination of the loving relationship that animates Delp’s efforts to remain faithful to God, to his fellow imprisoned members of the Kreisau Circle, and to his own self-identity during difficult times. Delp’s writings, especially those from prison, thus function as a guide for the thesis. Balthasar and Lonergan serve as theological interlocutors throughout the thesis.

Procedure

The first chapter begins with a review of studies from the field of psychology that conceptualize martyrdom in terms of the contemporary understanding of depression and suicidal and masochistic tendencies. The chapter then reviews studies from other fields of non-theological fields to provide an overview of the understanding of martyrdom from the perspective of a variety of academic disciplines. It also presents an analysis of Christian martyrdom situated within contemporary Christian theological studies, expressly drawing on the work of two prominent Jesuit theologians, Karl Rahner and Jon Sobrino. The investigation reveals that the social sciences regard the Christian martyr as a person who lacks freedom and despises the world. Theological studies, by contrast, consider the Christian martyr to be a person who follows Jesus by displaying either ultimate freedom or exhibiting great compassion for the persecuted. Taking a

42 Rahner was a German Jesuit priest who lived from 1904 to 1984; he is widely considered one of the most influential theologians in the Catholic-Christian world and an expert of the Second Vatican Council. See: Fergus Kerr, “Karl Rahner,” in *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 105-20.

43 Spanish-born and El Salvadoran Jon Sobrino is a Jesuit theologian priest known for his work in liberation theology.
perspective different from both the social sciences and extant theological scholarship, this thesis demonstrates that the Christian martyr, as exemplified by Delp, is a person drawn to a greater degree of freedom and transformed by a relationship with Christ, facilitated by the Spirit, to work for justice and care for the persecuted. Delp’s martyrdom embodies both freedom and care for the persecuted and the work of both Christ and the Spirit.

The second chapter introduces the witness of Alfred Delp and places it in dialogue with the theology of Bernard Lonergan. This chapter establishes a connection between Delp’s witness unto death and Lonergan’s writings on intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate that Christian martyrdom is reasonable, is concerned with justice in the world, and is impelled by the love of God. It seeks to refute the charges that Christian martyrdom is irrational, involves a detestation of the world, and is impelled by a masochistic faith. The chapter is divided into three major sections. The first involves Delp’s ministry of writing while he was studying for the priesthood and illustrates his intellectual conversion. The second segment covers his work with the Kreisau Circle and his priestly ministry from 1940 to 1944, during the Second World War and demonstrates his moral conversion. The third section deals with his imprisonment as well as the events surrounding his trial and execution and offers a discussion of his religious conversion.

The third chapter explores in detail Delp’s writings, with particular attention to his prayerful reflections on the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which for him is the way to God and the way of self-sacrificial love in the world. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that Delp articulates his religious conversion through a particular Christological devotion. Delp understands that God relates to him personally in the love of Christ as represented by Christ’s Heart, and this loving relationship helps to form Delp’s identity. Delp’s meditations on the devotion to
the Heart of Jesus are found in his tertianship diary, an Advent homily, and his first two prison meditations. The chapter initiates a dialogue between Delp’s meditations and Balthasar’s discussion of the Incarnation as the Triune God’s saving response to sin and evil. Delp’s appeal to Christ as saviour in his reflection on the Heart of Jesus is analogous to Balthasar’s description of Jesus Christ as saviour. In particular, Balthasar describes the saving deed of the Trinity in Jesus Christ under five motifs of soteriology centred on the saving love of God as revealed in the Cross and the Resurrection. These motifs demonstrate that the kenosis of Divine love affects human maturation.

The fourth chapter argues that Delp understands his prayerful transformation in Christ’s friendship and his abandonment of self to follow Christ as the work of the Holy Spirit. The aim of this chapter is to explain that Delp’s rescue and re-creation in Christ’s friendship do not take place without the Spirit’s assistance. This chapter discusses Delp’s prison meditation on the Spirit that speaks of the God who brings the created realm into an ever-deeper relationship with the Divine in prayer. The chapter engages Balthasar’s writings on pneumatology. For Balthasar, Christian prayer is Trinitarian because the Spirit, sent by Christ, who intercedes for people with the Father, gives men and women the capacity to pray. Delp’s reflection on the Spirit illuminates a Christ-centred freedom that enables him to live a life of self-sacrificial love for others.

The conclusion summarizes the thesis and argues that Alfred Delp’s life memoirs and life witness exemplify the Divine initiative to save persons and enable their radical self-abandonment of self to God for the sake of others. The source and model for Christian martyrdom is the gift of

---

the saving love of the Triune God in Jesus Christ. The Spirit makes such an encounter and relationship with Christ possible. This Christological encounter frees martyrs to give their own lives as a gift that reaches into the fullness of the eternal life of the Triune God that was revealed on the Cross. The martyr becomes the analogous witness of God’s saving love for the world.
Chapter 1 The Case for the Christian Martyr

1.1 Introduction

Within the Christian tradition, the martyr has consistently been viewed in a positive light, as a witness who holds faith to be of greater value than life itself. In contemporary scholarship, however, the concept of martyrdom has had a less favourable reception. Significant articles in the field of psychology have argued that martyrs, especially the early Christian martyrs, were people laden with psychological disorders, such as depression, masochism, and suicidal tendencies. Recent scholarship in religious studies has drawn attention to certain characteristics of martyrdom narratives, including embellishments, violent rhetoric, and a persecution complex manufactured by these narratives. Such scholarship is not necessarily interested in the historical lives of the individual martyrs, but rather in the ways the accounts influence the discourse of a given culture. The claim is made that the identity of present and future martyrs will be influenced by a narrative marked by violence.

On the other hand, prominent Christian theologians have attempted to inform contemporary readers of the positive value of Christian martyrs. Two respected figures of the Catholic theological world, the German Jesuit Karl Rahner and the Spanish and El Salvadoran Jesuit Jon Sobrino have made explicit efforts to refine and expand the understanding of Christian

martyrdom to correspond to the Church and the world in contemporary times. Rahner’s theology of Christian martyrdom understands the Christian martyr as one who exercises the highest freedom, whereas Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom understands the martyr as one who struggles and dies on behalf of the oppressed and the impoverished.

1.2 Psychological Studies of Martyrdom

For several centuries, Christian martyrs have been remembered and venerated. Their principled conscience and unwavering perseverance have been seen by Christians as qualities to be celebrated and emulated, yet, in recent years modern scholars have denigrated martyrdom as deviant, self-destructive, unhealthy, and irrational. Among these contemporary approaches, the psychological study of martyrdom provides some of the most severe criticisms.

1.2.1 C. A. Mounteer’s “Guilt, Martyrdom, and Monasticism”

Many psychological studies of martyrdom have sought to understand the inner world of martyrdom, and have used the words “martyr” and “martyrdom” to describe unhealthy and immature behaviours. In “Guilt, Martyrdom, and Monasticism,” C. A. Mounteer argues that martyrdom does not ultimately concern the act of dying for the cause of the faith; rather, it concerns self-destructive or suicidal behaviours driven by “aggression, exhibitionism, and self-hatred.”


Christian martyrs, for the purpose of explaining how they had been motivated by one or a combination of these drives.

Regarding the first suicidal impulse, the drive of self-hatred, Mounteer writes, “The extraordinary self-punishment of the martyrs probably originated from a profound and tormenting sense of guilt.”48 He argues that this guilt was based on the child-rearing practices of the earliest centuries of Christianity, which he links to low self-esteem and depressive personalities. He acknowledges that such child rearing practices were not necessarily unique to the early Christians, but could also be found in pagan families. He states that parents provided much love for children during their first two years, but withdrew love afterward and made it conditional on the child’s “good” behaviour.49 The child’s reaction to this change from unconditional to conditional love created a pervasive insecurity fueled by the belief that the change in his or her parents’ attitude was his or her fault. Thus, the child was laden with guilt. In some persons, this guilt could be relieved only by death. Mounteer goes on to state that in a highly religious society, the guilty conscience of a depressive is projected onto his or her concept of a God who has become a substitute father.50 As a consequence, “the depressive in such an environment may come to believe that God demands his death to atone for his sins.”51

From Mounteer’s perspective, alongside the drive of self-hatred, which the martyrs used to assuage their guilt, they also experienced the drive to express aggression through suicide. Mounteer divides the aggressive drive into a passive aggression and aggressive exhibitionism.

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 149.
He argues that passive aggressive behaviours can manifest as cruelty to one’s loved ones and family. “The necessity to hate is as basic as the necessity to love, and the two emotions”\textsuperscript{52} are evident in many cases of suicide victims, who have experienced a breakdown in relationships with loved ones. This drive of hatred towards loved ones can also be found in martyrs: “In the martyr, as we have suggested, the instinct to love is stunted, and thus the impulse to hate acquires an overwhelming strength.”\textsuperscript{53}

Mounteer illustrates passive aggression with his interpretation of the martyrdom of St. Perpetua. He argues that the motivation for Perpetua’s self-sacrifice was her desire to defy and wound her father. He analyzes passages in which Perpetua provoked her father and caused him incredible grief: “Her passive form of aggression is indicated by her resistance to all of her father’s attempts to dissuade her from her self-destructive course and by the great grief which her stubbornness caused him.”\textsuperscript{54} Mounteer highlights the father’s grief by referring to a moment in the testimony of Perpetua when she resists her father’s loving plea to desist from being a Christian:

Have pity, my daughter, on my grey hairs. Have pity on your father if I am worthy to be called father by you. If I have brought you up to this flower of your age, if I have preferred you to all your brothers, do not deliver me up to the scorn of men. Have regard to your son, who will not be able to live after you. Lay aside your courage and do not bring us all to destruction; for none of us will speak in freedom if you should suffer anything.\textsuperscript{55}

Mounteer concludes with a quote from the Roman historian Tertullian:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 149.  \\
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 147.  \\
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 150. For full text, see: http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.asp, accessed May 5, 2014.
\end{flushright}
Perpetua, that she might taste some pain, being pierced between the ribs, cried out loudly, and she herself placed the wavering right hand of the youthful gladiator to her throat. Possibly such a woman could not have been slain unless she herself had willed it.\textsuperscript{56}

Mounteer also points out that the martyr’s aggression could take the form of active provocation. In the case of provocative aggression, the person seeks to obtain a self-punitve and masochistic gratification through belligerent actions.\textsuperscript{57} As evidence, Mounteer points to a few incidents in which Christians desecrated pagan holy places or insulted Roman dignitaries.\textsuperscript{58} For example, he recounts the story of the brothers Appian and Aedesius. The former was martyred because he interfered with a Roman governor’s attempt to offer a libation to the gods; the latter was martyred because he insulted a Roman judge, who was selling Christian virgins into prostitution. These accounts of provocative aggression, according to Mounteer, indicate an issue with authority that characterizes many early Christian martyrs.\textsuperscript{59}

Mounteer then illustrates the presence of the third drive of the martyrs: exhibitionism, which possesses an erotic character. According to Mounteer, the testimonies of some of the martyrs show that they derived conscious sexual gratification from “having extreme suffering inflicted upon them.”\textsuperscript{60} This indulgence combines narcissism and exhibitionism. Mounteer writes that though exhibitionism and narcissism are frowned upon by many societies, certain radical acts can escape societal judgment and can thus be praised if they are disguised well enough. He argues that because it elicits sympathy through suffering, “martyrdom is one of the most effective

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. For full text, see: Tertullian, \textit{Ad Scapulam}, 5.1; \textit{Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church} 3:107.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 151.  
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
disguises because the suffering of the martyr diverts one’s attention from the exhibitionistic and narcissistic gratifications in the act.\textsuperscript{61}

For a narcissistic personality, the incentive for martyrdom is considerable. The martyr’s self-absorption was driven by the desire to achieve prestige among fellow Christians through his or her suffering and death. If a person could withstand torture and be publicly executed, he could be transformed into an object of cult-like devotion, holding a privileged place among the dead.\textsuperscript{62} Exhibitionist satisfaction could be attained when the martyr was publicly and theatrically tortured and executed. This dramatic suffering and death, according to Mounteer, was directed toward God:

Thus, the martyr may seek to arouse pity or concern in the god for whom the martyr dies. The origin of this motive probably lies in the child’s desire to arouse the same sentiments in his or her parents. Pity is so close to love that it is sometimes eagerly pursued as a substitute for love.\textsuperscript{63}

In Mounteer’s account, Christian martyrs are no longer seen as persons who died for God or God’s kingdom, but as persons who died for themselves or their selfish desires.

A closer examination of Mounteer’s position reveals weaknesses in his methodology. His starting points are unsubstantiated, and thus, his arguments are built on shaky grounds. Mounteer’s methodology is built upon the assumption that Christian martyrs “indulged in self-destructive behavior.”\textsuperscript{64} He does not, however, address or unpack the notion of “self-destruction” or its origins in the personality, and thus his argument is built upon fallacious reasoning. One might ask: if the Christian martyr’s religious stance is self-destructive, why are not the noble

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 145.
deaths of the Greco-Romans of late antiquity characterized in the same fashion? Is this a selective, anti-Christian bias on Mounteer’s part, or does it reflect a modern blindness to finding value in suffering and death?

Though contemporary society is arguably ill at ease with death and will find the notion of submission to a violent, public death appalling, classical sources offer a different perspective. As Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie point out, the Romans championed a heroic end on the battlefield or in the arena; late antiquity lauded the suicide of Socrates; and the ancient Jews paid homage to their heroes, the Maccabees, for refusing to participate in pagan rituals.\textsuperscript{65} Henten and Avemarie argue that urbane and technocratic society desires to banish death, much like religion, from private as well as public life.\textsuperscript{66} The accepted way to die is to pass away quietly in a hospital under the supervision of medical professionals.\textsuperscript{67} Many members of such advanced societies will see a quick, quiet, and solitary death as a blessing.\textsuperscript{68}

In addition to arguing from the unexplored assumption that the early Christians indulged in self-destructive behaviour when it came to confronting the possibility of death, Mounteer builds his argument upon another questionable assumption: that the martyrs’ self-destructive behaviors are similar to modern suicidal acts. Since the ancient martyrs never explicitly intended to commit suicide, this second position is untenable. Mounteer argues that these three suicidal drives featured prominently in the psychology of the Christian martyrs. In doing so, he assigns the martyrs’ drive for self-destruction or punishment to their sense of guilt. He assumes that the

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
guilt rooted in the unconsciousness of the martyrs is the consequence of unhealthy child-rearing practices. This loaded assumption requires some explanation, but nowhere in Mounteer’s article does he provide concrete evidence for his claims.

In summary, Mounteer’s psychological study of Christian martyrdom exhibits distinct problems. Firstly, he attempts to define Christian martyrdom but ends up explicitly or implicitly attacking Christian martyrdom. Secondly, Mounteer assumes the meaning of Christian martyrdom can be reduced to psychological illness, and that the Christian tradition itself is unable to define Christian martyrdom meaningfully. As a consequence, the voice of the authentic martyr and the faith community are silenced. Finally, Mounteer exhibits no willingness to consider Christianity’s understanding of Christian martyrdom and the genuine martyr. Instead, he imposes alien categories upon a Christian phenomenon.

1.2.2 Rona M. Fields’ “The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom”

In a 1998 article, Ekman P. C. Tam argues that previous and current psychological studies of Christian martyrdom will lead readers to conclude that Christian martyrs were mentally ill. He makes the case for research that considers “spirituality” not as a “sickness,” but as an integral characteristic of the human experience. Tam advocates an approach that instead of rejecting religious experiences or viewing religion as a problem, considers instead that religion can offer beneficial meaning. He concludes that future psychological studies of Christian martyrdom

70 Ibid., 464.
should not think that martyrs were driven by unconscious sexual, aggressive, or self-punitive drives, but that they were driven by a conscious concern for an ultimate truth.\footnote{Ibid.}

One encounters such a psychological study of martyrdom in Rona M. Fields’s 2003 article “The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom.”\footnote{Rona M. Fields, “The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom,” in Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 23-82.} Fields offers a discussion that goes beyond the oversimplified views of Christian martyrdom which were prevalent in Mounteer’s study. Fields’ article presents a much more holistic consideration of martyrdom as a significant part of the human person and the human community. Her research does not focus solely on Christianity but examines martyrdom as it is conceived by the three monotheistic religions.

Fields argues that the martyr as understood within these monotheistic religions is:

\[
\text{[O]ne who knows that to profess faith may result in death, but chooses to profess faith through their life. That is the common element of the secular and religious martyr. But it is predicated on the choice to live to profess the faith. The act of living is itself a profession of faith, and the struggle to overcome obstacles to life is fuelled by belief mixed with hope.} \footnote{Fields, “The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom,” 27.}
\]

Fields focuses mainly on the concept of martyrdom in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Nonetheless, she also analyzes examples of men and women from outside these three faiths, such as Mahatma Gandhi. It must be noted, however, that the concept of martyrdom cannot be assumed to take the same form in all three Abrahamic faiths. Though Fields makes the important point that martyrdom is a significant aspect of humanity, one can better appreciate martyrdom’s capacity to communicate a positive message to humanity by examining and respecting the particular ways it emerges and manifests itself in different faith communities and traditions.
Fields contrasts her definition of the martyr as understood by the monotheistic religions with that of the “suicide/homicide” martyr. Fields is aware that the contemporary idea of martyrdom has been linked with terrorism as a result of suicide bombings, which entail killing others while killing oneself. She provokes a discussion of martyrdom that goes beyond simplistic connections to religious violence. She claims that martyrs are persons who want to live and practice their faith; their deaths are the results of the witness of their faith. As a consequence, they are people with the psychological constitution to become martyrs. These are men and women, according to Fields, who are rational and emotionally mature.

Fields compares the psychological constitution of a martyr with that of a suicide/homicide. In her research on Palestinian children who had been traumatized by violence and recruited by paramilitary or terrorist organizations, Fields shows that the children survivor’s guilt and anger were leveraged by their recruiters to suggest revenge as a resolution to their suffering and trauma. Several of the boys, whom she interviewed, later took on suicidal missions in which they murdered civilians at Rome and Vienna airports. She writes, “They were killed and had probably accepted that their mission would be fatal. The single surviving captive expressed that expectation. Given that probability, speculation on suicidal acceptance, not the

---

74 Martyrdom, xviii.
75 Ibid.
76 One such person is Eva Seluczka, who is a Holocaust survivor. Fields calls Eva a potential martyr.
77 Fields conducted research in 1982 with the American University of Beirut with survivors of the Sabra/Shatila Massacre.
78 For a closer examination of Fields’s research on the issue of the recruitment and formation of children in terrorist organizations, see: Rona M. Fields, “Children of Violence” (paper presented at Third International Conference on the Psychological Effects of War and Peace, Jerusalem, Israel, 1986); idem, “Psychological Profile of a Terrorist” (paper presented at the American Psychological Association Convention, Washington, DC, 1986); idem, Salman Elbedour, and Fadel Abdul, “The Palestinian Suicide Bomber,” in The Psychology of Terrorism, vol. 2 (Westport: Greenwood/Praeger, 2002), 193-224. Fields places terrorists on the level of truncated moral development level which Piaget described as “Level 2-Vendetta.”
intention, is appropriate.” Fields goes on to note that these young men came from homes that had iconography, depicting uncles, cousins, or brothers who had died or been killed in similar suicidal missions.

For Fields, an inclination towards vendetta characterizes a suicide/homicide martyr. She writes that the young people that she studied were attracted to suicidal and homicidal actions because their moral development had been truncated. These young people were politicized and socialized in an environment that was soaked with vendetta-related images and rhetoric, and had been persuaded to seek immediate resolution for the sufferings they had endured. Moreover, Fields asserts that older suicide/homicide seekers, like the men who committed the attacks on the two World Trade Center towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, do not necessarily possess more mature moral and emotional perspectives than the adolescent suicide/homicide seekers from Palestine whom she studied. The psychological constitution of a suicide/homicide is not based on chronological age, but rather on emotional maturity. The truncation of emotional maturity can lead a person of any age to the perception that not all life is irretrievable and irreplaceable. Those who commit terrorist acts live in a dualistic “us vs. them” universe.

Fields argues that the personality of a healthy martyr is one of a testament, which emerges from a commitment to a good. Such a good is the emotional engine for the testament and

80 Martyrdom, 154.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 166.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 30.
dying for this good is not the principal goal but is a means to the goal.\textsuperscript{85} In her studies of survivors of terror trauma, particularly of torture and hostage situations, Fields came upon a crucial distinction amongst the survivors: a distinction between “those who focused on helping others and empathy for others and those who became self-absorbed, centered on what was happening or would happen to them.”\textsuperscript{86} According to Fields, the former suffered fewer negative consequences, whereas the latter tended to be paralyzed by their experiences.\textsuperscript{87} The distinction leads Fields to suggest that a martyr is one who epitomizes a selfless endeavour to help others at his or her risk and seeks something greater than self.\textsuperscript{88}

Fields, drawing upon Viktor Frankl’s thought in \textit{Logotherapy}\textsuperscript{89} writes that excessive attention to one’s experience and feelings of fear confirms the fear and creates a neurotic incapacitation.\textsuperscript{90} Conversely, Frankl notes that the belief that one’s suffering is a sacrifice for a loved one’s life becomes an empowerment. Fields asserts that the “psychodynamic of a person who becomes a martyr begins with the belief in and commitment to a cause greater than his or her well-being, but not in contradiction of life and self.”\textsuperscript{91} She argues that this dynamic entails a mature psychology because an immature psychology is unable to conceive of a universal morality.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Martyrdom}, 38.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 39.
and remains at the level of immediate gratification. A healthy martyr takes actions that transcend but do not negate the self.  

Fields deduces that the capacity for selfless and fearless adherence to one’s convictions emerges from a secure childhood. The secure childhood that fosters altruism and resilience is a consequence of being part of a caring family – nuclear and extended. She writes, “[The family dynamic] is the critical field within which the individual integrates the developing self.”

Individuals, who possess a healthy sense of the self, have the freedom to make choices and have the capacity to deal with concepts of responsibility, courage, and uncertainty. To describe the psychologically mature person who might become a martyr, Fields quotes Abraham Maslow:

Man has his future within him, dynamically active at this present moment…. The future is in principle unknown and unknowable, which means that all habits, defenses and coping mechanisms are doubtful and ambiguous because they are based on past experience. Only the flexibly creative person can really imagine the future, only the one who can face novelty with confidence and without fear.

Fields' discussion of the freedom to make choices in the face of demanding situations, in particular for the sake of others, leads her into a brief analysis of the phenomenon of hope. She argues that the other distinction between the suicide/homicide martyr, who takes the lives of others, and the healthy martyr, who is motivated by self-sacrifice, involves the phenomenon of hope. For Fields, self-sacrifice is a manifestation of hope, which enables the person who becomes a martyr to see the lives of others, particularly loved ones, as worth dying for. The stories

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., 44.
94 Ibid.
of men and women who suffered the oppression of Nazi-occupied Europe represent the most abundant contemporary catalogue of stories of selfless sacrifice.  

Fields shares the story of a Nazi German concentration camp survivor, Eva Seluczka, to highlight the phenomenon of hope in selfless persons. According to psychological reports, Eva’s recounting of her ordeal at Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and a slave-labour camp reveals that Eva did not ignore the horrors of her past and that she “[tended] to dwell on what might be scored as high achievement outcomes and effective modes of operations.” Eva’s experience of totalitarian oppression did not end with the fall of the Nazi regime but continued under Communist-occupied Czechoslovakia. Despite all this, Eva raised two children on her own, learned a few languages, and received a degree in economics. Arguably Eva’s intellect and her capacity to adapt to and recognize difficulties and obstacles as well as to assess ways to surmount them served her well.

Fields points out that Eva’s childhood experiences in a middle-class family afforded her a solid foundation for emotional and legal socialization and moral development. Eva recalls that she desired to survive because:

I could not let myself go as long as there was the hope that some of my people had survived. I was thinking of my brother. He was a brilliant mathematician, but totally unable to take care of himself so I thought that I could aid him… I think the Jews fighting in ‘48 were happy they could fight for a country where nobody would call them “dirty Jews” and could kill them at will… But they had arms and could, finally, after decades of helplessness, feel.

Field notes that throughout Eva’s horrific ordeals of slave labour and confinement in a boxcar full of women with no food and water, she chose her meaning and values. During those

---

96 Martyrdom, 64.
97 Ibid., 59.
98 Ibid., 60.
99 Personal communication of Eva Seluczka as quoted in Martyrdom, 60.
difficult times, Eva kept alive her concern for those worse off than herself. She assisted several young pregnant women and sought to find her family. According to Fields, her commitment to others (or to forming a community among the oppressed) was a significant factor in her survival. For Fields, though Eva is not a martyr, she possesses the psychological constitution of a person who could become a healthy martyr. The distinction, usually left unacknowledged, between a healthy martyr and a suicide/homicide martyr is that the former’s death is “a protest action to bring attention to an evil.”

Eva’s pattern of choices reveals a person who values her life and the lives of others so much that she would potentially give her own away in defiance of evil. Eva’s pattern of choices was not motivated by vendetta; it was motivated by love and hope. Faced with the horrors of the Holocaust, Eva defied her oppressors’ attempt to limit her choice of actions to flight or fight. Human progression is predicated on choices far more imaginative than mere survival – it depends on love for others and intervening for the sake of their well-being.

Fields has added a fresh perspective to the conversation on martyrdom in an era that can view the phenomenon in an adverse and skeptical light. She has presented the martyr as someone who has the freedom to make choices and to live out his or her faith with fearless convictions. The martyr’s life and death can be seen as a radical protest on behalf of transcendent values against unjust social conventions. Fields' discussion of Eva Seluczka, a non-martyr, invites the readers to shift their attention away from death to appreciate the phenomenon of self-sacrifice. It causes the reader to recognize that martyrs concern themselves not with death but rather with living a virtuous life. Fields establishes that the martyr’s moral and emotional capacity is one that

\[100\] Martyrdom, 61.

\[101\] Ibid., 64.
aligns with a mature psychology – a quality that speaks to an advanced moral and emotional perception of the world. The emphasis she places on the martyr’s desire and choice to live for others challenges the claims that the psychological constitution of the martyr reflects a pathological drive towards suicide.

Fields acknowledges that she focuses on the concept of martyrdom in general, or at least, in the three monotheistic faiths. It cannot be assumed, however, that the concept of martyrdom is identical across all three faith traditions. If, as Fields maintains, martyrdom entails a living out of the profession of one’s faith, a struggle to overcome life’s obstacles, and a death that is the result of a hopeful witnessing of one’s faith, then it is appropriate to understand martyrdom in relation to the particular contents of the different faith traditions. Fields' approach is not necessarily flawed, but a fuller understanding of martyrdom is required. To better understand Christian martyrdom it would be helpful to analyze a Christian martyr, just as a discussion of a Jewish martyr would be the best route to understanding Jewish martyrdom. The particularities of each religion should be carefully considered.

1.3 Treatment of Christian Martyrdom in Religious Studies

This section elucidates a development in the scholarship on Christian martyrdom in the field of religious studies, which views religion as a phenomenon to be described and explained through a variety of disciplines, such as history. Christian martyrdom has long been a field of study for theologians. Yet over the past decade the study of martyrdom has come under the examination of historians and sociologists. One work has been selected for its contribution to the
study of martyrdom, Candida Moss’s *The Myth of Persecution: How the Early Christians Invented Martyrdom*. The approach is historical and is a distillation of Moss’s academic work. The text has received ecstatic reviews from fellow historians, such as James Carroll, who states that *The Myth of Persecution* is a “tour de force addition to the literature of sacred violence; a case study in how bold scholarship can dismantle it. Moss’s religious history will change religion, and if Christians heed it, history, too.” The prominent Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu regards the book as “compellingly argued and artfully written, Moss reveals how popular misconceptions about martyrdom in the early church still create real barriers to compassion and dialogue today. An important book and a fascinating read.” Moss argues that Christians amended their stories of martyrdom for the sake of political gain. Moreover, they created a persecution complex that persists today—a complex that polarizes society into an “us versus them” mentality. This mindset enables Christians to demonize their opponents as truly evil and can lead to further violence.

---

102 Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*.
104 Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., 258.
1.3.1 The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom

Candida Moss argues that early Christians created a myth of persecution, the legacy of which continues to influence Christianity today. Moss begins her book with the story of the December 31, 2010, murder of Mariam Fekry, who along with other Coptic Christians, was killed in a bombing while at a church in Alexandria, Egypt. Mariam and her companions were quickly declared martyrs. Moss notes how Egyptian Christians turned to “militarized” rhetoric rather than using the rhetoric of “turn the other cheek.” Moss’s concern that rhetoric which involves prayers for divine retribution and expressions of persecution “legitimates and condones retributive violence.” Moss contends that such rhetoric is grounded in a narrative that began with the early Church and according to Moss, such rhetoric lacks a historical foundation; she, therefore, aims to prove that the persecution of early Christians is a myth.

In the first chapter, Moss begins her argument by considering pre-Christian martyrdom and tracing its probable influences on Christian views of martyrdom. Her goal is to prove beyond doubt that the notion of Christian martyrdom is not unique to the Christian faith. Moss argues

107 Moss’s insight draws from Elizabeth Castelli, who claims that martyr narratives are ideologically driven stories constructed by a faith community. See Elizabeth Castelli, Martyrdom and Memory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Castelli argues that martyrdom is more than an event; it is a discourse that constructs a Christian identity. Castelli grounds her work on that of Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), a disciple of Emile Durkheim. Halbwachs argues that memory is a social construction, the product of an individual’s interaction with his culture, and that the individual’s identity and memory is shaped within a discursive frame. Castelli’s study of early Christian martyrdom first pays attention to the construction of Christian culture in the early narratives of martyrdom. She explores this topic not with respect to a set of historical events or figures, but as part of the process of “memory making.” The “memory work done by early Christians on the historical experience of persecution and martyrdom was a form of culture making, whereby Christian identity was indelibly marked by the collective memory of religious suffering. Martyrdom gave the early Christians a “useable past,” which they shaped and reshaped through a liturgical process into a powerful and authoritative discourse. Martyrdom thus creates a value-inverting understanding of victimhood as a virtue” (Martyrdom and Memory, 61).

that the phenomenon of martyrdom existed prior to the emergence of the word “martyrs,” pointing to the heroes of the “noble death” tradition of the classical era and the heroes of the Maccabean conflict:

Just because the Greek term μάρτυς was not used to describe these individuals does not mean that they do not meet our modern definition of a martyr. It just means that they weren’t called martyrs. In some important ways, Christians are just like these other groups. Death for Christ is just a variant in an ancient worldview that thought that dying for something greater than oneself was the best way to die.¹⁰⁹

Moss continues to argue the non-uniqueness of Christian martyrdom by pointing out that Christians borrowed from Jewish and pagan martyrdom traditions. She looks for relevant similarities between the stories of the non-Christian martyrs and those of Christian martyrs in order to demonstrate that Christians borrowed heavily from other traditions when creating their stories of martyrdom.

Moss argues in the ensuing chapters that the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire is a myth. She focuses on six allegedly authentic accounts of the early Christian martyrs, including those of Saints Polycarp and Perpetua. She demonstrates the presence of embellishments in these accounts by identifying anachronisms, such as attacks on heresies that post-dated the story or references to elements of the Christian tradition that did not exist at the time the story supposedly took place. She also identifies errors in the accounts regarding current conceptions of Roman society and behaviours. She concludes that the cult of the saints, which began in the fourth century, gave rise to a large body of hagiography: embellished stories of venerated martyrs that lacked historical authenticity.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 53.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., 124.
Moss’s question that drives her work is “How persecuted were the early Christians?” She notes that in contrast to ideas popularized by Christian literature and film, Christians were only sporadically subjected to the attention of the Roman authorities from the death of Jesus to the time of Constantine, and even then, this attention was inconsistent in terms of its degree of severity. In her judgment, the Roman Empire did not engage in what would qualify as the persecution of Christians. Moss insists “Christians were executed as the result of imperial initiatives for fewer than ten years out of the nearly three hundred years from Jesus to Constantine.\(^\text{111}\)

Essential elements of Moss’s argument stem from her definition of “persecution.” She defines “persecution” as the inflicting of violence, particularly state-sanctioned execution, upon members of a particular religious community.\(^\text{112}\) She makes the case that although Christians were sometimes subjected to brutal punishments, this does not mean that they were persecuted as part of a broad imperial campaign against the Christian religion. To support her view, Moss argues that the Roman Empire did not engage in prosecution of the Christians. She maintains that some Christians acted in a way that was punishable under general Roman law:

[The key reasoning that explains why the] Romans took offense to Christians’ refusal to participate in the imperial cult was that the vast majority of people in the ancient world thought nothing of participating in it… In the marketplace of ancient religions, pledging one’s allegiance to the emperor and, by extension the Roman Empire, was easily done. It did not require the abandonment of a civic, household, or personal god. It was but one facet of ancient religious life.\(^\text{113}\)

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 129.
\(^{112}\) Ibid., 159-60.
\(^{113}\) Ibid., 174.
Moss compares the early Christians’ refusal to participate in the cult of the Roman emperor to the refusal of Americans to say the Pledge of Allegiance or a refusal to salute the flag. She writes that the participation in the imperial cult was something that held the empire together:

Much like the Pledge of Allegiance, it was a communal ritual that solidified social ties between individuals on a local level and disparate regions and groups on an imperial level. In times of political or social instability, the imperial cult became particularly important as a form of steadying the ebb and flow of potential unrest.\footnote{Ibid., 175.}

The upshot of her argument is that the tensions between Roman officials and Christians were the result of mere political antagonisms, not religious ones:

Very few Christians died, and when they did, they were often executed for what we in the modern world would call political reasons. There is a difference between persecution and prosecution. A persecutor targets representatives of a specific group for undeserved punishment because of their participation in that group. An individual is prosecuted because that person has broken the law.\footnote{Ibid., 14.}

For the Romans, the Christians’ “stubborn, petulant, difficult, and, at times, completely incomprehensible”\footnote{Ibid., 179.} refusal to participate in the imperial cult was seen as a threat to the wellbeing of Roman society as a whole. For the Christians, this “may be unfortunate, it may be unfair, but it is not persecution.”\footnote{Ibid., 14.}

Towards the end of her book, Moss examines the common and positive traits—such as humility, courage, determination, and selfless love—that surround the early Christian martyrs. She argues that Christianity has painted an overly simplistic picture of the Christian martyrs. The narratives of the martyrs portray them as men and women committed to selfless love who did not instigate their own arrests or commit acts of violence. She points out that the death of the martyr

\footnote{Ibid., 175.}
Saint Agathonike would be judged a suicide by current medical standards. In the earliest version of the story, Agathonike is a bystander in a crowd of people who gathered to watch the execution of a bishop named Carpus and his deacon, Papylus. She has neither been arrested nor sentenced to punishment. Yet, Agathonike has a vision and throws herself into the bonfire as a result. Moss concludes, “This is suicide, and even today Agathonike is a saint.”118

Concerning violence, Moss cites images and the rhetoric of military conquest used in the narratives to describe the action of the martyrs: the martyrs are engaged in a cosmic war against the devil and his minions. In terms of actual violence, at the beginning of the chapter and in her section on violence in the sixth chapter Moss cites the Circumcellions, a fringe group of the schismatic Donatists. Moss’s understanding of martyrdom appears to include groups or persons considered heretics in the Church:

There was little difference between the behavior of orthodox Christians and the behavior of heretical ones. Although only a few Christians were physically violent, the imagery and language of martyrdom are aggressive and replete with fantasies of vengeful justice. Christians saw themselves at odds with the world and eagerly anticipated the suffering and destruction of those who oppressed them. . . They are, quite literally, soldiers for Christ.119

Moss’s popular, provocative, and helpful work requires some words of caution. Firstly, it is common knowledge in the academy that many accounts of early martyrs are considered unhistorical from a modern perspective. Many historians and other scholars have noted that no one studying early Christianity and the Roman Empire would dispute Moss’s claims that the early Christians borrowed from Jewish and pagan traditions when constructing their martyrdom narra-

118 Ibid., 192.
119 Ibid., 213.
tives. Though Christian accounts of martyrdom have been redacted, the conclusion of embellishments does not suggest that these texts do not relate substantially historical events.

Another point of concern regarding *The Myth of Persecution* is that Moss fails to appreciate the distinction between theological violence and real, historical violence. She admits that violence among early Christian martyrs was quite rare, yet she combines the rhetorical fervency in the records of orthodox martyrs with the real violence amongst a group of schismatic, fringed Christians: the Circumcellions. She not only minimizes the excommunication of this historically violent group of Christians by the Church Fathers but also claims that there is very little difference between the behaviours of orthodox Christians and heretical Christians. As a consequence of her integration of excommunicated Christians into normative Christianity, she argues that one of the most common misconceptions about early Christian martyrs is that they were humble pacifists who meekly accepted torture because of their love for Jesus.

In light of Moss’s concern about violent rhetoric, I argue that the combative or military language that is used in the narratives of Christian martyrdom must be seen as part of a theological discourse that spoke of martyrdom as a cosmic contest between God and Satan. Such combative language must be distinguished from real, historical violence that was inflicted upon actual human beings. According to Tripp York, dying well is not a natural skill; it is not something

---

121 Moss mentions a couple of times that the Church saw the Circumcellions as mad and suicidal.
123 For example Cyprian the bishop/martyr wrote that Christian martyrdom involves beholding “a lofty and great contest, glorious also with the reward of a heavenly crown, inasmuch as God looks upon as we struggle, and extending His view over those whom He has condescended to make His sons, He enjoys the spectacle of the contest. God looks upon us in warfare. . . His angels look on us, and Christ looks on us.” Cyprian, *Epistle 55*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 5: 347.
inherent to being human. To die well demanded that the Christian undertake a basic training in certain habits, practices, and skills that empowered him to withstand and overcome the fear of death. The early Christians identified Satan as the biggest threat to dying well. Thus, combative and military language was used to describe the preparations and the fight of the martyr. The arena was understood as a battlefield, and just as no gladiator entered it unprepared, neither should any Christian. What were the tools or weapons of the Christian martyr in his or her battle? According to York, “Prayer, charity, and the sacraments were understood to be fundamental habits that prepared one for the coming battle.” The “basic training” of the Christian martyrs prepared them to testify to the folly of temporal powers while giving them the capacity to commit themselves to divine providence.

1.4 Theological Studies of Christian Martyrdom

This section examines the theological perspective on Christian martyrdom as represented by the writings of two prominent Catholic Jesuit theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Karl Rahner and Jon Sobrino. By theology, I mean Christian theology, which “finds its base and center in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.” Its focus is “a critical understanding of the content of faith so that the lives of believers may be fully significant.” Rahner was a 20th

125 Ibid., 40.
126 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
century German Jesuit priest, who is widely considered one of the most influential European theologians and was appointed a theological expert at the Second Vatican Council. Spanish-born and naturalized El Salvadoran Jon Sobrino is a Jesuit theologian priest known for his work in liberation theology. He is a proponent of the idea that holiness has a place in the political sphere and that holiness also entails an attempt to reduce the number of suffering people in the world. This section relies on two recent studies that explore the foundations of Rahner’s and Sobrino’s theologies of martyrdom. Craig J. Slane’s Bonhoeffer as Martyr makes a case for the German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a Christian martyr by utilizing Rahner’s theology of martyrdom. John Thiede’s “The Reality of Martyrdom in the Christology of Jon Sobrino” explores the expansion of the meaning of Christian martyrdom in Jon Sobrino’s work. After introducing Rahner’s and Sobrino’s theologies of martyrdom through using these valuable studies, this section will examine certain key texts of both authors.

1.4.1 The Philosophical Foundations of Karl Rahner’s Theology of Martyrdom

Karl Rahner develops his theology of martyrdom on the basis of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy of freedom and act as its foundation. Heidegger argues that Dasein’s Being is that

129 Karl Rahner lived from 1904 to 1984.
133 Thiede, “The Reality of Martyrdom in the Christology of Jon Sobrino.”
134 Slane, Bonhoeffer as Martyr, 138.
135 Dasein is the term by which Heidegger refers to the concrete, individual instance of the existing entity of the human. In philosophical discussions, the term is brought directly into English. Translated literally, Da-sein is “there
which exists towards death and that Dasein comes to an understanding of Being only through death. When Dasein becomes aware of its own death, grasps it and assimilates it, Dasein then achieves authenticity.\textsuperscript{136} Death is something that stands before every individual, and unlike routine affairs that involve others, human beings face death on their own.\textsuperscript{137} A person’s awareness that he is going to die is paradoxically fruitful because it empowers that person with an understanding of what is meaningful. As Slane puts it, “Impending death floods life with meaning.”\textsuperscript{138}

Nonetheless, Heidegger acknowledges that modern society tends to shy away from the significance of death. Society influences a person to think that death is a mishap that happens to others but is not yet his or hers.\textsuperscript{139} As an unfortunate consequence, death, which ought to be confronted, is tranquilized and hidden from view.\textsuperscript{140} People most commonly take refuge in the anonymity of the public realm, which masks the importance of a person’s death. “Everyday Being-towards-death is a constant fleeing in the face of death. Being-towards-the-end has the mode of evasion in the face of it – giving new explanations for it, understanding it in-authentically, and concealing it.”\textsuperscript{141} This avoidance of death, however, does not necessarily imply outright denial,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{136} Slane, \textit{Bonhoeffer as Martyr}, 125.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 125-26.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 126–27. See also Martin Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time} (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 298.
\end{flushleft}
because people can acknowledge that death is real, while still seeking to alleviate their fears by not recognizing death’s importance in their present moment.\textsuperscript{142}

Slane points out that the pivot in Heidegger’s philosophy of Being-onto-death is Dasein’s anticipation of its own death. When this anticipation occurs, the human being is “wrenched away” from the public and the anonymous “they” and confronts the inevitable “mineness” of death.\textsuperscript{143} As a consequence, the human being encounters liberation. “Freedom” in Slane’s words, “is the fruit of an authentic confrontation with death.”\textsuperscript{144} He quotes Heidegger:

When by anticipation, one becomes free for one’s death, one is liberated from one’s “lostness” in those possibilities which may accidentally thrust themselves upon one; and one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the factual possibilities lying ahead of that possibility which is not to be outstripped. Anticipation discloses to existence that its uttermost possibility lies in giving itself up, and thus it shatters all one’s tenaciousness to whatever existence has been reached.\textsuperscript{145}

Slane highlights an insight: when individuals anticipate their own death, death sheds a light on their future. The anticipation of death calls the person to act authentically because Being-onto-death concerns the fullness of personhood, and it is the self-realization of the person toward which the person is being called.\textsuperscript{146}

\section*{1.4.2 Karl Rahner’s Theology of Dying}

Building upon and appropriating Heidegger’s concepts of death and freedom, Karl Rahner argues that freedom is not the capacity to change one’s physical existence, but rather,
the power to decide that which is to be final and definitive in one’s life, that which cannot be superseded or replaced, the power to bring into being from one’s own resources that which must be, and must not pass away, the summons to a decision that is irrevocable… If, therefore, man is personal freedom, then it follows that he is one who uses the resources of his own innermost nature to form himself by his own free act, for by the exercise of this freedom of his he can definitively determine the shape of his life as a whole, and decide what his ultimate end is to be, the ultimate realization of his own nature, beyond all possibility of revision.\textsuperscript{147}

The human person is constituted by a self-directing freedom, the freedom to become a self and to realize the self. Freedom enters into the dimension of becoming and of openness to further development only in order to achieve its own consummation: the fulfillment of the human person.\textsuperscript{148} For Rahner, dying is the ultimate act of freedom because it is the act in which one “either willingly accepts or definitively rebels against his own utter impotence.”\textsuperscript{149} The fulfillment of a Christian requires death, because only at the end of the Christian’s temporal existence does God bring to pass the promise of eternal life. Moreover, if human freedom aims at the core of human existence and if finitude is the existential condition of humankind, freedom and death are inextricably linked. Freedom aims at what is most foundational to human existence – and death is at its foundation.

Rahner understands death as the breaking in of finality upon what is transient. It is this finality that actualizes a freedom that has reached maturity. The Christian person, then, views death as an invitation and final opportunity to gather his or her life and place it freely in the hands of divine providence. He writes, “Death brings man, as a moral and spiritual person, a kind of finality and consummation, which renders his decision for or against God, reached during the

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
time of his bodily life, final and unalterable.”\textsuperscript{150} Paradoxically, the very death that allows for the greatest use of one’s existence and is the consummating act of that existence is also the cessation of all acts.

When the last trace of human power is about to depart from the individual, can the person accept the reality that he is not in control? Will the individual surrender to God or will he refuse to do so? For Rahner, the last act of freedom concludes and embraces one’s life:

\begin{quote}
Death for [a human being] is neither the end of his existence, nor is it a mere passage from one form of existence to another, which continues to share with the preceding its essential characteristic of indefinite temporal sequence. Death is the beginning of eternity, if and so far away we may use the term “beginning” at all in regard to this eternity.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

Individuals who accept their mortality before God and surrender to Him in faith die a death of fulfillment, precisely because they have offered the whole self to God. The person who refuses to recognize his or her mortality dies a death of solipsistic autonomy. In the final analysis, both ultimate acts of freedom are taken into divine providence; the former is an act of faith, and the latter is a mortal sin.\textsuperscript{152}

For Rahner, the individual who dies surrendering his or life in faith to God dies with and in Christ. He regards such death to be a death in the state of grace and to be a saving event.\textsuperscript{153} A death in the state of grace is the culmination both of the reception and effecting of salvation, be-

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{153} Rahner describes those who die in the state of grace as follows: “Those who have died in faith are not ‘dead in Christ’ only because they lived in Christ, but also because their dying itself was in Christ” (\textit{On the Theology of Death}, 69).
cause death, as a human action, is the occasion for an individual to configure his or her whole existence into an offering of self to God. Rahner, then, refers to the death of Jesus Christ to explain how such death is salvific. The essential character of Christ’s death is that death, which was considered the penalty for sin, became an expression of grace; death as a sign of human emptiness became the advent of God’s plenitude. Death became life:

The real miracle of Christ’s death resides precisely in this: death which in itself can only be experienced as the advent of emptiness, as the impasse of sin, as the darkness of eternal night (especially since the supernatural order is the real order in which there could be no death), and which “in itself” could be suffered, even by Christ himself, only as such a state of abandonment by God, now through being embraced by the obedient “yes” of the Son, and while losing nothing of the horror of divine abandonment that belongs to it, is transformed into something completely different, into the advent of God in the midst of that empty loneliness, and the manifestation of a complete, obedient surrender of the whole man to the holy God at the very moment when man seems lost and far removed from him.  

Rahner notes that an exchange takes place in Christ’s death. In his surrender of himself, Christ offers to God “the flesh of sin” that is death and transforms it into a flesh of grace. The grace of the transformation is offered to human persons such that they, through Christ’s grace, belong to God in their dying.

As a consequence, individuals in their deaths can now die with Christ and encounter God’s love because Christ shared in the darkness and powerlessness of death and overcame it:

[Christ] experiences his life falling into emptiness and the powerlessness of death as remoteness from God, as the bitterness of guilt (his own and that of the human race), yet he believes in the mercy of God, hopes for life in God and loves this God so far removed from him.

---

155 Ibid., 70.
156 Ibid., 71.
157 Ibid.
Rahner makes clear that the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are not mere feelings that accompany the darkness of death. Since faith, hope, and charity are transformed by grace, they are infused with the divine.

Though Rahner argues that death is the ultimate act of freedom, this deed of freedom is, however, veiled. Despite Rahner’s conviction that one’s freedom comes to maturity with the act of dying, he cautions persons from projecting their present faith into a completed state in order to derive from it an illusionary comfort. No one can know for sure whether the death a person is dying is that of a courageous and trustful faith or the death of absolute autonomy and despair. Death in itself is ambiguous:

Even though this death is personal and unique to the individual in this sense, still it is death which has been ushered into this world of the embodied spirit … by the rebellion of the first man. And at the same time it is the death which the Son of Man freely takes upon himself. Our death is modeled upon both of these. For it was precisely the death of Adam that the Son of Man willed to die in order to redeem this death. And because it is never possible for us to say of ourselves with complete certainty which exercise of life we commit ourselves to with the ultimate decision of our free will, we cannot ultimately know either whether it is possible for us to say which of the two deaths we are dying; the death of perdition or the death of Adam which has been redeemed; in other words whether the death of Christ imports life for us or judgment, whether it is the death of despair that we are dying or the death of faith. Both modes of dying are concealed beneath the surface in the everyday process of dying.

Rahner’s critical evaluation of the ambiguity of death leads him to search for greater clarity:

The ambiguity of all freedom, in fact, reaches its supreme and unique culmination in death. Any other act in this world leaves behind part of its reality which, to the doer and his fellow men, offers the possibility of at least a partial judgment in regard to the whole of action. In death, however, deed and doer disappear from the range of observation of

\[158\] Ibid. 
\[159\] Ibid. 
\[160\] Ibid., 96. 
\[162\] Ibid., 291-292.
doer and spectators into the mystery of God’s sole judgment … [But] is there a death which can expose its dark, veiled essence to us and so enable us to know how a particular man really died? Is there a death in which the appearances disclose the reality? If there is such a revealing and patently evident Christian death, then it would constitute the Christian witness as such, because the act integrating all that is Christian and perfecting a life, would also manifest what it is.  

Christian martyrdom, Rahner concludes, is the death that reveals most clearly the greatest act of freedom and death with and in Christ.

1.4.3 Karl Rahner’s Theology of Martyrdom

Martyrdom is the prototype of a Christian and human death because it communicates the “ultimate beauty which is born of the perfect harmony between interior reality and external appearance.”  

For Rahner, one of the requirements of Christian martyrdom is that the death must be an act of genuine liberty: “It must be a death that could have been avoided in the particular case.” According to Rahner, the quality of a martyr’s death expresses “an acceptance” of “a presence of love which a Christian must have, and which he may not, however, carry into effect by suicide.” Such a Christian death finds its analogy in the death of Jesus – for Jesus said of His own death, “I lay down my own life” (John 10:17). The Christian martyr does not meet his or her death as a passive victim but rather accepts death as a God-given occasion for the exercise of freedom. The violence inflicted upon the martyr “is only the secret device of God who provides the opportunity for this highest act of liberty.”

Rahner states:

164 Ibid., 97.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid., 98.
167 Ibid.
In a violent death, which could have been avoided and which is, nevertheless, accepted in freedom, the freedom of a whole life is gathered into the one burning moment of death. Then the death of life (in its totality and freedom) enters into the death of death, in an act of complete freedom affecting the totality of life and so life’s eternal finality. The death of martyrdom is a death of genuine liberty. By it is disclosed what is elsewhere hidden under the veil covering death’s essence. By it the enigma and veil of death’s essence (is it a death of enforced freedom or real liberty?) receives a definite answer.\textsuperscript{168}

Overall, Christian martyrdom discloses a death in freedom and faith which could have otherwise been hidden under the flow and ambiguity of human events. The Christian martyr is a visible demonstration of a person who exercises the utmost freedom and faith. Such a notable death, according to Rahner, holds a sacramental reality, “for it is the manifestation of a grace-given reality; it is the empirical expression of a divine act of grace in man.”\textsuperscript{169}

Wherever the Church recognizes and celebrates the life and death of a Christian martyr, God’s eschatological victory is acknowledged and celebrated.\textsuperscript{170} Rahner argues that such a relation between the individual martyr and the ecclesial community implies that the Church and the martyr bear witness to one another. The martyr testifies on behalf of the Church’s teachings, and the Church recognizes what God has done in the martyr.\textsuperscript{171} In the Christian martyr, the objective and subjective sanctity of the Christian faith converge.\textsuperscript{172} In Rahner’s theology of martyrdom, the Christian participates uniquely in God’s self-revelation within history by showing us the greatest use of freedom and faith. He serves as a focus for God’s grace that enables the exercise of freedom and faith among us. The Christian martyr reveals to the world that the authentic hu-

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 105.
man person is constituted by a self-directing freedom: the freedom to become a self and realize the self.

My evaluation of Rahner is not necessarily a criticism of his theology of martyrdom; rather it takes the form of a question. In Rahner’s writings on Christian martyrdom, there is a puzzling lack of a discussion of love, which is considered by many theologians, including Rahner, himself, to be the preeminent Christian virtue. If Christian martyrdom is understood by Rahner as the definitive act of freedom and fulfillment of a person, then what is the role of love in this conclusive act of freedom? In order to better demonstrate that the death of the Christian, especially a Christian martyr, is not likely be interpreted by people as a death of solipsistic autonomy, one needs to show that love, which involves the capacity to receive from and to give to the other, is a significant and intrinsic part of the freedom and fulfillment of the person.

My argument is that Christian martyrdom is as much an act of love as it is in an act of self-constituting freedom; that is, the Christian martyr is one who responds to the love of God. God’s love is graciously poured upon the human being: it draws him into an encounter and then leads him to make a response. My aim is to offer a deeper perspective on and a greater biblical faithfulness to Christian martyrdom; for Jesus does not just lay down his life (John 10:17) as testimony only to freedom and faith, but also to love: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:12-14).

173 In the section “On Martyrdom” from his On the Theology of Death, Rahner uses the word “love” only once. The reference is quoted on page 11 of this dissertation.
Christian martyrdom is better interpreted as an act that entails freedom, faith, and love. In his or her witness, the Christian martyr is the means by which God points not only to authentic freedom and faith but also to love. If the death of the Christian martyr is a Christian death par excellence and is thus a fulfillment of a Christian life and a testimony to the Church’s teaching, it must include the element of love, especially that love which is a response to God and a concern for one’s neighbour in a world mired in violence. Furthermore, the Christian tradition has proclaimed throughout the ages that love is at the heart of the life of the Triune God, and it is love of the Trinity that sends the Son into the world for the sake of redeeming it: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him” (John 3:17-18). The death of a Christian martyr is not just the definitive exercise of human freedom but is a call to love in the midst of hostility and violence. The Christian martyr’s surrender to love is not only a response to the love of God, but also a witness of love to neighbours threatened by hostile powers.

1.4.4 The Foundations of Jon Sobrino’s Theology of Martyrdom

John Theide states that the civil strife in Latin America in general and in El Salvador in particular, which led to the murder of 70,000 men and women during the mid to late twentieth century offered Jon Sobrino poignant material for reflection on the nature of Christian martyrdom. Firstly, numerous Catholic-Christians were being murdered because they were struggling for political and economic justice. Secondly, as Theide points out, the Catholic-Christian martyrs from Latin America were slain predominantly by fellow Catholic-Christians. The reality of this twofold development moved Sobrino to broaden the category of Christian martyrdom. According
to Theide, out of the numerous murders, four cases – those of Rutilio Grande, S.J.; Archbishop Romero; the four American churchwomen; and the Jesuits of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) – were the most significant for Jon Sobrino and his theological writings. Their deaths contributed to the foundations of Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom. Rutilio Grande was a Jesuit priest in El Salvador, who worked with the poor and promoted their cause; he was one of the first Jesuit priests to be threatened with death and was the first to be murdered. Grande was assassinated on 12 March 1977 (along with two laypersons, Nelson Rutilio Lemus and Manuel Solórzano) while on his way to preside at the Eucharist in a small village in El Salvador. Theide notes that Sobrino would later write an article calling Rutilio Grande the “proto-martyr” of El Salvador.175

Oscar Romero was bishop of the Catholic Church in El Salvador; he was appointed archbishop of San Salvador on 23 February 1977, and prior to his appointment to San Salvador, Romero was regarded as a “safe” choice by some conservatively inclined members of the Catholic Church.176 The transformation of Archbishop Oscar Romero occurred with the death of Rutilio Grande. According to John Theide, Sobrino and the former Jesuit priest, John Dear, stated, respectively, that the assassination of Grande “was a moment of conversion” and “opened the eyes of the Archbishop.”177 “The killing of the first native Salvadoran priest,” as Theide writes, “caused Romero to celebrate only one Mass in the Archdiocese on the 20th of March as a sign of

176 According to Thiede, the papal nuncio consulted forty people in the government and private enterprise and women of the higher classes, and they regarded Romero as “one of them” and as someone who would return the church in El Salvador to a more spiritual position. See John Thiede, “The Reality of Martyrdom,” 70 and Martin Maier, Monseñor Romero: Maestro De Espiritualidad (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 2005), 43.
protest. Over 100,000 people attended the Mass, which spilled out from the cathedral into the main square and surrounding streets.”

Theide asserts that Sobrino believed Romero greatly influenced his own theology:

He reflects back on the Eucharistic Procession in Aguilares, when people paused in front of the soldiers guarding the mayor’s office, the Archbishop yelled out “Go ahead” and they walked right past the soldiers and the mayor’s office. Sobrino remarks, “I also remember that day the impact Mons. Romero had for my own theology. The way he celebrated the Eucharist was for me a revelation; [it] was kind of (a Eucharistic) theology class. All of the theological themes were known, but Mons. Romero elaborated them in actu with such creativity that he explained what the Eucharist is better than many long years of study.”

According to Theide, Sobrino speaks of the death of Romero as if it were the death of a mentor or spiritual father. Clearly, Romero’s life and death profoundly influenced Sobrino’s theology. Sobrino viewed Romero as the “word of God” for El Salvador, whose actions and death could inspire the Church to find the “presence of God in the poor, and in the faith of the poor and the martyrs.” Due to Romero’s witness, Sobrino encouraged Christian theologians to start their theological reflections from the perspective of the poor.

The third contributing factor to the development of Sobrino’s theology of Christian martyrdom was the abuse and murder of four American churchwomen by members of the Salvadoran National Guard on 2 December 1980. The churchwomen were Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan. Ita, Maura, and Dorothy were Maryknoll Sisters who had been working in Central America. Jean Donovan was a successful accountant with Arthur Andersen,
but in 1977 she had decided to leave her career behind and work for justice through the lay associates of Maryknoll. The four women had been invited to work with internal refugees in El Salvador by Archbishop Romero in 1979, and they became friends of the bishop.

Sobrino regarded these four women as examples of the many just and innocent persons whose deaths have witnessed Christ. He states, “This time Christ who has died [can be seen] in these four women, religious, and North American. And for this [reason] the darkness of this crime is accompanied by a special light… These four women are Christ who died.”

Theide concludes Sobrino’s thought by writing that these women represented all the men and women who had been stripped of their human rights and oppressed in El Salvador.

The final major influence on Sobrino’s theology of Christian martyrdom was the death of his Jesuit brethren at the Jesuit university, the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA). In the early hours of 16 November 1989, US-trained soldiers of the Salvadoran armed forces entered the campus of the university and brutally murdered the six Jesuits, together with two women who were sleeping in a parlour attached to their residence. The Jesuits were the university rector Ignacio Ellacuría, 59, an internationally known philosopher; Segundo Montes, 56, head of the Sociology Department and the UCA’s Human Rights Institute; Ignacio Martín-Baró, 44, the pioneering social psychologist who headed the Psychology Department and the polling institute; theology professors Juan Ramón Moreno, 56, and Armando López, 53; and Joaquín López y López, 71, founding head of the Fe y Alegria network of schools for the poor.

---

183 As quoted in Thiede, “The Reality of Martyrdom,” 86.
184 Thiede, 86.
185 Julia Elba Ramos, the wife of a caretaker at the UCA, and their daughter Celina, 16, were immediately murdered to ensure that there would be no witnesses. Ironically, the women had sought refuge that evening at the Jesuit residence for fear of the violence near their cottage on the edge of the campus.
On the day of the murders, three members of the Jesuit community were not present. The first two, Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J. and Jon Cortina, S.J. were each visiting other towns in El Salvador. The third member not present was Jon Sobrino, S.J., who was in Thailand. He was asleep when he was contacted by an Irish Jesuit with news of the murders. The subsequent days were extremely difficult for Sobrino. He wrote,

I spent several hours, or rather several days, unable to react … The distance made me feel helpless and alone. And the six murdered Jesuits were my community, they were really my family. We had lived, worked, suffered, and enjoyed ourselves together for many years. Now they were dead.  

Sobrino, as Theide reports, would question why he was alive and whether he was worthy to live on, yet his doubts would change into a sense of mission. Sobrino endeavoured to finish the book Ignacio Ellacuría and he were writing together, to complete Juan Ramón Moreno’s editorial work on the forthcoming issue of Revista Latinoamericano de Teología, and to return to El Salvador and the UCA. With great support from around the world, including that of the Jesuit Superior General, Fr. General Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Sobrino gained the courage to return to El Salvador and work, not just on behalf of the memories of his slain Jesuit brothers, Elba and Celina, but also for the 70,000 other victims in El Salvador. Sobrino called each of his slain companions martyrs in his short book Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador.

187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
The civil strife in Latin America in general and in El Salvador in particular provides the context for Sobrino’s theology of Christian martyrdom. The violence moved Sobrino to rethink what constitutes a Christian martyr and whether the conventional definition fit the needs and reality of the Church in the modern world. A new and broader notion of Christian martyrdom was needed, according to Thiede:

Marked by the sacrifice of priests, bishop, and laity in El Salvador, Jon Sobrino wants to expand the idea of martyrdom, perhaps even presenting a case for an “anonymous” martyr, one who does not even realize he are dying for the Christian faith. Certainly Sobrino would support the idea that a martyr dies for a cause, someone like Rutilio Grande or Archbishop Romero, who believed that he might die and yet continued forward. Since thousands of Catholic-Christians were abused and murdered at the hands of fellow Catholic-Christians, the notion of men and women dying due to “hatred of the faith” had lost its relevance. Sobrino broadened the concept of Christian martyrdom.

1.4.5 Jon Sobrino’s Theology of Christian Martyrdom

In “Cruelty and Compassion,” Sobrino’s chapter in Rethinking Martyrdom, he contributes to the task of examining what constitutes a martyr in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He understands the twentieth century as a time of incredible suffering, a time filled with both perpetrators and victims. Such a violent world can give rise to compassionate persons. Sobrino argues that “there are people who, faced with victims, react, and defend them in various ways—solidarity movements, human rights movements, anti-globalization protests—and sometimes do

---

190 The conventional definition of a martyr consisted of the notion of a person who dies out of in odium fidei (out of hatred for the faith). This criterion was outlined by Pope Benedict XIV in 1751.
191 Thiede, v.
so to the very end.”\textsuperscript{192} Often the men and women who defend the victims end up being murdered for their compassionate stances and Sobrino emphasizes that some of these deaths do not fit the traditional Catholic-Christian definition of the martyr. Their murders were not the result of witnessing to the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{193} Christians who are slain because they show compassion for and defend the oppressed have commonalities with men and women from other religions or cultures who perform similar acts. Non-Christians, who were killed because of their compassion, can be called “martyrs,” the “fallen,” or “heroes.”\textsuperscript{194} As a consequence, Sobrino argues,

> In our time, “martyrdom” has, then, taken a new form. Many men and women have suffered violent deaths not on account of their witness to faith but because of the compassion that stems from the faith. In the church, these have been bishops and sisters, catechists and delegates of the word; in civil society, they have ranged from peasants and indigenous inhabitants to students, lawyers, and journalists. In one way or another, they have unmasked the lie used to cover over the death of the poor and have struggled against injustice. They have been people of compassion against cruelty.\textsuperscript{195}

Sobrino further expands the concept of martyrdom by arguing that the Church needs to consider the hundreds of thousands of human beings who have been slaughtered, such as the persons who were victims of genocide in Rwanda and the millions of persons who die each day of incredible poverty.\textsuperscript{196}

> Sobrino recognizes that not all Christians will accept his expansion of the meaning of Christian martyrdom. He acknowledges that “to describe the individual victims we have made

\textsuperscript{193} Sobrino, “Our World Cruelty and Compassion,” 16.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 17.
novel use of the traditional term ‘martyr.’” Sobrino argues that despite the hierarchical Church’s lack of consensus on the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the people in El Salvador immediately used the term “martyr” to describe Romero after his death. Archbishop Romero was eventually beatified on 23 May 2015. As John Theide points out, “Martyrdom could be seen in Romero in a true sense, a man who died for a greater love of God’s people.” Yet Sobrino desired to give recognition to the second group: those who were massacred or died in excruciating poverty. The importance of such recognition, he argued, has been ignored by both the Church and society. The new historical situation, according to Sobrino, compels Catholics to rethink martyrdom. For Sobrino, it is not just the civil strife in Latin America that ought to bring the Church to rethink martyrdom; Vatican II also calls for a redefinition of the term. What the Council said of the “signs of the times” he said can be applied to martyrdom in the contemporary world, especially in the developing world.

As a result, Sobrino introduced the concepts of the “Jesus martyrs” and the “crucified people” in order to place two distinct relations in the category of Christian martyrdom. Concerning the former, Sobrino argued “those men and women who have given their lives out of reactive compassion for the victims (of oppression) recall Jesus.” He continued:

“The Jesus martyr” earned the appellation, because they “are not, strictly speaking, those who die for Christ, but those who die like Jesus and for the cause of Jesus. Their martyrdoms do not result from fidelity to some mandate of Jesus, or even from a desire to:

\[197\] Ibid., 18.
\[198\] Thiede, 23.
\[199\] Sobrino, “Our World Cruelty and Compassion,” 17.
\[200\] Ibid.
\[201\] Ibid., 18.
\[202\] Ibid.
for mystical identification with the crucified Jesus, but arise out of their effective following of Jesus.\textsuperscript{203}

Sobrino argued that the “Jesus martyrs” served as witnesses to the truth just as Jesus did. As Thiede points out, their martyrdoms did not result from a “hatred of the faith” but from a sense of compassion which led them to a greater love.\textsuperscript{204} For this reason Sobrino contended, “These martyrs can be martyrs in the church, but they are not martyrs of the church.”\textsuperscript{205} For Sobrino, compassion is a principal human capacity and as such Catholicism and the rest of Christianity do not hold a monopoly on it; anyone is capable of exercising compassion.\textsuperscript{206}

After explaining the “Jesus martyrs,” which is already an expansion of the traditional concept of Christian martyrdom, Sobrino introduced the concept of the “crucified people.” In proposing this second type of Christian martyrdom, Sobrino accounted for those nameless people who were oppressed, massacred,\textsuperscript{207} and often forgotten by the majority of the world:

Whether they are called “martyrs” or not—those human beings on whom God looks with infinite tenderness in their suffering, even before considering their personal or moral situation (Puebla n. 1142)—though they often have the basic holiness of living and laying down their lives so that all the poor may be reached by just a little life. Nevertheless, over them there descends an inhuman and anti-Christian silence, while the great ones of this world, including the saints, are exalted—“eliteistly” if I may be allowed the word—in a way that a Francis of Assisi or Romero of America would be the first to condemn.\textsuperscript{208}

Sobrino worried that if Christians were to continue to focus on a few saints and martyrs, they would continue to ignore the plight of the poor and the downtrodden. For the liberation theologian, the challenge of redefining what constitutes a martyr was more than just traditional Christian

\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{204} Thiede, 24.
\textsuperscript{205} Sobrino, “Our World Cruelty and Compassion,” 20.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{207} Thiede, 25.
\textsuperscript{208} Sobrino, “Our World Cruelty and Compassion,” 23.
martyrdom. It caused people to reconsider “whether the cries of the crucified people have reached us and whether the Jesus martyrs moved us to compassion.”

The compassion of the “Jesus martyrs” and compassion for the “crucified people” moved Sobrino to include both groups in his definition of what constitutes a martyr. In doing so, Sobrino made a methodological move in order to affirm a Jesus who was present among, not distant from, the people. He wanted the Church to go beyond affirming that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist, in the celebration of the word, in the ecclesial community, and in its pastors:

[There is a] a final bastion of the presence of Christ—which is in effect the first—of the presence of God and his Christ: “And with particular tenderness he chose to identify himself with those who are poorest and weakest” (Matthew 25.40). The poor are the greatest presence of Christ in history: “Vicars of Christ” they were called in the Middle Ages. They are therefore Good News, and they evangelize the church; but they are also a summons, and they call the church to conversion.

Sobrino argued that the number of oppressed peoples who have been murdered is too considerable to be ignored by the Church. Their oppression and deaths ought to spur the rest of the Church to conversion. Sobrino asserted that this change of heart and mind, as well as a call to action, comes from the victims themselves. He continued: “[This] basic appeal will relate not just to anything but to the essence of Christian faith: mercy, love, defence of the poor, and identification with the victims.”

Sobrino appealed to the nature and mission of Jesus Christ to defend his claim that oppressed peoples who were murdered should be considered martyrs:

209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid., 141.
This incarnation is not easy for the church, even though, according to the faith, it is an obvious and primary requirement. John’s prologue expresses the will of God himself to be real in our world, a will that consists not simply in becoming actual flesh but in becoming weak flesh.\textsuperscript{214} Thiede, commenting on Sobrino’s ecclesiology, suggests that it may be easier for the Church to remain in the ethereal realm and not be touched by the reality of the masses, yet Sobrino would consider ignoring the reality of so much suffering to verge on the heretical.\textsuperscript{215} He argued,

For the church (and not just for Christology), the greatest problem here is Docetism (Walter Kasper), that is creating its own sphere of reality (doctrinal, liturgical, canonical), which distances it and so defends it from the real world, and above all the crosses.\textsuperscript{216}

In this third millennium, for Sobrino, the miserable situation of the bulk of the inhabitants of the world demands that the Church wake up from its “lethargic sleep” and engage reality.\textsuperscript{217} Theide points out that the emphasis on the divinity of Jesus permits the Church to forget about the weak human flesh of the incarnate Word, flesh that died on the cross.\textsuperscript{218} By accepting the reconstitution of the Christian martyr in the Jesus martyrs, the Church can recognize the crucified peoples in its midst. In acknowledging the deaths of so many oppressed people, the Church can attend to the structural oppression that is pervasive in the world. Sobrino is not overly concerned about a Church that is correct in its teachings, so long as a Church acts to alleviate the sufferings of peoples. He references the martyr-bishop Archbishop Romero and his leadership during the El Salvadoran civil war:

Archbishop Romero’s church could be accused of being a church with limitations, errors, and sins, but there could be no doubt that it was a “Salvadoran” “real” church. And not

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} Thiede, 28.
\textsuperscript{216} Sobrino, “Martyrs: An Appeal to the Church,” 141.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{218} Thiede, 28.
only from sharing in the suffering of the situation in El Salvador, but also in it spirit and creativity. It was a Salvadoran church, shot through with the generosity and commitment of its people.\textsuperscript{219}

Sobrino understands that Archbishop Romero wanted the Church to be incarnate in the midst of a people’s problems.\textsuperscript{220} He wrote, “The martyrs appeal to us and encourage us to move beyond [our Docetism]: the crucified peoples are a call for us to open our eyes to reality; the Jesus martyrs show us how to get involved in it.”\textsuperscript{221} For Sobrino, the Church must struggle prophetically on behalf of the poor, who represent the majority of the world’s population. If the Church does not pursue this mission, it will lose its prophetic character and the church will become “a closed sect or, indeed, a massive institution, but one detached from reality, a new attempt at socio-cultural Christendom.”\textsuperscript{222}

Thiede points out that Sobrino’s concept of the martyr is someone who faces the problems and burdens of reality with great earnestness. The selfhood of the martyr is not founded on a mystical identification with Christ but comes into being as a result of following Christ in Christ’s love for the oppressed and the poor.\textsuperscript{223} Sobrino sees the martyr as a man or woman who follows the command to take up the Cross most literally: “In this sense, ‘Cross’ means the suffering and death that follow from defending the oppressed and struggling against injustice, and it derives from the will to immerse oneself in the ‘conflictivity’ inherent in unjust situations.”\textsuperscript{224}

\begin{flushleft}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sobrino, “Martyrs: An Appeal to the Church,” 142.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 143.
\item Thiede, 30.
\item Sobrino, “Martyrs: An Appeal to the Church,” 145.
\end{enumerate}
\end{flushleft}
For both Sobrino and Thiede, the martyrs helped to bring credibility to the Church because they evinced Christian discipleship in a concrete manner.

Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom clearly possesses significant strengths as well as weaknesses. Firstly, it engages the concrete context of Latin America, especially El Salvador. As John Thiede states, “The Salvadoran reality forces this new framing of martyrdom. The traditional definition of martyrdom, literally to die in odium fidei, simply does not work here. Christians are murdered by other Christians, so technically they do not die for their faith.”225 Yet Sobrino argues correctly that many of these men and women did, in fact, die for their faith: the Christian faith inspired men and women to speak out against oppression. These exemplary men and women modeled their lives on Jesus, who, according to Sobrino, took up the Cross on behalf of the oppressed and the poor. Sobrino’s term “the Jesus martyr” helped to establish a new paradigm for the Catholic-Christian understanding of martyrdom: men and women who die for justice.

My main concern about Sobrino’s theology is that it overextends and dilutes the concept of Christian martyrdom. If Christian martyrdom is made to emphasize the work of justice and the alleviation of suffering and oppression of peoples at the expense of “mystical” identification with Jesus or a spiritual relationship with Jesus, is Christianity then diminished in favour of a noble but nonetheless primarily sociopolitical agenda? Should the Church recognize as martyrs politically left-leaning, non-Christian activists or Marxists who died on behalf of the poor in Latin

225 Thiede, 175.
Sobrino’s use of the term “martyr” for a young Marxist university student who does not believe in God does not make the student a witness; rather, he is a social activist.

The witness of Christ, indeed, entails the bringing of good news to the poor and fighting on their behalf. Yet Christ offered much more because the good news is meant for everyone, both the oppressed and the oppressor. Moreover, the good news of Christ is the revelation of the Triune God and the eternal, merciful love of that God. The revelation of the love of the Trinity includes and transcends any sociopolitical agenda. A better balance might be achieved if one acknowledges that though Christian martyrdom can entail the pursuit of justice on behalf of the poor, this endeavor is born out of a relationship with Christ. The life the martyr gives on behalf of his or her brothers and sisters is one that originates in a loving relationship with Christ. Furthermore, the gift of that life is not solely for the oppressed: it is also a gift for the oppressor. Both groups need the martyr’s gift but in different ways. In the case of the former, the Christian martyrs alert us to the suffering of the world’s countless victims. Sobrino does not have a category for the latter, but the Christian tradition asserts that Jesus witnessed the Father’s love for all, including and in particular sinners. Jesus died on the Cross in order to atone for the sins of all humankind, including those of the oppressors.

1.5 Conclusion

Two interrelated issues are salient in this chapter’s survey and the discussion of non-theological interpretations of martyrdom. Firstly, these interpretations struggle to provide a func-

---

\(^{226}\) Ibid., 176.
tional definition of Christian martyrdom. This issue arises from the faulty assumption that there is no distinction between Christian martyrdom and modern mental illnesses and traumas, such as depression and suicide. Non-theological attempts to confront the question of the Christian martyr must, therefore, struggle to accommodate the issue of the identity of the Christian martyr. Rona M. Fields’s study presents a fair portrayal of the martyr within the monotheistic faiths as one who has the capacity for choice and who chooses to live his or her beliefs in hope regardless of threat or punishment.227 Still, although the concept of martyrdom is present in all the Abrahamic faiths, that does not mean it is present in the same form in the three religions. The modern use of the term “martyrdom” can not only combine morally contradictory actions, such as suicide bombing and selfless acts, but can also obscure the tradition of Christian debate and discussion regarding the nature of martyrdom. Christian martyrdom has a particular theological basis, and to disregard this theological basis is disingenuous.

Secondly, imped ing the theological articulation of Christian martyrdom can risk an assimilation of Christian martyrdom to real, historical violence. The inability to discern the difference between orthodox martyrdom (which provokes society with a cosmological struggle) and heretical martyrdom (which polarizes society with real violence) can lead to negative consequences. The early Christians understood martyrdom as part of a cosmic struggle, and their battle was not ultimately against the state, such as the executioners and the Roman governors, but the person of the devil.228 The Christian community saw themselves, especially their martyrs, as soldiers in a

227 Martyrdom, 76.
cosmic war,\textsuperscript{229} and in their witness to Christ unto death, the martyrs participated in Christ’s victory over death and Satan.\textsuperscript{230} The martyrs also helped to bring judgment upon their persecutors. Due to their treatment of the martyrs, the persecutors show themselves to belong to Satan. As such, the persecutors will share in Satan’s destruction at the end times.\textsuperscript{231}

The martyr’s eschatological combat deals with divine judgment, which seeks to separate the righteous from the unrighteous at the end of time. This cosmic battle, however, when interpreted through a fundamentalist reading of the sacred texts of the Abrahamic faiths could justify extreme acts of violence to usher in the end times.\textsuperscript{232} A distorted reading of sacred texts does not lead to hope in the future but despair and hatred in the present, and as a consequence of such readings, violence is justified and demanded in order to keep the people free from contaminating influences and oppressive forces.\textsuperscript{233} If Christians consider martyrdom to be a positive part of their identity and tradition, then they must be able to discern the difference between judgment at the end of time and real violence. The authentic Christian martyr does speak the truth about injustices in the world, but he ultimately leaves the redressing of wrongs to God. He does not commit acts of violence on his perpetrator(s). If violence is an expression of one’s identity, it closes the self from the world and God.

One of the main strengths of Karl Rahner’s theology of martyrdom is that it understands Christian martyrdom from a Christian perspective. As seen in some non-theological studies of

\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{233} Middleton, \textit{Martyrdom}, 129.
Christian martyrdom, the inability to make a clear distinction between suicide and Christian martyrdom is partially due to a lack of understanding of the nature of Christian freedom. From a Rahnerian perspective, the Christian martyr is a person who exercises the most definitive act of freedom and faith in the face of death.

Unlike Karl Rahner’s more philosophical theology of martyrdom, Jon Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom emerges out of a concrete situation: the civil strife in Latin America, and especially in El Salvador. Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom provides an account of the new type of Christian martyr that has emerged in the twentieth century. In Sobrino’s view, the Christian martyr is a man or woman who fights and dies for justice on behalf of the poor and the oppressed and, in his or her struggle, imitates Christ. Sobrino’s concept of the Christian martyr offers a pressing testimony to the evils and horrors of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and a sign of hope for the men and women who resist the contemporary culture of death. Sobrino’s theology of Christian martyrdom helps to bring Christian love into the political sphere, dealing with two important issues Rahner overlooked in his treatment of martyrdom. Sobrino reflects on the nature of Christian compassion in martyrdom, whereas compassion does not play an explicit role in Rahner’s theology of martyrdom. Sobrino also reflects on the nature of evil and violence in conjunction with Christian martyrdom. He understands Christian martyrdom to be the just response of love and compassion to the problems of human violence and evil. Rahner, on the other hand, characterizes Christian martyrdom as the individual’s definitive act of freedom and self-realization. In Rahner’s theology of martyrdom, the drama of human violence and sin is almost ignored. A theology of the Cross is absent, and there is no mention of the biblical proclamation that Jesus died for the sins of humanity. Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom grapples with human violence and sin and reflects on the Cross. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, Sobrino’s theolo-
gy appears to limit the fruits of Christ’s death on the Cross to a concern for the oppressed and the impoverished.

In conclusion, my evaluation of the non-theological studies of Christian martyrdom judges that they erroneously assume that Christian martyrs were either deprived of reason and freedom or did not desire to fulfill their selfhood. My concern about Rahner’s theology of martyrdom suggests that although martyrs exercise freedom, self-fulfillment upon encountering death is not their primary concern; rather the focus of their attention is on their relationship with God and their fellow human beings. The Christian martyr is often more highly attuned to the welfare or fulfillment of the other than their own welfare or fulfillment. My evaluation of Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom suggests that he loses the “Christianity” in Christian martyrdom when he argues that non-Christians can be considered Christian martyrs if they lose their lives in the struggle for peace and justice. His great emphasis on the struggle for peace and justice runs the risk of reducing Christianity to a sociopolitical agenda.

The following chapter introduces the figure of the martyred Jesuit priest Alfred Delp. Before he was martyred, Delp understood himself as a follower of Jesus Christ; he was a disciple who faithfully carried out his mission of assisting the afflicted and giving an account of his beliefs and actions in the face of a hostile Nazi legal system. If Christian martyrdom is to be understood in depth, then it should be viewed from within the Christian understanding of the demands of discipleship.
Chapter 2 The Transformation of the Self: Alfred Delp’s Faith and Ministry in Totalitarian Germany

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented different conceptions of Christian martyrdom. The non-theological studies of martyrdom provided negative assessments of the Christian martyr. Some judged the Christian martyr to be a person who lacks freedom and rationality. Others judged the martyr to hold a deep-seated dislike for the world. Two theological studies on martyrdom respectively presented the Christian martyr as one who embodies great freedom and incredible concern for the persecuted and the poor. This chapter focuses on a particular individual whom I would attest is a Christian martyr. I theologically explore the transformation of Alfred Delp, presenting a biographical sketch and highlighting the important transformative moments of his life that shaped the context for his martyrdom. The non-theological studies of martyrdom do not take into account the martyr’s faith life or relationship with God. Jon Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom de-emphasizes a Christian’s identification or relationship with Jesus at the expense of social justice. Karl Rahner’s theology of martyrdom lacks a theological engagement with sin and evil. In order to understand the reason why a Christian surrenders his life, we must look at the transformative marks of the life of a Christian disciple. Christian martyrdom is prompted by a call from God to follow Christ in a radical and profound manner. Using Bernard Lonergan’s theology of conversion, the purpose of this chapter is to establish that Alfred Delp’s martyrdom testifies to both a dynamic relationship with Christ and a concern for the persecuted in the midst of a totalitarian state.

Encountering the presence of God, Lonergan writes, is about the transformation of consciousness. “There is sought”, he writes, “the transformation of consciousness that makes possi-
ble a human life that is a life of prayer.”\textsuperscript{234} Firstly, I utilize Lonergan’s writing on conversion to clarify the structure and dynamics of knowing in a religious subject. He offers a helpful analysis of the cognitional structures and operations of the human subject who is in a relationship with God. This explication provides an approach to understand God’s fidelity to Delp and Delp’s fidelity to God and commitment to the world. I then proceed to detail Delp’s upbringing in a Christian family and his formation in the Jesuits. Delp’s early homilies are brought into conversation with Lonergan’s writings on conversion to highlight an intellectual conversion. The third section details Delp’s ministry and collaboration in the anti-Nazi resistance group the Kreisau Circle. His work for justice is highlighted as a moral conversion. The fourth section illuminates Delp’s spiritual experience during imprisonment as a religious conversion. Furthermore, it brings into dialogue Delp’s notions of “self-surrender to Christ” and “birth of Christ in his soul” with Lonergan’s writing on the mediation of Christ in prayer. Ultimately, Delp’s life, witness, and relationships are given a theological coherence by his relationship with Christ deepened through prayer. In this encounter of this love, Delp surrenders himself to follow Jesus for the sake of others, and his martyrdom proceeds from a response to the Divine initiative.

### 2.2 Lonergan’s Dynamics of Conversion

According to Lonergan, the activity of human knowing does not consist in one act but in a series of acts of which experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding are the primary group-
nings of operations. These acts are dynamically interrelated, and the basic pattern of operations of knowing that utilize these four components is called the general empirical method.\textsuperscript{235} The imperatives are calls to overcome self-centeredness, to look outward, and to conform oneself to truth, goodness, and beauty. As such, they undergird any authentic human existence, which is grounded in the journey to query, know, decide, and act.

Lonergan does not limit the concept of knowing to the collection of information or data; he also does not limit knowing to the human initiative but makes the case that God acts on the human person. The Divine initiative here is an act of love whereby God transforms human understanding and existence. It remains for us to understand how a finite creature can receive this gift. Here, we move to the terms “vertical finality” and “obediential potency.” For Lonergan, vertical finality denotes the relation of a thing to its end, where the end motivates an appetite or orients a process because the end is good.\textsuperscript{236} The finality that is critical to this discussion is vertical finality, “which is to an end higher than the proportionate end.”\textsuperscript{237} Vertical finality involves a plurality of essences, which entails an ascent from lower to higher levels.\textsuperscript{238} Lonergan explains it thus:

This fact … is most conspicuous to the one who looks at the universe with the eyes of modern science, who sees sub-atoms uniting into atoms, atoms into compounds, compounds into organisms, who find patterns of genes in reproductive cells shifting, \textit{utu in minori parte}, to give organic evolution within limited ranges, who attributes the rise of cultures and civilizations to the interplay of human plurality.\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{235} Lonergan formulated his GEM as four imperatives that bear on any persons that seek to know and choose appropriately. These four imperatives are: “be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible.” See Bernard Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13-20.


\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 57.

\textsuperscript{238} Bernard Lonergan uses the term “upward thrust,” while the dissertation prefers the term “ascent.” See Bernard Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 142.

Lonergan intends the reference as an affirmation of telos amongst multiplicity. Just as subatomic particles can participate in the higher events of chemical reactions or biological processes, so human persons, including Delp, can participate in the supernatural events of knowing and loving God.\textsuperscript{240} The understanding that distinguishes the created order from the supernatural order does not inhibit participation, but rather enables finite beings to participate in the Infinite:\textsuperscript{241}

A concrete plurality of rational beings have the obediential potency to receive the communication of God Himself: such is the mystical Body of Christ with its head in the hypostatic union, its principle unfolding in the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit by sanctifying grace, and its ultimate consummation in the beatific vision.\textsuperscript{242} Delp’s transformation as human person will be understood not as his achievement but rather as his cooperation with the auspices of God. The notion of vertical finality enables one to understand a dynamic universe that is continually developing and emerging under Divine guidance:

Vertical finality is of the very idea of our hierarchic universe, of the ordination of things devised and exploited by the Divine Artisan. For the cosmos is not an aggregate of isolated objects hierarchically arranged on isolated levels, but a dynamic whole in which instrumentally, dispositively, materially, obedientially, on one level or being subserves another.\textsuperscript{243}

A vertical finality that includes the supernatural is one of “obediential potency.” This denotes the type of potency that enables the reception of the creature, of the self-communication of God, which spurs a transformation or conversion in the human person. Thus, this thesis understands the state of conversion in Delp as God awakening Delp with His love to a deeper under-

\textsuperscript{240} Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, 57.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 22.
standing of the Divine, reality, and the self. Such love is not without antecedents; as one will see in Delp’s narrative, conversion was always happening in him.

As Lonergan understands it, the person could be habituated towards unrestricted love of God, who is the source of all that is true and good. For Lonergan, the human desire for God is a pure desire for ultimate value. Another way to describe the human yearning for God is self-transcendence, which means going beyond the self. Within the human person, there is a dynamism to keep going beyond; ultimately, this dynamism is a desire and a questing for God. Nevertheless, Lonergan reminds that God remains always beyond the human person’s grasp; God remains a mystery. That is why Lonergan calls the spiritual life as a “dynamic state of being in love with God.” Falling in love with God is not our initiative, but God’s; it is the result of God’s devotion to us. God’s love floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. (Rom. 5:5). As such, self-transcendence is a never-ending dynamism in the human person’s life; the human person is consistently undergoing a transformation. We will see in Alfred Delp’s life a constant maturation towards God and other human persons, marked by a deepening and broadening love.

Lonergan’s theology of transformation, which he refers to as “conversion,” entails the notion of a horizon shift; the term “horizon” referring to the boundary of one’s field of vision: a shift in the horizon requires a new perspective, and Lonergan extends the usage of the term to cover a mental phenomenon. Just as one’s physical vision is limited, there is also a boundary to the scope of one’s knowledge and interests.244 Horizons are “the structured resultant of past achievement

244 Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1999), 236.
and, as well, both the condition and limitation of further development.” Furthermore, an exercise of freedom that takes place within the given horizon is a horizontal exercise of freedom. This is why this chapter includes Delp’s early life and upbringing. His Christian faith is not something that he achieves but has been given to him by his family and the Jesuit Order. An exercise of freedom that adopts a new stance, on the other hand, is a vertical exercise of freedom. It is “a set of judgments and decisions by which we move from one horizon to another.”

When this movement involves a radical beginning, it may be termed a conversion. According to Lonergan, a conversion is a vertical exercise of freedom in which “the movement into a new horizon involves an about-face. . . It begins a new sequence that can keep revealing ever greater depth and wealth.” It is a process that normally takes place gradually but can be particularly concentrated in certain judgments and decisions. Conversion, especially religious, is extremely personal and intimate, yet it is the basis of a deep-rooted solidarity among persons. In this sense, a collective conversion can both build up community and be supported in a community setting. Lonergan writes of intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. The following sections explore the figure of Delp in the light of these conversions.

2.3 The Young Alfred Delp

To appreciate his conversion as a dynamic and ongoing activity of God’s love, the thesis provides a glimpse of Delp’s upbringing and early adulthood, because Delp’s parents and, even-

---

245 Ibid., 237.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid., 237-38.
248 Ibid., 238.
ually, the Society of Jesus nurtured his faith in God. The aim of this section is to illustrate that Delp was born and nurtured in a faith-filled environment, which ultimately enabled him to receive God’s self-communication and to respond to God’s call. It also aims to show that conversion is a process that occurs in incremental steps. Delp was born in Mannheim, Germany, on 15 September 1907. He was the second child of unwed parents. His mother, Maria Bernauer, was a kitchen worker and a Catholic; his father, Friedrich Delp, was an office worker and a Protestant. Delp had an older sister, Justina, born two years earlier. A month after his son’s birth, Friedrich decided to take responsibility for the family and married Bernauer. Eventually, Alfred was joined by two more sisters, Gerda and Greta, and two brothers, Ewald and Fritz. In 1914, the Delp family relocated to the town of Lampertheim, south of Frankfurt. They moved into a three-bedroom apartment above a restaurant, located a few steps from the Catholic church of St. Andreas and across the street from the Lutheran church of St. Luke’s. At his father’s insistence, Alfred, though baptized a Catholic, received religious instruction from the Lutheran school.

Alfred was considered a bright student and enjoyed his religious education. He also became friendly with the Catholic pastor of St. Andreas, Father Unger. In March 1921, Alfred was confirmed in the Lutheran Church. But, after being slapped across the face by the Lutheran pastor for being late to a religious lesson, Alfred left the church and vowed never to return, instead turning to the Catholic pastor as a teacher. Father Unger began instructing Alfred in the Catholic faith. On June 19 he made his first communion and was confirmed in the Catholic Church nine days later. The following year he entered the minor seminary in Dieburg, a town several miles north of Lampertheim, with a desire to study for the priesthood. Because he was considered a budding intellectual, it was arranged for him to attend the Germanicum in Rome,
the seminary dedicated to the most intellectually promising German candidates for the diocesan priesthood.\footnote{Coady, \textit{With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany}, 6.}

The young Alfred, however, developed other aspirations. During his time in the minor seminary, he joined a Catholic youth movement – the Neudeutschland – which was run by a Jesuit, Ludwig Esch. After the First World War, the Catholic Church in Germany wanted to apply the social Catholicism laid out in Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical \textit{Rerum Novarum} to the lives of young Germans so that they could contribute to the rebuilding of German society,\footnote{Ibid., 5.} and the Neudeutschland was one of the many idealistic Catholic youth movements that arose during this period. Such exposure to Catholic Social Teaching would lay the foundation for Delp’s desire to plan for a post-war Germany based on the social values of the Catholic Church as a member of the Kreisau Circle.

Through Alfred’s contacts in Neudeutschland, he had learned about some of the Jesuit saints and he went on a retreat based on St. Ignatius’ \textit{Spiritual Exercises}.\footnote{Ibid., 6.} Delp was attracted to the spiritual legacy of the Society of Jesus, so he decided to enter the Jesuit order in 1926. When Father Unger heard about Delp’s decision to leave the diocesan priesthood for the Jesuits, he exclaimed, “What is [Delp] thinking! He has disgraced me! With the Jesuits, he’ll waste away somewhere as prefect of students!”\footnote{Roman Bleistein, \textit{Alfred Delp: Geschichte Eines Zeugen}, 1. Aufl (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1989), 33.} Delp’s mother, however, stated, “In my opinion, the Lord God wanted Alfred [with the Jesuits].”\footnote{Ibid.}
As a young Jesuit, Alfred Delp was deeply engaged in his studies. He loved history, particularly the history of political change, and enjoyed academic debates with his classmates. He also showed a keen interest in the new social teaching of the Church, which had emerged with Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. Delp was to become an expert in this field, especially in matters concerning Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*. One of his Jesuit brothers, Josef Neuener, SJ, described Delp as a man of enormous energy—someone who threw himself into books and possessed a deep and intense prayer life. Such interests in social justice and prayer, as a young Jesuit, help set the foundation for Delp’s ardent love of God and love of neighbor amidst the Nazi oppression and persecution. Unfortunately, Delp also displayed a sharp critical attitude towards his Jesuit brothers. He was argumentative, which made his confreres wary of him, and there were times when his superiors considered dismissing him. When Delp began his regency at Stella Matutina, he had severe clashes with his superior, Agustin Rösch, who would later become provincial of the Upper German Province of the Society of Jesus. Though he was aware of Delp’s intellectual gifts and enormous energy, Rösch found Delp rebellious and intractable. Delp’s boisterous immaturity would later be humbled by imprisonment, and transformed gradually by God’s love.

By the time Delp finished his regency in 1934, the Nazis had taken control of the government in Germany. Even as early as 1930, when Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were beginning their

---

254 Pope Pius XI published *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 in order to offer a Christian alternative to Communism.
256 Coady, 14.
257 Regency is a period of apostolic work for Jesuits in formation. Stella Matutina was a Jesuit boys’ boarding school located in Feldkirch, Austria.
258 Coady, 16-17.
march to power, Delp recognized the incompatibility between the aims of National Socialism and those of Christianity. Such early awareness of the evil of National Socialism challenges the non-theological understandings of Christian martyrdom as either lack of care for or enmity towards the world. Delp wrote to his brother Ewald that if the Nazis were to gain power, “you can visit your brother in exile in a few years.”

In April 1934, Delp left Germany to pursue theological studies at Ignatiuskolleg at Valkenburg, in the Netherlands. The institution endured financial hardship in the wake of a 1934 Nazi law that forbade sending money outside the country. Despite the financial hardship, Delp thrived in his theological studies. In December 1935, along with his Jesuit brothers, he planned to author The Rebuilding, a publication that would outline the kind of German society that should be established after the demise of National Socialism.

Delp’s Jesuit collaborators formed an impressive group of young men that included such future scholars as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hugo Rahner, and Karl Rahner.

2.3.1 Intellectual Conversion: Resisting Nazi Ideology as a Young Jesuit

As a Jesuit, Delp was immersed in the spiritual tradition of Ignatius of Loyola, who esteemed intellectual formation. Delp cared passionately about truth and he summoned his fellow Catholics to an intellectual conversion. In 1935-1936, Delp was the editor of Ignatiuskolleg’s theological journal Chrysologus, which published selected sermons and theological treatises of the Jesuit students of theology. For that academic year, Delp intended to outline the conflict be-

259 Ibid., 14.
260 Ignatiuskolleg was a German Jesuit institution that had been established outside of Germany during Bismarck’s Kulturkampf.
261 A draft of the publication can be found in the archives of the German Jesuit province.
262 Bleistein, Alfred Delp, 91.
between Catholicism and the neo-pagan aspirations of National Socialism, and the 1936 edition of *Chryologus* offered 38 sermons articulating the distinction between the Catholic faith and Nazism and offered critiques of the Nazis’ depiction of the divine, the human person, and human society.\(^{263}\) Delp contributed eleven of these sermons.\(^{264}\) As National Socialism was pervading German society, Delp desired to illustrate to German Catholics the fundamental truths of the Christian faith and to delineate the irreconcilable differences between the teachings and claim of Catholic Christianity and National Socialism. He decried Nazism’s racism, self-idolization, and distortion of freedom and countered it with a Judeo-Christian theology of creation and a theology of salvation rooted in the Christian revelation of Jesus Christ.\(^{265}\)

A return to Lonergan’s four imperatives referenced in the start of this chapter – “be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible” – will be valuable at this juncture. For Lonergan, a mark of an intellect turned in on itself is inattentiveness: it does not encounter the truth because it is not alert enough to see and hear. The intellect must be continuously summoned to conversion, because it inclines to self-preoccupation. The poorly operating intellect is one that has turned in on itself and in its self-absorption has lost its relationship with the true, the good,

\(^{263}\) According to Roman Bleistein, since these sermons were written by Jesuit scholastics studying theology and on the track for ordination, the sermons were really theological treatises or essays. *Chryologus* afforded the opportunity for young Jesuits to practice communicating their ideas for a wider audience. See Bleistein, *Alfred Delp*, 99.

\(^{264}\) They were titled: Advent 1935, Religion, Revelation, the Historical Christ, Who is the Human Person?, the Divine Foundation in the Human Person, Sin and Guilt in the Existence of the Human Person, the Honest Person in Christianity, the Heroic Person, the Church in the Hands of Human Persons, and Christ—the Lord of the Modern Age. See Alfred Delp, *Gesammelten Schriften: Geistliche Schriften*, 1:111-194.

\(^{265}\) The British historian Jonathon Glover claims that Nazi Germany, though its brutality resembled that of the communist regimes of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, was set apart by the degree and thoroughness of its assault on human identity. The aim of National Socialism was to transform human nature. For Glover, Stalinism and Maoism were arguably twisted forms of consequentialism, such that the Stalinists and Maoists perceived their cruel treatment of people to be a means to a better and more equitable human society. Nazism, on the other hand, was an assault on the human self and the desire to create humankind anew. See: Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 317-400.
and the beautiful. Delp’s summons to intellectual conversion exhorted German Catholics to reject the Nazis’ self-idolization of the German people, their corruption of finite freedom, and their sinful tendency to turn inwards.

Delp begins in these sermons on the truth of the Catholic faith and the falsehood of National Socialism by using the theme of Advent. He writes that the liturgical season of Advent has become inaccessible to his contemporary society: the modern human being has “discarded the original religious meaning of Advent. People [today] believe that it is not necessary to migrate to a divine home.”\(^266\) The German people have been led to believe that religion is founded on their race, as a consequence “there is no difference between God and the created world.”\(^267\) The German people, who follow National Socialism, need no conversion since they see themselves “to be like gods.”\(^268\) National Socialism had reduced the divine to the material, blurring the distinction between God and creation.

In his second sermon-essay, “Religion,” Delp continues the assault on National Socialism by calling it a pagan religion and a turning in on oneself. He writes: “This religion is basically nothing more than the monstrous attempt at national self-idolization.”\(^269\) Here, he is exhorting the German people to be intelligent and to see the dangerous pattern of the ideology of National Socialism, which is in contradiction with the Christian claims of God and humanity. For Delp, Nazism reverses the Judeo-Christian theology of creation by conceiving the divine in the image

\(^{266}\) The complete German text reads: Verworfen wird der ursprünglich religiöse Sinn des Advents. Die Menschen glauben, es nicht mehr nötig zu haben, einer göttlichen Heimat zuzuwandern (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Gesittliche Schriften, 1:116-7).
\(^{267}\) Ibid., 1:117.
\(^{268}\) Ibid.
\(^{269}\) Diese Religion ist im Grunde nichts anderes als der ungeheure Versuch einer nationalen Selbstvergötzung (Ibid., 1:124).
of the human being. This false image is a “turning in on itself” as the Aryan human person becomes the measure of the divine. The National Socialist person thinks that he possesses unlimited freedom, Delp writes “This individual only believes in himself and knows only to commit to himself.” In this worldview, the distance between the Creator and the created world collapses—the divine and the human are one. As a consequence, the German person sees in himself an “indestructible holiness,” “arrogates to himself earthly goods,” and “considers and believes himself to be divine.” For Delp, the National Socialist man decides for himself the standards and values of existence. Delp writes,

[This] is the understanding of the neo-pagan individual in Germany: he feels free, only obligated to himself, and just pursues the one goal of coming into his own. He believes that in his being, in all his manifestations and relationships that he is indestructibly holy, flawless, untouchable because he believes himself to be divine. This human being walks the earth as God. What he does is pure, what he thinks is a revelation, what he feels is religion. No mandatory form compels him; no clear commitment binds him, with him God wanders and changes… [M]ankind [in the neo-pagan ideology of Nazism] has never positioned himself higher and prouder and more self-aggrandizing. He created god in his image; according to his own image he created him.

270 Ibid.
271 According to Hannah Arendt, the Nazis conjured up an enticing and deceptive picture of reality that could attract the minds of the uprooted masses. As they established power, the Nazis crafted a world according to their race and nation-based identity. The Nazis’ lure of an Aryan identity gave “the masses of atomized, undefinable, unstable and futile individuals a means of self-definition and identification which not only restored some of the self-respect they had formerly derived from their function in society, but also created a kind of spurious stability which made them better candidates for an organization. Through this kind of propaganda, the movement could set itself up as an artificial extension of the mass meeting and rationalize the essentially futile feelings of self-importance and hysterical security that it offered to the isolated individuals of an atomized society” (Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 4th ed. [New York: A Harvest Book, 1958], 245).
272 Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Gesittliche Schriften, 1:151.
273 Dieser Mensch glaubt nur an sich selbst und weiß sich nur selbst verpflichtet (ibid.).
274 My free translation of: Das ist der letzte Grund dieser großen Freiheit, die der Mensch sich anmaßt, dieser unzerstörbaren Heiligkeit, die er sich und seinem irdischen Gütern zuspricht: er halt sich und meint sich göttlich (ibid., 1:152.).
275 My free translation of: Das ist das Selbstverständnis des neuheidnischen Menschen in Deutschland: er fühlt sich frei, nur sich verpflichtet, nur dem einen Ziele zustreben: zu sich selbst zu kommen—er glaubt sich in seinem Sein, in all seinen Lebensäußerungen und Beziehungen unzerstörbar heilig, makelloss, unantastbar: weil er sich göttlich wähnt. Als Gott geht dieser Mensch über die Erde. Was er tut, ist rein, was er denkt, ist Offenbarung, was er fühlt,
After Delp puts forth the Nazis’ disconcerting pattern of self-idolization, he sets forth the intelligible pattern that undergirds the Christian life. In addressing the yearnings of his contemporary German Catholics, in the sermon-essay “The Divine Foundation of Human Persons” Delp states that the very experience of life speaks against the notion that the German people are divine and possess boundless freedom; the facts denied such a right. He rhetorically reminds people of their creatureliness:

We want to ask these individuals: what gives you the right to speak and think of yourselves like that? What gives you the right to speak of unlimited freedom? The individual who examines himself with a healthy eye notices at every corner of his being that he is a limited and conditional being. He knows that he comes from somewhere… that he is going somewhere and that even this “somewhere” lies largely beyond his freedom… This claim to [unlimited] freedom does not withstand the facts of life.276

Delp reminds people of their dependence upon God. The human person is characterized not by possessing some godly traits within them but being in a relationship with the Creator God. He writes,

Because that [Judeo-Christian revelation] is what is said at the start of human history: \textit{fecit hominem secundum imaginem suam}. The first relationship that arises between God and the individual is the relationship between the Creator and His creature. Not that the person adjusts his image of God according to his disposition, according to his temperament and his blood—the [human being] is the created one, the masterpiece of God’s hands. So people have every reason to discover divine traits in themselves; the image resembles the model and archetype. Nevertheless, all of these similarities never amount to sameness… What always remains is the distance of createdness. And the path, which is set for a person, means not letting the person turn in on himself. The path means going far beyond himself into the lighted areas of God. Revelation places God as our

\begin{flushright}
\textit{ist Religion. Keine verpflichtende Form zwingt ihn, kein klares Bekenntnis bindet ihn, mit ihm wandert und wandelt sich Gott und alles Göttliche... höher und stolzer und selbstherrlicher hat sich der Mensch noch nie auf sich selbst gestellt. Er schuf sich Gott nach seinem Bilde, nach seinem eigenen Bilde schuf er ihn (ibid., 1:153.).}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
276 My free translation of: Wir wollen diesen Menschen fragen: mit welchem Recht sprichst du so von dir und denkst du so von dir? Mit welchem Recht sprichst du von deiner schrankenlosen Freiheit? Der Mensch, der mit gesundem Blick sich selber prüft, spürt doch an allen Ecken seines Daseins, daß er ein beschränktes und bedingtes Wesen ist. Der weiß doch, daß er irgendwer, oh, die Menschen, die irgendein welcher, ohinem außerhalb seiner Freiheit liegt... Vor den Tatsachen des Lebens besteht dieser Freiheitsanspruch nicht (ibid., 1:154.).
\end{flushright}
Lord... Revelation reveals humankind as the work of His hands, as the most cherished work of the Almighty, but never as the appearance of His being. The belief that human beings are made in the image of God signifies that it is God who is the Master, not the human person, and it implies that an ontological difference exists between God and human beings.

Nonetheless, the distinction between Creator and creature is not the ultimate mark of the relationship between God and the human person. In “the Divine Foundation of Human Beings” and “the Heroic Christian,” Delp makes known the importance of being in relationship with Jesus Christ. Such identification with Christ will be a key note of his resistance to the Nazis. His martyrdom will be understood as a witness of Christ’s redemptive love in a violent world. In this homily, he writes that the definitive characterization is to be found in Jesus Christ, who reshapes the relationship of people to God in two ways. First, Christ communicates to human beings the nearness of God’s love, which makes us sons and daughters of God. Despite this intimate relationship, Christ has not blurred the distinction between the human and the divine. Secondly, with the Incarnation the human longing for the transcendent has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Here, Delp invokes his fellow German Catholics to be reasonable—to make a decision for Christ and the Christian faith and to sever ties with Nazism. The imperative to be reasonable

---


278 Ibid., 1:157.
calls German Catholics to accept the truth of the message of the Gospel even if it goes against their society’s idolatrous vision of humanity and militaristic inclination. In the “The Heroic Christian,” Delp argues that true Christians do not reject the world that God creates but are committed to a healing of that world.\textsuperscript{279} The Christian lives for the sake of the world, but his or her living on behalf of the world comes from being in a relationship with Christ.

Delp acknowledges that such relationship supports the Christian in his failures. He asks his readers to be honest and recognize that not every venture will end in worldly success. The non-Christian may find failure a tragedy while a Christian can find meaning even in failure. The final Lonergan imperative—“be responsible” is a call to live out one’s decision for Christ even if it does not end in worldly success. The call to be responsible draws Christians out of their fears and involves the totality of their existence. The call to live the Christian truth includes being in an intimate relationship with Christ. Such is the key difference between the “heroic” Christian and the “heroic” National Socialist. The source of the Christian’s existence does not come from his initiative but from God.\textsuperscript{280} The divine source provides the Christian with the confidence to commit to the task at hand, despite any difficulty, sense of abandonment, or even death.\textsuperscript{281} Due to the Incarnation, the Christian person is never alone. Delp writes in the sermon-essay “What is the Human Person?”:

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 1:178.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., 1:179.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 1:180.
If in the hour of the Mount of Olives all earthly supports stumble and break, if the true hour rises, the hour of death, the hour of the exam and decision, in which no man can either relieve or assist us, then we can stand before God and say: Father.\textsuperscript{282}

Despite the threat of Nazism and the looming fear of an arms race and war, Delp continues to console German Catholics with an image of the human person who is supported by Christ:

Christ puts our life on a new ground. “Come to me, you, who are under the burdens of life, I will raise you again.” We will always have to go through dark ravines, but the fear and distress of the heart is banished by a certainty of Christ who comes that we might have life and that we have it in abundance.\textsuperscript{283}

Such notions of radical identification with and dependency on Christ, particularly during difficult times, will become significant for Delp as he moves towards his death. It will be a recurring theme in many of his writings from prison.

In his last sermon-essay “Christ, the Lord of the Modern Age” in \textit{Chrysologus}, Delp declares that people have no way forward except through Jesus Christ despite the pervasive threat of Nazism.\textsuperscript{284} He evokes the Christian belief that “without Christ and His grace every task will ultimately fail”\textsuperscript{285}: anyone who gives in to the arrogance of National Socialism will descend into a subhuman existence.\textsuperscript{286} For Delp, human beings are created in the image of God and are saved

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{282} My free translation of: Wenn in den Ölbergstunden alle irdischen Stützen brechen und wanken, wenn wirklich die Stunden aufgehen, die uns kein Mensch abnehmen und in denen uns kein Mensch beistehen kann, die Stunden des Todes, der Prüfung und Entscheidung: dann stehen wir vor Gott und sagen: Vater (ibid., 1:148.).
\item \textsuperscript{283} My free translation of: Christus stellt unser Leben auf einen neuen Boden. „Kommt doch zu mir, die ihr schwer und hart unter den Lasten des Daseins geht, ich will euch wieder aufrichten.“ Wir werden immer wieder durch dunkle Schluchten gehen müssen, aber die Angst und Not des Herzens bannt die Gewißheit: „Ich bin gekommen, daß sie das Leben haben und daß sie es in reicher Fülle haben“ (ibid.).
\item \textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 1:133-40.
\item \textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 1:189.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
by being in a relationship with Jesus Christ. He writes, “All those who are in Christ will exist. ‘No one will snatch them out of my hand.’”

In the spirit of Lonergan, Delp is calling German Catholics to be fundamentally oriented to the other, particularly God. He persuades people to overcome their tendency to see only what might be convenient to see or only what is in front of them—the lies of a totalitarian state. Delp opposes the Nazis’ distorted creation theory and distortion of freedom with the truth of the Judeo-Christian theology of creation and Christology. He considers that Christians are called to commit to Christ as a response to Christ’s commitment to them, and that this commitment may manifest itself as a gift of self unto death.

In October 1936, Alfred Delp moved to Frankfurt, Germany, to conclude his theological studies. He was ordained a priest at St. Michael’s Church in Munich on 24 June 1937, and he returned to Frankfurt in the fall to complete his licentiate in theology, which he received in July 1938. The following September he departed for Lake Starnberger, south of Munich, for his tertianship, the Jesuit’s final year of formation before formal entry into the order. During this stage, which has been called “the school of the heart,” a Jesuit undertakes the full thirty-day Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola for the second time in his life. For Delp, the Spiritual Exercises provided a period of intense personal prayer, and he kept a journal of his experience of prayer on the retreat.

Alle, die in Christus stehen, warden bestehen. „Niemand wird sie aus meiner Hand reißen“ (Ibid.).

Delp was pursuing a licentiate in theology, which is considered a 2nd cycle study of theology and prepares a person to teach theology in a seminary.

Tertianship usually occurs several years after ordination.

The journal entries covered his retreat experience from 8 October 1938 to 6 November 1938.
This period of Delp’s life is significant because he underwent a religious conversion. He recognized the importance of prayer and encountered the transformative love of God in Jesus Christ. A significant theme in his journal is his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: six of the journal entries make serious references to this devotional practice.\(^2^9^1\) Delp regarded the devotion to the Sacred Heart not as a simple form of piety but as central to Christian life because it allows Christians to encounter the loving figure of Jesus Christ as experienced through the medium of prayer. In devotion to the Heart of Jesus, Delp experienced the intimate and encompassing love of God in Jesus Christ. Such a personal relationship with God will enable Delp to persevere in the tribulations of imprisonment. The most significant treatment of the devotion occurs in a journal entry dated 1 November 1938 – a few days before the end of the retreat. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is described as a spiritual practice that involves the senses, the Trinity, and self-sacrificing service. He reaffirms this experience in the following day’s journal entry: “The Heart of Jesus is the doorway to the Trinity; the Heart of Jesus is the way of sacrifice, faithfulness to the Trinity, to the Father. The Cross is the way of the Heart of Jesus.”\(^2^9^2\)

For Lonergan, religious conversion involves the knowledge that is born of being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion, and is a process that frees one from self-absorption. Such conversion enables a human person to attain the self-transcendence of loving God and fellow human persons, and that self-transcendence is possible only because one has been consciously on the receiving end of God’s unqualified love. Religious conversion is the twofold process of being

\(^{2^9^1}\) The thesis will explore Delp’s tertianship reflections on the Heart of Jesus in conjunction with his prison reflections on the Heart of Jesus in the next chapter.

loved unconditionally and responding to that radical gift by cooperating in the process whereby one’s own loving becomes unconditional. Lonergan understands religious conversion as the peak of self-transcendence. Intellectual conversion promotes self-transcendence by orientation to truth and moral conversion by its commitment to justice in society. Religious conversion is a falling in love with God without restriction. Nonetheless, since conversion, especially religious conversion, is constantly happening, the thesis will give greater attention to Delp’s religious conversion during his imprisonment at the end of this chapter. Delp’s openness or disposibilité to God flowers during his imprisonment and as he moves towards his death. It is time now to explore Delp’s moral conversion.

2.4 Early Wartime Ministry and Moral Conversion

Delp finished his tertianship on 16 July 1939, and he applied to the doctoral program in political philosophy at the University of Munich in the autumn, but his application to the university was rejected. The rejection was due to the fact that he was a Jesuit and reflected the opposition to Christian churches in Nazi Germany. As a result, Delp was assigned to take up writing and editorial duties at the German Jesuit journal Stimmen der Zeit. From this point on, it is possible to see Alfred Delp as a human person who is capable of selfless love, genuine collaboration, and deep-rooted solidarity amongst persons, especially the oppressed. Such concern for others defies the non-theological notion that a martyr holds either a persecution complex or a detestation of the world. Delp’s commitment to healing his world is brought into conversation with Lonergan’s

---

293 Bleistein, 141.
understanding of moral conversion. In moral conversion, human persons move from narcissistic inclinations to commitment to values. One becomes aware that one is responsible for both oneself and others.

As an editor and writer for the journal, Delp became the resident expert on social issues and worked to publish articles that counteracted National Socialism’s policies. Even so, he was careful not to bring himself into confrontation with the Nazi regime. Accordingly, he focused less on politics than on philosophical and theological ideas of the human person as a being in relationship with God; this was his indirect method of responding to the Nazis. On 15 August 1941, eight Gestapo officers came to the door of Stimmen der Zeit with an order to close down the Catholic publication and seize the building. This was in keeping with a policy, many Christian leaders both Protestant and Catholic had suspected for some time namely that the Nazis planned to rid Germany of Christianity. On 22 September 1941, an SS memo confirmed those suspicions, putting forth the goal of “the complete destruction of Christianity.”

After the closure of Stimmen der Zeit, a new ministry for Delp began as rector at St. Georg, a small church in Munich. His homilies carefully criticized the Nazi regime without drawing serious attention from the Gestapo. In November 1941, however, after viewing the Nazi propaganda film on euthanasia Ich klage, he preached against the film’s ideas, which represented in Delp’s words, “an escape from the difficulty of love and community”:

294 Ibid., 145-88.
295 The closure occurred despite the Concordat of 1933 between the Vatican and the Nazi regime, which permitted the Catholic Church in Germany to operate so long as it did not speak out directly against National Socialism.
296 Bleistein, 189.
297 Coady, 33.
Even if a person’s organs are gone and he can no longer express himself as a human being, he is still human and there remains a constant call toward an inner nobility and a call to love and sacrificial strength for those who live around him. If you deprive people of the ability to nurse and heal their sick, you make human beings into egotistical predators who are interested only in their pleasant life.²⁹⁸

Though Delp protested openly against euthanasia, there is very little evidence that he spoke to the persecution and plight of the Jews. His decision to avoid this topic, however, was strategic: he was engaged in helping Jews escape the Nazis and did not want to draw attention to his covert activities.²⁹⁹ Delp was part of a wider underground network of concerned German citizens who helped Jewish people to escape Nazi Germany. He obtained food rations and money for Jews who were fleeing Germany through Munich. During their flight from Germany, he accommodated them in his rectory and the homes of some parishioners. In this way, Delp helped twelve Jewish persons to flee into Switzerland. He ceased to participate in this project when his superior missioned him to be a contributing member of the Kreisau Circle.

One sees that Delp is deepening his anti-Nazi stance. When Delp was a young Jesuit he knew that the ideology of National Socialism conflicts with the values of Christianity. As a priest, he not only understands the conflict between Nazism and Christianity, Delp puts his knowledge into action—to know what is true is one thing, to commit to the truth and to do the right thing is another, such as speaking out as a public figure against euthanasia and risking his life to save Jewish refugees. Moral conversion entails a shift to action or praxis. For Lonergan, when moral conversion and intellectual conversion takes place in the same person, moral conversion takes up intellectual conversion, builds upon what is held up to be true and carries the truth

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 33–34.
²⁹⁹ Bleistein, 203-05.
forward into a fuller realization by a lived conformity to the truth. The following subsection delves deeper into Delp’s moral conversion by exploring his work in the resistance group the Kreisau Circle.

2.4.1 Solidarity with Helmuth James von Moltke in the Kreisau Circle

It must be said that Alfred Delp’s work in the Kreisau Circle was intimately related to that of Helmuth James von Moltke, the founding member of the enterprise. The mandate of the Kreisau Circle was the preparation and organization of a group of people who would stand ready to take over the German government upon the fall of the Nazi regime, which they believed was inevitable; the new government would lead the re-established German nation back to the civilized world. Amid the conditions of wartime and totalitarian Germany, the Kreisau Circle’s members could gather only infrequently; still, given their circumstances, the group was remarkably cohesive, held together by friendship, a clear purpose, and the threat of Nazism. Moreover, the group had an anchor in the person of Moltke, who established himself as the crux of the

300 For further biographical information, please see Appendix 3.
301 In his memoirs, George F. Kennan, the famous American diplomat and the father of the West’s Cold War strategy, holds Helmuth James von Moltke in incredible regard. In his memoirs Kennan recalls, “A tall, handsome, sophisticated aristocrat, in every sense of the word, Moltke was also, at the same time, everything that by the logic of his official environment he might have been expected not to be: a man of profound religious faith and outstanding moral courage, and a firm believer in democratic ideals. I found him, on that first occasion, immersed in a study of the Federalist Papers – to get ideas for the constitution of a future democratic Germany; and the picture of this scion of a famous Prussian military family, himself employed by the German general staff in the midst of a great world war, hiding himself away and turning, in all humility, to the works of some of the founding fathers of our own democracy for ideas as to how Germany might be led out of its existing corruption and bewilderment has never left me. I consider him, in fact, to have been the greatest person, morally, and the largest and most enlightened in his concepts, that I met on either side of the battle lines in the Second World War. Even at that time – in 1940 and 1941 – he had looked beyond the whole sordid arrogance and apparent triumphs of the Hitler regime; he had seen through to the ultimate catastrophe and had put himself to it inwardly, preparing himself – as he would eventually have liked to help prepare his people—for the necessity of starting all over again, albeit in defeat and humiliation, to erect a new national edifice on a new and better moral foundation. I was particularly impressed by the extent to which
entire enterprise, and it was at his family seat at Kreisau, in Silesia, that three significant conferences took place. This account of Moltke and his collaborative work with Delp will illustrate the understanding of a Christian martyr as one who also cares for the persecuted and works with those who hold different beliefs to advocate for structural changes. The account will dispel notions of the Christian martyr as an irrational, alienated, and misanthropic person. Moreover, it will highlight that moral conversion is lived out and witnessed in an adult universe of meaning in which human beings collaborate, bring forth, and build up shared values. Such collaboration between Delp and Moltke will anticipate the deep-rooted solidarity and ecumenical fellowship that they will undergo in Tegel Prison.

Helmuth James von Moltke was born at Kreisau, in Silesia, on 11 March 1907. He was the first child of Helmuth von Moltke and his wife, Dorothy. Both his parents were Christian Scientists, but the children grew up Lutheran. As a young man, Helmut embarked on studies in law, politics, and history, studying in Breslau, Berlin, and Vienna. Helmut worked in the legal office of a former justice minister in Berlin. Like Alfred Delp, as Hitler was rising to power, the young Moltke was vocal about his antipathy towards the Nazis. He warned, “Whoever votes for Hitler votes for war.”302 When Hitler attained the chancellorship in 1933, Helmut lost all desire

---

to work as a judge in Nazi Germany. In 1935, Moltke went abroad to study British law at Oxford. He used the opportunity to introduce himself to those in favour of appeasement in the British camp and convince them of the real goals of the Nazis. After Moltke had finished his program at Oxford, he returned to Germany in 1939, just as war was breaking out. He made use of his knowledge of British law by joining the Foreign Division of the Abwher (the German intelligence service) as legal adviser to the High Command of the Armed Services. The Abwher, under Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, was a focal point of much opposition to the Nazi Regime. Moltke’s job as a legal adviser to the German military enabled him to remain in touch with different anti-Nazi resistance movements in Germany; it helped him to start the Kreisau Circle, in which Delp would eventually be a key contributing member.

The beginning of the Kreisau Circle originated in Moltke’s judgment, as a member of Abwher, that Germany would lose the war and that well-established bureaucrats would be vital to the rebuilding of Germany. Moltke took care to include representatives of the two groups he saw as basic building blocks for a new Germany, namely majority Protestant and minority Catholic churches; such was the background for ecumenism and collaborative work amongst the future.

---

303 Moltke wrote to a friend, “I may well give up law for the time being. The old jurisprudence, which I have learned and which is inspired by the concept of justice and humanity, is today only of historical interest because no matter how things develop in Germany there is absolutely no chance of bringing back these old ways of establishing what is just” (Balfour, Helmuth von Moltke, 54).

304 One of the appeasers, Bishop Headlam of Gloucester (1862-1947), who was the chairman of Foreign Relations for the Church of England wrote, “Moltke seems to me to be a bitter opponent of the whole Hitler regime and to be determined to keep up the Church feud because he thinks, rightly, that it will injure National Socialism” (Balfour, 71).

305 Canaris was anxious to have someone who could use international law as a check on Nazi violations of rights. In Moltke, Canaris found the resourceful and determined technical expert who could show him how, if at all, it could be done. (Balfour, 96).

306 It was in the summer of 1940 that Moltke began systematically assembling a group of like-minded men to discuss the principles upon which postwar Germany should be rebuilt. The Gestapo would call this group the “Kreisau Circle.”
tured martyrs. Moltke’s introduction of the Jesuits to the Kreisau Circle was due in part to one of the members, Baron Guttenberg, who encountered Augustin Rösch, provincial of the Upper German Province, in Berlin. In October of 1941, while in Berlin to negotiate the dismissal of Jesuits from chaplaincy work in the German military, Rösch met Guttenberg on the street. Guttenberg led him to an apartment building on the outskirts of Berlin where the Jesuit Provincial could meet Moltke. Moltke disclosed to Rösch what he knew of the Red Army reserves from official Abwher reports, and he went on to predict that Germany would lose the war to the Soviet Union in a few years if Hitler was not removed from office.

Moltke insisted on some form of resistance. He argued, “We must fight, we must do everything to save what can be saved.” He then expressed his disappointment at the conflict between the Confessing Church and the Nazi supported Reich Church. The different orientations harmed the Protestants, whereas, from the perspective of Moltke, the unity and coherence of the Catholic Church was protected by the structure of the episcopacy and the pope. While discussing the differences between the “Evangelische” and the Catholic churches, Moltke surprisingly added, “As a Protestant there is one thing I want to say to you: Christianity can only be saved through the German bishops and the pope. We must unite to save Christianity, which is still there, and to make our concern the re-Christianization of the working world.” Rösch was convinced, but he believed Moltke’s invitation for collaboration must be clarified because he did not want his Jesuits to participate in any act of violence. On 4 December 1941, Rösch met Moltke and assured him of his cooperation in the Kreisau Circle. On the weekend of May 25-27 1942,

307 Bleistein, 258.
308 Ibid.
the first large-scale Kreisau Circle conference was held at Moltke’s estate in Silesia; the task was to plan for a Germany after the dissolution of the Third Reich. The themes of the conference were education and the relationship between church and state. Rösch attended and offered the Catholic position. The participants agreed that Christianity was the most powerful force for the moral renewal of German and Western society, for the overcoming of hatred and deceit, and for peaceful cooperation between peoples. Participants desired that the reconstruction of German society should welcome the ecumenical insights of all the churches. At the end of the conference, Moltke asked Rösch to suggest a Jesuit political scientist who could help the Kreisau Circle by providing the Catholic viewpoint on the state and the economy. At Rösch’s suggestion, Alfred Delp was brought into the group. From July 1942 onwards Delp was thus engaged in the work of the Kreisau Circle.

Prior to the second Kreisau conference, scheduled for 16-18 October 1942, Alfred Delp conducted preliminary meetings with Moltke and Rösch to better understand the issues that confronted the group. A text written by Delp, dated 2 August 1942, sheds light on these issues.

---

309 Ibid., 262.
311 I have translated the text as follows: The starting point for the discussion is the presentation and degradation of people and that people are looking for a saving power. The powers called upon to save have failed thus far. There are various reasons for this failure. In part it comes from the destruction of entities which were created to defend the rights of the people and partly from the powerlessness and indecisiveness of those who should have been capable. Indeed the last entity from which people expected help is Christianity, yet people expect the churches not only to stand up for purely religious and ecclesiastical issues, those pertaining to canon law and the Christian mysteries, but also and, most importantly, to defend people as people. For the people, the efforts of the Christian churches mean the appearance of a final power capable of saving them. For the Church, a significant possibility arises with the responsibility to regain a spiritual leadership with the masses that have become estranged from the Church. The first question posed to the churches aims to discern whether the churches recognize the plight of the people, whether the churches are willing to advocate for the people, and whether they know that as a result of the personal efforts of their ministers they have the possibility to assume the internal leadership of the German people and of the Western people. The second question posed to the churches aims to discern basic human rights that the Church is willing to
They believed that the starting point for discussion was the dehumanization and disempowerment of peoples. Nevertheless, Moltke and Delp acknowledged that there should be no direct political activity from the churches; the contribution of the churches lay in awakening the consciousness of people and providing support to those who were able and willing to participate in the transformation of society. The second meeting of the Kreisau Circle occurred as planned over the weekend of 16-18 October 1942, and focused on building up the state and the economy. This meeting highlights the social justice dimension of moral conversion. Here, the Christian martyr does not concern himself with heavenly affairs but also earthly affairs, especially as these pertain to the oppressed and persecuted. Delp facilitated the discussion that addressed the premises of two social encyclicals: Rerum Novarum \(^{312}\) (“The Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor”) by Pope Leo XIII; and Quadragesimo Anno \(^{313}\) (“In the Fortieth Year”) by Pope Pius support. No direct political activity is expected from the churches, however; the contribution of the churches lies in awakening people and in providing people who are able and willing to collaborate. The fact that the involvement of the churches in any given situation will be misinterpreted by today’s state and this involvement will automatically have political effects should not deter the churches from taking on the immense task of the spiritual leadership of the people. The third question posed to the churches should attempt to achieve clarity about the possibility of coordinating the efforts of both the churches and non-church groups and to make effective arrangements to maintain such coordination. The churches should not adopt a political stance, but they [should be] willing to commit to doing justice [in the world]. In doing so, the churches should be concerned about the people as people without limitations. See Roman Bleistein’s *Alfred Delp: Geschichte eines Zeugen*, 266-67.

\(^{312}\) *Rerum Novarum* (RN), published by Leo XIII on 15 May 1891, emerged out of critical discussion on the modern forces of change and upheaval in industry, science, and labour along with the increasing disparities between rich and poor. Workers were no longer protected by guilds or supported by public institutions of religion. RN defended the right of private property, criticized unrestricted capitalism, argued for a living wage for workers, and affirmed the right of labour to organize and, when necessary, strike. For further analysis see: Richard Rosseau, SJ, *The Human Dignity and the Common Good: The Great Papal Social Encyclicals from Leo XII to John Paul II* (London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 9-54.

\(^{313}\) *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA), published by Pius XI on 15 May 1931, commemorated the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. It reinforced the Church’s solidarity with the plight of workers during the Great Depression; criticized the enormous, increasing disparity between the wealthy and the poor; clarified the rights and duties of labour and capital; and suggested a “safe road” for repairing the socioeconomic ills that would avoid the errors of both unrestrained capitalism and collectivism (fascism or communism). It suggested that the right to private property is not absolute and workers with families should be given a family wage. For further analysis see: Christine Firer Hinze,
XI. In these papal letters, the Catholic Church expressed concern for the working poor and the lack of social justice in the world. One of the socialist members of the Kreisau Circle exclaimed that the exposition of Catholic social teaching by Delp and the Catholic bishop’s confirmation revealed that the Catholic Church had made an irrefutable turn to socialism. He wrote, “This is an incredible historical decision!”

Delp’s collaboration with Moltke calls to attention that moral conversion, as understood by Lonergan, is lived out and communicated in a community of meaning. Human persons produce social institutions and cultures; they build up a history of common shared meanings, which is transmitted and enriched within a community. A community is not just a number of people living within a certain geographical place, but an achievement of common meaning. Such community remains or falls apart to the extent that this shared meaning coheres or breaks up. Both Delp and Moltke saw that Nazi injustice is a violation of common morality. Furthermore, they desired an economic system that was neither an end in itself nor a domain of the state; they sought a middle way between communism and unbridled capitalism. They saw the economy as an instrument with which human beings can responsibly shape the external conditions of their lives. Moltke and Delp judged the European community, not just Germany, to be broken and maintained that a new foundation was needed and should be built with Catholic Social Teach-

“ Quadragesimo Anno” in Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 151-74.
312 Bleistein, 269.
313 QA introduced the term social justice into the tradition of Catholic Social Thought. The term was coined by the nineteenth-century Italian theologian Luigi Taparelli D’Azeglio to replace Thomas Aquinas’ terms legal justice and general justice. The term social justice specified that the goal of social institutions is not competition but the common good. See: Christine Firer Hinze, “ Quadragesimo Anno” in Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations, 167.
314 Bleistein, 269.
317 Ibid.
ings.\textsuperscript{318} Here, Delp’s concern for the persecuted moves into the social-political sphere. Delp was not interested in merely conforming German society to its pre-Nazi past, but rather to create a new community with social-political structures that care for the vulnerable and families. In this case Delp’s concern for the oppressed and his work social justice resonates with Jon Sobrino’s conception of the martyr.

The third Kreisau meeting, which took place over Pentecost 1943 (12-14 June) dealt with foreign affairs and the international economic order in the postwar period. It also grappled with the issue of punishing war criminals. Delp participated in this meeting and contributed in the area of restoring the rule of law; handwritten drafts by Delp indicate the direction of Delp’s thoughts on these critical issues.\textsuperscript{319} These drafts also make apparent the extent to which his suggestions were adopted in the Kreisau Circle’s “Declaration of Principles,” which Moltke prepared on 9 August 1943.\textsuperscript{320} Moltke anticipated a revolt against Hitler by the generals and a power vacuum resulting from the \textit{coup d’état}; accordingly, he hoped to shape a new Germany decisively with concepts developed by his group.

According to Delp’s biographer, Roman Bleistein, Delp’s ideas aligned with the fundamental principles of a state governed by the rule of law, which proceeds from the premise of a human being’s God-given rights.\textsuperscript{321} He was concerned about the right to form associations

\textsuperscript{318} There were tensions within the Kreisau Circle over the group’s direction. A few aristocrats wanted a restoration of the monarchy and viewed Catholic Social Teaching as too radical. Delp came to serious arguments with this group. The aristocrats were taken aback by Moltke’s desire to build a federation of European states. See Coady, 56-57.

\textsuperscript{319} Please see my translation in Appendix 4.


\textsuperscript{321} Bleistein, 272-73.
and about the family. Delp believed that protecting the family was in the interest of society, advocating a family wage that would allow one parent to work and the other to raise children. He also supported a healthy safety net that would protect households in the event of an economic crisis. The historian Ger van Roon points out that the “Declaration of Principles,” like other Kreisau Circle documents that emerged during and after the end of the third meeting, emphasized a responsible freedom. Roon writes,

To describe this social order as “free” is inadequate. Freedom can be interpreted as arbitrariness, as un-freedom for others. A better word is “responsible” used in several Kreisau documents. Responsibility assumes an obligation towards the community, but it does not set freedom aside or twist into collectivism. Every “responsible” order ought to develop between two poles of freedom and obligation; it is not the case of either/or, but of both/and. This approach shows the influence of Catholic ideas, as expressed in Quadragesimo Anno and other papal documents, as well as a reaction against the excessive claims which National Socialism made for the state.

The responsible freedom that the Kreisau Circle sought in the socio-politico sphere at the cost of their lives demonstrate that Christian disciples and martyrs are concerned with social justice. The Kreisau Circle’s concern with social justice exemplify moral conversion; the members aimed to move society and themselves from a self-centered life to a more integral and authentic life together. The planners worked from the premise that human beings are the subjects of the economic system rather than objects for its control and that human beings need a social order that enables them to live out their dignity as persons made in the image of God. Moreover, they were willing to risk their well-being and lives for justice in society.

322 Roon, German Resistance to Hitler, 241.
323 Ibid.
325 Roon, 241.
On 19 January 1944, as part of a wider crackdown against conspirators and dissenters within the Abwher, the Reich Security Office arrested Moltke. They were tipped off by a mole, who overheard Moltke speaking about the war being lost and that the necessity of a replacement for Hitler was required. The arrest had a decisive negative influence upon the development of the Kreisau Circle. Though Delp was arguably its intellectual head, especially regarding matters of state and the economy, it was Moltke who held everything together, provided the stimulus, and took the initiative. Moltke had organized the meetings, scheduled the conferences, and inspired people to action. The centre was now missing, and the work of the Kreisau Circle came to a standstill, separating the group into individuals dispersed across Germany.

2.5 Imprisonment and Religious Conversion

As indicated above, conversion, especially religious conversion, is both personal and the basis of a deep-rooted solidarity among persons. For Lonergan, religion conversion is the acme of authenticity. Intellectual conversion, as we have seen in Delp’s early years as a Jesuit, promotes authenticity by fidelity to truth. Moral conversion, as we have just explored in Delp’s wartime ministry and work with the Kreisau Circle is highlighted by his commitment to justice and collaboration with others to bring about a meaningful society. Religious conversion is other-worldly falling in love with God without restriction. We saw a glimpse of such conversion in the

326 Balfour, 296-98.
327 Ibid., 299.
brief description on Delp’s experience in tertianship, and now we explore in greater detail Delp’s religious conversion during his imprisonment.

This thesis understands the state of religious conversion in Delp as God’s love awakening Delp to a deeper understanding of the Divine, reality, and the self. Such love is not without antecedents; as one sees in Delp’s narrative, religious conversion was always happening in him, especially from his tertianship experience onwards. The gift of his faith was nurtured by his family and the Jesuit Order. From his tertianship experience to his imprisonment, one senses intensifying renewal and more profound commitment to God. The loving initiative of the Divine grounds a profound union between God and the human person without blurring boundaries between the Creator and the creature. One perceives this transformation in Delp when he writes from prison to his Jesuit brethren that “the external chains mean nothing more, now that God has found him worthy of the vincula amoris.” Thus, even during his imprisonment, one can trace a movement of spiritual growth and transformation. Let us begin with the arrest of Delp.

After a failed assassination attempt against Hitler on 20 July 1944 by Claus von Stauffenberg, the majority of the Kreisau members were implicated and arrested. On 28 July 1944, Alfred Delp was arrested in the sacristy after celebrating Mass at St. Georg’s in Munich. Delp was taken to the Gestapo prison in Berlin, where he was in solitary confinement for nearly two months and subjected to interrogation and abuse. During those months, some members of the Kreisau Circle were tortured, tried, and executed. In Delp’s case, the Gestapo attempted to persuade him to

---

328 Coady, 14.
329 For example, Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, Hans Bernd von Haeften, Adam von zu Trott were tried, sentenced, and executed in August of 1944.
leave the Jesuits and to join the Nazis in order to save his life. Delp’s fidelity to the Jesuits was not denial of his life but an affirmation of the values that he cherished: fidelity to God, to his Jesuit identity, and his concern for the oppressed.

At the end of September 1944, the remaining Kreisau prisoners were ordered out of their cells and into the courtyard of the prison. The Protestant pastor Eugen Gerstenmaier saw Delp standing behind him and turned to greet him; however, he reported that Delp stared through him as if he were a pane of glass. Two months of torture and misery had taken its toll. The prisoners were eventually hustled into a truck that took them to Tegel Prison, a jail for ordinary criminals; the Gestapo prison had become too damaged by Allied bombing to hold prisoners securely. The surviving members of the Kreisau Circle soon learned that they were all being held in the same area. They were transferred to the cellar of Department 8 of House 1, known as the “House of the Dead” (Totenhaus) because those who were held there were eventually executed. Delp was prisoner number 1442, and he lay in cell 8/313. Pastor Eugen Gerstenmaier, Moltke, Delp, and Josef Ernst Fugger occupied adjoining cells. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s cell was in another part of the prison, so the surviving members of the Kreisau Circle and Bonhoeffer most likely never met. Tegel was run by ordinary prison staff, who were less abusive than the Gestapo. The prisoners were given some freedoms, such as permission to write.

A few days after moving to Tegel Prison, Delp wrote to Marianne Hapig and Marianne Pünder, two social workers who knew him from Munich and were known within various circles of the German resistance movement. He asked for practical items, such as soap and shaving sup-

330 Coady, 75.
331 Bleistein, 327.
332 Ibid., 377-78.
plies. Delp also asked for hosts and a small bottle of wine so that he could say Mass. The women bribed the guards with cigarettes in order to have the Mass items smuggled into Delp’s cell. On 1 October, Delp celebrated his first Mass in his cell. Also through Hapig and Pünder, Delp was able to smuggle out letters through a basket of laundry. With the help of these two social workers, Delp not only sent letters to family, friends, and brother Jesuits, but also spiritual reflections on the nature of human existence amid the starkness of his prison conditions. The capacity to worship, pray, and spiritually reflect over his existence helped to deepen his faith and to make Delp more available to God.

One can trace a movement of spiritual growth and transformation from Delp’s earliest prison letters, written in the early autumn of 1944, to the letters written in the winter of 1944-1945. At the beginning of his imprisonment, Delp was afflicted with mental anguish. The torment is evident throughout his letters. He writes to Luise Oestreicher at the end of October 1944:

“Unicus et pauper sum ego,” or “I’ve become very alone and very miserable,” it says in a psalm. I’m so grateful for the Host, which I’ve had in my cell since October 1. It breaks the isolation, although, I’m ashamed to admit, sometimes I feel so tired and devastated that I can no longer grasp this reality at all.

In another letter written to Oestreicher around the end of October 1944, Delp conveys a spirit of defeatism:

My own strength has gone. “God alone suffices”: I said that once when I was very self-sufficient. And look at me now. Until now I did everything in a false manner, and it got increasingly worse … There’s just nothing more I can do. If I were worth millions, some

---

333 Bleistein, 321.
334 Luise Oestreicher was the secretary of St. Georg’s parish.
335 Coady, 88-89.
people would be able to get all the way to the top on my behalf, but I’m only a beaten and failed human being.\textsuperscript{336}

Delp’s third letter from Tegel Prison was written in the middle of November to the Kreuser family, his friends from Munich:

Yes, life has come to this. I have learned much in these twelve weeks of bitterness, temptation, and loneliness. And misery. Yet God is good enough to help me make use of it all. With this help I always have hope, yet in purely human terms things seem pretty hopeless. Between myself and the gallows lies nothing less than a miracle. Please pray and wait with me, and get the children to pray.\textsuperscript{337}

One detects in the third letter a change in tone from a spirit of defeatism to a sense of hope centered on Delp’s entreaty to be joined in prayer. Though Delp acknowledges the desperate situation that surrounds him, he communicates hope. And that hope is linked to God. This is a deepening conversion, and this is around the time that he received a prayer book that contained prayers and devotions to the Heart of Jesus. Delp would begin his prison mediation on the Heart of Jesus soon afterwards.

A letter to Luise Oestreicher dated 17 November 1944 reaffirms Delp’s hope and the shift in his mental horizon:

This week has in many ways been really turbulent. Three of our number have gone the way that remains a bitter possibility for all of us and from which only a miracle can separate and protect us. Inside myself, I have much to do, to ask, to offer up completely, before God. One thing is clear and tangible to me in a way that it seldom has been: the world is full of God. From every pore, God rushes out to us, as it were. But we’re often blind. We remain stuck in good times and don’t experience them right up to the point where the spring flows forth from God. That’s true … for pleasant experiences, as well as unhappy ones. In everything, God wants to celebrate the encounter and asks for the prayerful response of surrender.\textsuperscript{338}

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{338} The German word for “surrender” here is “hingeben,” which means to “hand over,” “surrender,” “give up oneself to,” “dedicate,” or “devote.”
He recognized his prison cell and the upcoming trial as a testing ground for the abyss that lay before him. The way across did not depend on his actions and gifts as it might have previously; what was demanded of him was nothing less than a total surrender to the loving mercy of God. He could pinpoint the moment when he first let go of his misery and placed himself into God’s care. It was the day after he had received a beating from the prison guards. That evening in the cell, Delp found comfort meditating on the Gospel figure of St. Peter, who flailed about in the water whenever he relied on his strength and who walked in safety only when he gave himself to the Lord.\(^{339}\)

Within Delp, there is a manifestation of religious conversion occurring. Delp realizes that if he sees the world from a purely human perspective, his situation appears hopeless. To see the world from God’s perspective entails trusting in Christ:

Oh how restricted is the human heart in matters of its own ability: in hope and faith. It needs help to overcome itself and not to flutter around like some shy birds that have fallen out of their nest because they have half-learned to fly. Faith as a virtue is God’s “Yes” to himself in human freedom – I preached that at one time. That’s how it is now – exactly that. Pray and hope and believe with me that the Lord soon brings us poor Peters to the other side and once again sets us down on solid ground.\(^{340}\)

It seems that the love of Christ overcame the figurative walls surrounding Delp in late November. He had become detached from his strengths and past achievements, and he realized that when the human person turns away from God and trusts only in his talents, he becomes merely an individual like St. Peter sinking in the Sea of Galilee. When religious conversion occurs, as exemplified by Delp, human existence receives a new foundation. Whereas before the

\(^{339}\) Coady, 93.
\(^{340}\) Ibid., 92-93.
initiative may have come from Delp in his own efforts to criticize the ideology of National Socialism in his homilies and to work for a more just German society, now the initiative comes from only God as he receives God’s love.

On 22 November 1944 Delp wrote to the two Mariannes. This letter conveys an experience of God through prayer and worship that Delp is unable to put into concepts:

God has taken me at my word and has placed me in the most extreme position possible. Regardless of anything, I have to say “Yes” a thousand times to him. That’s sometimes a great strain on the heart, even from a purely physical point of view… I want to abandon myself to God’s freedom and God’s goodness …

These letters help to affirm that Delp’s whole journey from tertianship to prison involved a religious conversion. Lonergan argues that an event of conversion could involve continuity with a re-appropriated past. Such transformation should not necessarily be understood as a denial or rejection of the former horizon: it entails the transformation, not the destruction, of old values, and such transformation can include an elevation of one’s understanding of currently held values. Religious conversion can be a response of a greater self-surrender to God’s call to love, where one’s horizon shifts from the privation of total loving to the habitual realization of a state of being-in-love-with-God. This conversion is at once a gift and a response. The Divine offer of loving friendship enables the free consent and appropriation of the gift. God’s offer of friendship establishes a fresh setting where a new living in the love of God happens, and faith is the knowledge born of this love.

______________________________

341 Ibid., 94.
Furthermore, the theme of God educating Delp on matters of faith and existence emerges. Delp realizes that the initiative belongs to God, Delp’s teacher, if Delp surrenders himself to God’s tutelage:

For myself personally, I see the situation as an intensive education in faith that God is giving me. The whole manner in which everything came about; the determination with which he knocked all the trumps out of my hand and let my self-assurance fall to pieces… All of this indicates that I must answer a specific question God is asking. It’s a tough answer, because on the one hand it must be free with regard to the outcome of the situation, and at the same time it must be given in hope. I’m trying hard and discovering new sides to God; the world is full of God; God comes even in misery and there is encounter … And yet I remain confident that he will bring us across the sea without allowing us to drown … And don’t forget to pray and hope with me. All of it, however, is to be consecrated and blessed seed. The hours I’ve gone through up to now have been rich and, in the mystery of God, have been his will.342

As one reads, the results of religious conversion are increased peace, attentiveness to God in prayer, and to God’s love. Lonergan writes that the positive affective orientation of religion does not require a corresponding knowledge as a *sine qua non*:

Such a positive orientation and the consequent self-surrender, as long as they are operative, enable one to dispense with any intellectually apprehended object. And when they cease to be operative, the memory of them enables one to be content with enumerations of what God is not.343

For Lonergan, the love of God can indeed precede the knowledge of God.344 This love can explain how people can pray in all sincerity to God, even though the theoretical apprehension of God is incomplete. Delp’s “yes” to God is a surrender of his self to God, and it is a desire that is initiated by the divine, who is not an object to be possessed and dissected by the human mind. The encounter with God demands that Delp goes beyond himself. The journey to fulfillment is

---

342 Ibid., 95-96.
344 Ibid.
driven by God and is achieved by falling in love with God. Such a fulfillment, as elaborated by Lonergan, invited Delp to open himself toward his neighbour:

As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality. The fulfillment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, privation, betrayal, desertion. The fulfillment brings a radical peace that the world cannot give. The fulfillment bears fruit in a love of one’s neighbour that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth.\(^{345}\)

For Christians, the love of God that begins growth and transformation is encountered in prayer with Christ.

2.5.1 Mediation of Christ in Prayer

Delp’s religious conversion during imprisonment integrates the intellectual and moral conversion in that it retains all that is true and good in them, and puts them on a basis that can be described as Christological. In the November 1944 letter to Luise Oestreicher, Alfred Delp noted that he would like to compose something cohesive.\(^{346}\) Even so, he was afraid that his bound hands would keep him from writing anything more than just letters. Gradually, however, he learned to write sustained meditations with his fastened hands. The meditations helped him come to know himself and to build a spiritual kinship with the people with whom he was imprisoned. Delp’s first two prison meditations are on devotion to the Heart of Jesus.\(^{347}\) Delp’s biographer, Fr. Roman Bleisten, SJ describes these particular meditations as a rescue (“a yanking out” would

\(^{345}\)Ibid., 105.
\(^{346}\)Bleistein, 338.
\(^{347}\) An English translation of Delp’s prison meditations on the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has not yet been published whereas his Advent meditations along with selected letters from prison and his prison reflections on the future of humankind, the Church, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Holy Spirit have been translated into English. The German is of rough quality; perhaps this is due to the fact that Delp’s reflection on the devotion is his first attempt at a sustained reflection while being handcuffed in a cold prison. I have made a free translation.
be a more accurate translation) from the kitsch that has invaded the devotion. The principal themes of Delp’s meditations on this devotion are the recognition of humankind’s brokenness; God’s initiative to save humanity; prayer as the dialogical event wherein one encounters the rescuing love of God in Jesus Christ; and the encounter with Christ that re-creates the human person as a disciple. The thesis will explore in greater details the theology of Delp’s two meditations on the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the next chapter.

In a 22 November 1944 letter to Marianne Hapig and Marianne Pünder composed during the period when he was writing on the devotion to the Sacred Heart, Delp acknowledges that commitment to Christ (saying “yes” to Him) is not an easy task. Following Christ does not take away the difficulties of life but allows individuals to realize they are not alone in the travails of the world. He writes to them,

> God has taken me at my word and has placed me in the most extreme position possible. Regardless of anything, I have to say “Yes” a thousand times to him. That is sometimes a great strain on the heart, even from a purely physical point of view. For myself personally, I see the situation as an intensive education in faith that God is giving me. The whole manner in which everything came about; the determination with which he knocked all the trumps out of my hand and let my self-assurance fall to pieces. I’m trying hard and I discover ever new sides to God; the world is full of God; God comes even in misery and there is encounter, the need for discernment, and also comfort and blessing … The experience that a piece of bread can be a great grace is a new one for me. But, above all, the realization that there are people nearby who care for me and are mindful of me is often a great consolation. Since Sanctissimum [the Blessed Sacrament] has been here, the world has become more pleasant again, and so I want to abandon myself to God’s freedom and God’s goodness and take pains not to refuse him in anyway. And yet remain confident that he will bring us across the sea without allowing us to drown.

---

348 Bleistein, 339.
349 Coady, 95.
Delp’s prison letter communicates that Christian conversion is ultimately the turning around of the person’s entire being; it is not an attempt to achieve some superficial mental or physical improvement by an effort of the will or to overcome some fault or vice. Conversion is a gift from God and involves an encounter in prayer with Christ. Relationship with Christ “is the first principle. From [this relationship] flows one’s desires and fear, one’s joys and sorrows, and one’s decisions and deeds.”

The transformation of Delp was characterized by his entering into a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer.

The Christic transformation of Delp as experienced in prayer can be explored using Lonergan’s 1963 essay “The Mediation of Christ in Prayer.” The essay concerns the interpersonal communication of religious meaning. Lonergan first develops a general notion of mediation and then considers the mediation of Christ in prayer as an instance of mutual self-mediation. Self-consciousness offers a stage for self-mediation. He places the term “self-consciousness” on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision-making, and action. Human persons grow in awareness that they are called to act responsibly. This development reaches its goal in the appropriation of oneself as a subject, that is, in the decision to be an autonomous and authentic doer. Lonergan, however, is not arguing for a solipsistic existence. He clarifies his case with a contrasting description of someone who is not an autonomous and authentic person. He describes such a human being as a drifter:

350 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 105.
352 Mutual mediation takes place between parts of a whole or between the various functions of a compound.
It is the existential moment that the drifter never confronts. He thinks as everybody thinks, he says what everybody says, he does what everybody does, and so do they. The mass of inauthentic humanity lacks the courage to take the risk of thinking things out for themselves—they might very well be wrong if they did. It lacks the resoluteness that decides and the fidelity that stands by its decisions.  

Lonergan describes the maturation of a human being from a drifter to that of an autonomous subject to that of a subject who gives him- or herself to another: “There arises the question of finding out for oneself what one is making of oneself, of deciding for oneself what one is to be, and of living in fidelity to one’s decisions. Such existential commitment is a disposal of oneself.”

Here, it is clear that the moment of great loyalty, commitment, and giving of oneself occurs not in an individualistic existence, but within and as part of the human community. He provides three examples:

Again this disposal of oneself occurs within community, and particularly in the three fundamental communities: in the mutual self-commitment of marriage, in the overarching commitment to the state, and in the eschatological commitment to the church, the body of Christ, the New Law which is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Next, Lonergan combines the notions of mutual mediation and self-mediation to yield the notion of mutual self-mediation. Mutual self-mediation is applied to the interpersonal reality that is occasioned by an encounter. We are radically opened to the influence of others, and we exert a reciprocal influence on them.

Lonergan then applies the concept of mediation to the mediation of Christ in prayer. The mediation of Christ in prayer involves both objective and subjective mediations of Christ. He writes, “The example of Christ in his life, in his suffering and death, is set before us through all

---

355 Ibid.
356 Ibid., 172.
357 Ibid., 174.
our religious teaching; and the work of Christ—in his redemption, in his sacrifice, in his satisfaction, and in the church that carries on his work—is all before us.”\(^{358}\) There is another approach, which entails seeing Christ as immediate and mediator. Lonergan points out that, *de facto*, a Christian may be a temple of the Holy Spirit, may be living the “life” of Christ spoken in the Gospel of John without this having a deep effect on their conscious living. Nevertheless, a movement from this dormant existence of the life of grace to a more conscious discipleship is needed. In this case, what is immediate in a person may be mediated to him through his acts. Such a mediation through one’s acts is not a “study or analysis” of oneself. It is a living, a developing, a growing in which one element is added to another until a new whole emerges.

Delp’s first Advent meditation is titled the “People of Advent.” His words are quite sobering, yet they do not fall prey to bitterness or despair despite his trying circumstances. Faced with humiliation, privation, pain, and inescapable death, he encountered a deep and fulfilling Divine love that prepared him for martyrdom. He writes,

> It would be impossible to endure the horror of these times—like the horror of life itself, could we only see it clearly enough—if there were not this other knowledge which constantly buoys us up and gives us strength: the knowledge of the promises that have been given and fulfilled.\(^{359}\)

Such knowledge is not abstract, but rather a lived experience that offers consolation that allows him to encourage people not to fall prey to desolation: “Advent, even when things are going wrong, is a period from which a message can be drawn.”\(^{360}\) With these words, Delp invites him-

---

\(^{358}\) Ibid., 177.


\(^{360}\) Ibid.
self and others to see and hear God’s love even in the midst of the horrors of war. This entails patience because love can enter our shabby rooms and hearts in quiet and subtle ways.\(^{361}\)

Delp continues the theme of hope in his meditation on the First Sunday of Advent, when he writes that:

\[
\text{It is God’s alliance with man, his being on our side, ranging himself with us, that corrects this state of meaningless futility. It is necessary to be conscious of God’s decision to enlarge the boundaries of his own supreme existence by condescending to share ours for the overcoming of sin. It follows that life, fundamentally, is a continuous Advent; hunger and thirst and awareness of lack involve movement toward fulfillment.}^{362}\]

In this reflection, Delp reminds himself and his audience that one cannot find fulfillment amid a fragmented world without the Incarnation. He writes, “Life is both powerless and futile within its own range of existence and also as a consequence of sin.”\(^{363}\) God’s love enables Delp to see whom he is meant to be and liberates him from any Nazi distortions of the human person and attempts to dehumanize him. He writes, “God helps us to find ourselves. Recognizing the truth of existence and loosening the stranglehold of this error are not matters that can be postponed to suit our convenience. They call for immediate action because untruth is both dangerous and destructive.”\(^{364}\) Here, we see in Delp’s Advent meditations that religious conversion sublates intellectual and moral conversions. His religious conversion holds as part of its meaning the fruits of the two former conversions. Receiving and falling in love with God in an unrestricted fashion involves a twofold commitment to unmasking falsehoods and confronting injustice in the world.

\(^{361}\) Ibid.
\(^{362}\) Ibid., 22.
\(^{363}\) Ibid.
\(^{364}\) Ibid., 23.
For the second Sunday in Advent, Delp continues to develop the theme of encountering the divine in the midst of darkness. He reflects,

Moments of grace, both historical and personal, are invariably linked with an awakening and restoration of genuine order and truth. That, too, is part of the meaning of Advent. Not merely a promise, but conversion, change…God is always the one who approaches…not just occasionally, but all the time, and he comes for our healing and salvation.365

For Delp, the healing and liberation that God offers does not relieve Christians of responsibility and commitment to the world.366 God’s liberation of human persons serves the purpose of deepening Christian discipleship in the world. The starting point of salvation is the way of the Saviour.367 Thus, he writes,

The keynote of this Sunday is the decision, the deliberate choice of salvation in Christ. The decision regarding one’s duty as a Christian; our salvation depends much upon our leading a Christian life which cannot be separated from the personal obligation to the figure and mission of Christ. The decision to let the grace of God work with us, that God may dissolve our opposition and render us worthy to receive him and to execute his mission.368

For the reflection on the third Sunday of Advent, Delp relates true fulfillment or happiness to recognizing and accepting the Lord in one’s life and doing His will. The conditions for fulfillment are grounded first in man’s inner attitude and steadfastness towards God, “which enable him, even in the most trying circumstances, to form at least a notion of what life is all about.”369 Without the divine, according to Delp, the human being is anchorless and vulnerable to the storms and crises of the world: “A person who does not believe in God has no defences

365 Ibid., 25.
366 Ibid.
367 Ibid.
369 Ibid., 29.
against trying circumstances and is delivered up, bound and disarmed.\textsuperscript{370} When human beings return to God, listen to his inner voice, consciously make contact with Him and surrender to him, they will discover that they are living God’s life within themselves, in their very heart’s core, proving the truth of the words of great and intuitive men like Eckhart, St. Augustine, and the rest. They will arrive at a state of perception in which they realize that the Supreme Being actually resides in them. They will find themselves and regain faith in their own dignity, their mission and their purpose in life precisely to the extent that they grasp the idea of their own life flowing forth from within the mystery of God. In this realization any disasters that may threaten and all despairing moods are overcome, completely disarmed from within. Evil is unmasked and deprived of all its seeming power.\textsuperscript{371}

For Delp, the religious conversion puts his life on a new basis. He experiences an increase in peace, joy, and attentiveness to God in prayer and a greater self-surrender to and love of God. It is important to note that before Delp’s meditation on Christmas, he references the thirteenth and fourteenth-century mystic, Meister Eckhart, and his spiritual theology of the birth of Christ in the human soul:

\begin{quote}
The life of God is lived within us, within the deepest centre of our being. Man becomes truly himself precisely at the point where he recognizes that the highest and brightest Being dwells within him. Moreover, he will rediscover himself and his own identity, as well as his faith in his own individual value, mission, and life options, to the degree that he comprehends human life as streaming forth out of the mystery of God. Then all that is negative and threatening is surmounted, its futility is exposed from within and simultaneously disempowered.\textsuperscript{372}
\end{quote}

Thus, the religiously converted Christian is a person who can say, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Nonetheless, since the love of Christ is fruitful, it overflows into the love of all those whom God loves. Christianity is not an individualistic religion.

\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
In prison, Delp became conscious of a “transformation” taking place in him—a change that included his Kreisau Circle collaborators. Before their imprisonment, the Christian members of the Kreisau Circle collaborated as Catholics and Protestants. During their internment, as they awaited their trial, sentencing, and potential death, they began to worship and pray as brothers in Christ. The collaboration that had begun during the Kreisau Circle’s clandestine meetings was now deepened into a spiritual union, made all the more intense by their furtive communication. Through whispers, they shared one another’s prayer and thoughts. Besides Mass, Delp introduced his Protestant colleagues to one of his favourite Catholic devotions—the Sacred Heart—and led them in novenas.

Thus, Delp’s imprisonment was not an occasion for his first religious conversion, but rather a radical deepening of God’s love, which was always a part of him, especially since his tertianship. The “birth of Christ” in him during his imprisonment is the radical deepening of intimacy with God. This growth took place through the communication of Christ to Delp in prayer and in his living. For Delp, friendship with Christ in prayer can “bring forth a new human being” even in imprisonment. Lonergan helps us to understand what such growth involves. Lonergan writes, “Growth is not only mediation of the subject by his acts. As always, the acts have an object, and in that object the focal point is Christ.” He argues that there are supernatural realities that do not pertain to our nature and that result from the communication to us of

---

373 Coady, 103.
374 Ibid., 107.
Christ’s life. Referring to vertical finality and obediential potency, created persons can receive God’s self-communication because humankind exists in a hierarchic universe and is ordained to the plans devised by God. Furthermore, human beings are temples of the Holy Spirit; we do not belong to ourselves, but to Christ. The communication of Christ’s life “is our reality, the higher part of our reality. It is something in us that is immediate and becomes mediated by the life of prayer.” Such a communication is not immediate in the sense in which our bodies are direct to us; they are ours by nature. Rather, it is in us essentially as a gift. This gift is not in the domain of the private interior reality; instead, the communication of Christ occupies our concrete reality. Through the mediation of prayer, the communication of Christ can proceed from a sort of vegetative living to a responsive living. Such living is not tantamount to thinking about Christ (or Christ’s communication) all the time, but rather “is a living, a developing, a growing, in which one element is gradually added on to another and a whole new self emerges.”

Through the process of prayer, Delp came to know Christ on an intimate level. Close friendship with Christ, as with other persons, requires an openness to change or to be converted. Delp’s prison meditations and letters reveal a man matured by his friendship with Christ. The early months of imprisonment appeared to be an occasion for a profound surrender of self. Tegel Prison was an opportunity to encounter God in Christ not in some supra-sensible oasis kept free from a broken world, but rather in the wreck of human existence. In the same letter he writes:

\[\text{Ibid., 178.} \]
\[\text{Ibid.} \]
\[\text{Ibid., 179.} \]
\[\text{Ibid.} \]
Mass in the evening was full of grace. . . I didn’t sleep much last night. For a long time, I sat before the tabernacle and just kept praying the Suscipe.  

It is important to note that the Suscipe is found at the end of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The one praying the Suscipe has matured and come to understand whose power is truly undergirding him. The subject of most of the verbs is God, by whose power alone one can hope to do great things for God’s creation. In alluding to the Suscipe at this point in his life, Delp speaks of the unpredictable ways in which God is loving him. He recognizes in himself a reawakening to the never-ending presence and power of God in Christ. He sensed the nearness of the Kingdom of God, despite his situation. In a letter to Luise Oestreicher, dated 15 December 1944, Delp writes the following:

Tonight I read through a large part of the Gospel at one go. One never finishes reading this book. The urgency, uniqueness and victorious qualities of God’s character always find a new way to touch and wake up the soul to enlightenment, belief, and discipleship. And the call to faith and trust is still there on each page. Tonight was truly beautiful.

The disorientation that Delp experienced was an occasion for him to rediscover the surprising nearness of God’s presence. He became a more complete “I” in his encounter with Christ.

Though God takes the initiative in rescuing humanity, the divine action does not impose itself on people. There is always freedom to respond affirmatively or negatively to God’s offer of friendship.

381 “Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have to possess. You have given all to me. To you Lord, I return it. All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is sufficient for me.”
382 Coady, 115.
384 Ibid.
385 Coady, 117.
Lonergan argues that conversion can entail a continuity with an appropriated past and that mutual-self-mediation includes not just the interpersonal encounter, but also involves the societal encounter. Thus, religious conversion as something new does not involve a denial or rejection of the old necessarily and is not restricted to the relationship between a human individual and God. The change in Delp is also a deepening of his relationship with the other imprisoned members of the Kreisau Circle and the heightening of his love for them. Delp’s encounter with a rescuing and re-creating God who meets humanity in its brokenness and alienation, suggests that Christian mysticism is ultimately not focused on personal experiences but on one’s friendship with Christ through the gift of self to neighbour. Thus, Christian spiritual growth has a communal expression.

The collaboration that had begun during the clandestine meetings of the Kreisau Circle deepened into a conscious life with Christ. A transformed group of men emerged from the depths of Tegel Prison. Through whispers, Delp and friends shared their prayers or meditations on particular Bible passages. They looked to the parable of the wheat seed in John 12: 24 (unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit) as an interpretation of their impending death. In a letter to his brother Jesuits at the end of December, Delp referred to this group in prison as “this praying Una Sancta in chains.”

---

386 Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus dem Gefängnis, 4:60.
The “praying Una Sancta in chains” points towards a new mission for Christians. Delp wrote the following in a Christmas letter after he received a small Christmas gift from a fellow Protestant prisoner:

This was a beautiful Christmas gift. And if we are outside again, we should show that more with it was meant. . . History will have to carry further the burden and inheritance of the divided churches. The division should never again become a scandal to Christ. I believe so little in utopian ideas, but Christ is nevertheless undivided, and where there is undivided love, we are led to him. . . The Lord dedicates us to a new mission.\textsuperscript{387}

The word “Christ” for Delp stands above denominational differences. Both Delp and Moltke learned this in the Kreisau Circle, particularly during their time in prison. For Delp, as for Moltke, engaging in communal prayer became a transformative event. The encounter with Christ in prayer inaugurated a new way of being human and the fulfillment of his identity in relation to other members of the Kreisau Circle.

For Lonergan, such transformation or conversion is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). Being-in-love-with-God is an unrestricted conformity to truth, and “expresses itself in actions, not in ideas, because love transforms us and becomes a new, powerful, motivating center for our behavior.”\textsuperscript{388} Religious conversion, as a result of Christian prayer, is a radical development in personal and communal horizons. Despite the crises of imprisonment, trial before a hostile court, and looming death, prayer changed Delp’s perceptions and feelings. The Spirit\textsuperscript{389} engaged Delp in a movement from despair to a life of plenitude, from alienated existence to ecumenical existence – a “Praying Una Sancta.” This con-

\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 4:76.
\textsuperscript{389} The facilitation of the Holy Spirit on Delp’s discernment and witness will be explored in the fourth chapter.
stituted an existence “in Christ Jesus.” When God’s gift of love floods the human being’s heart, he is in a dynamic state of being in love. The human being “in Christ Jesus” does not see the world in a calculating fashion, to identify and garner advantages. As a result of being moved by God’s love, the human being can give him- or herself over to God and others. The human person possesses the obediential potency to receive the breaking in of God’s love. The effect of this breaking in of God’s love on Delp was radical. Confronted with humiliation, privation, and inescapable death, Delp encountered a friendship that was the source of his inner freedom during his months in prison. The surrender of self to God is what occurs when the love of God encounters the human being.

2.5.2 Delp’s Final Vows and the Kreisau Circle on Trial as the Law of the Cross

The account of Delp’s Final Vows and trial tells us that one of the fruits of prayer is a closer identification with the Cross. Firstly, it is due to the work of Marianne Hapig and Marianne Pünder that Delp’s prison meditations survived. They smuggled out his meditations, as well as his letters, in his laundry. Furthermore, they passed valuable information to him in like manner. One of these communications, dated 8 December 1944, gave Delp the news that he would be able to pronounce his final vows as a Jesuit. About an hour after Delp received this news, Franz Tattenbach, SJ arrived and gave the appearance to the prison guard that the meeting was informal. He showed the prison guard the vow formula, which was in Latin, to be signed by Delp.

---

390 Bleistein, 332–33.
Tattenbach told the guard that the matter was wholly internal to the Society of Jesus. The guard permitted Delp to read and sign it, and Tattenbach gave Delp the vow formula. Delp silently read it and immediately sank back in his chair. Quickly, Tattenbach encouraged Delp to read it aloud and sign it in order to validate the ceremony. Delp sat up, managed to read it to Tattenbach in a moving, broken voice. Tattenbach, concerned that Delp’s emotions would attract attention from the guard, immediately took the signed vows, said farewell, and departed. The final vows had deep meaning for Delp. They were a firm rejection of the efforts of the Gestapo to influence him to leave the Society of Jesus. In a letter written to Tattenbach on 9 December 1944, Delp wrote:

I would like the [vow formula document] kept safe from the bombs. It would be too bad for all concerned if it got lost. I was supposed to write a letter that I am out. This response would be inflammatory [to the Gestapo].

Delp regarded his pronouncement of final vows as meaning that, no matter what happened to him, he had given his life over into the hands of God, which I argue is a commitment to the Cross.

The Law of the Cross, for this thesis, is a particular insight into religious conversion. Recall that Lonergan’s understanding of world process is both emergent and upward directed. The lower levels of created existence are not annihilated, but rather sublated by the higher. Thus, in human persons, the chemical, biological, and psychological levels are raised up, enriched, and

---

391 Ibid., 333.
392 Ibid.
393 Ibid.
394 Ich sollte einen Brief schreiben, daß ich ex. According to Roman Bleistein, the phrase “Daß ich ex” suggests that Delp was advised to quit the Jesuit Order in order to save his life. (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus dem Gefängnis, 41, note 66).
395 Bleistein, 334.
integrated by the overarching levels of reason and will. Vertical finality denotes an emergent, upward-directed drive that provides lower-beings the capacity to set the probability for the emergence of higher beings. Correspondingly, the higher levels are relatively supernatural to the lower ones, i.e. animal life is relatively supernatural in relation to plant life. By vertical finality there is an upward-directed dynamism of lower beings to higher beings. Human beings have the obediential potency to receive the free and loving self-communication of God. God’s love does not destroy the human person’s upwardly-directed movement to understand, judge, and choose, but rather fulfills that movement with grace. For Lonergan, God’s love is an integral part of the world process.

We now take up Lonergan’s understanding of God’s part of the world process in the context of the evils in the world. What is the divine solution to the problem of evil? For Lonergan, the Law of the Cross states that divine wisdom will from all eternity not do away with evil through power, but through the transformation of evil into a greater good. In particular, the Son of God became human because divine wisdom had willed to convert evil into a supreme good by the Law of the Cross. This law expresses how God’s sovereignty is established in sinful humanity by Christ for the sake of restored order in the world and a more intimate relationship with God. Accordingly, the term “law” does not convey a necessary relationship, but a fittingness.  


397 The word “fittingness” comes from the Latin “conveniens” which implies a harmonious or ordered beauty. Aquinas uses the term in order to show how the different facets of Christian revelation make coherence sense, especially from an aesthetic perspective.
To God's wisdom, it was fitting that fallen nature be restored to participation in divine glory through the Law of the Cross. Redemption works by recognizing evils and, by God’s grace and good will, transforming them into goods. For Christians, the prime example of this process “is the death of Christ: death as such is a punishment for sin, but in Christ death has been made the means of salvation” for humankind.398 According to Lonergan, the transformation effected by the Law of the Cross involves three steps.399 Each of these includes its own movement: firstly, sin issues in the consequent evil of penalty or moral evil; secondly, the evil of penalty or punishment is voluntarily transformed into good; thirdly, God the Father blesses this transformation with another good. Christ freely accepted the evils of His passion and death and transformed them into a good, whereupon the Father raised Him from the dead.400 It certainly was not God’s will that Christ be unjustly tried, convicted, punished and executed—all of this is the evil of sin. But Christ understood that fidelity to his God-given mission required him to suffer this evil rather than to try to escape it or to respond in kind, and the fidelity, love and courage that enabled him to endure it is the great gift that God inspired and enabled in him, the full price he himself was willing to pay because of sin and for the sake of sinners. The reign of sin and death was absorbed by God’s love and forgiveness, and an evil was transformed into a transcendent good, an execution became a self-sacrifice.

Here, love is the fundamental concept behind the fittingness of the Cross. Lonergan connects love to several classic definitions of friendship. He refers to Aristotle’s understanding of the friend as “another self,” such that the good things one wishes for oneself one also wishes for

399 Ibid.
400 Ibid.
one’s friends." He also refers to St. Augustine’s description of the friend as “half of my soul.”

St. Thomas Aquinas understood friendship to be a relationship of mutual intimacy. Thus, the Son became human, like us, and sacrificed Himself out of love for us. Lonergan writes, “It is by reason of this likeness and this love that we carry our cross, not alone, not left to ourselves, but associated with Christ, conformed to Christ, united with Christ.”

In the event of the Cross, Jesus Christ expresses the form love takes in a sinful world. In “The Mediation of Christ in Prayer” Lonergan explains this insight: “Christ chose and decided to perfect himself in the manner in which He did because of us. We think of the way of the cross as the Cross of Christ. But primarily the way of the cross is the way in which fallen nature acquires its perfection.” Particularly, the way of the cross embodies charity as part of God’s solution to an evil world. In that same essay, Lonergan emphasizes that prayer is not simply about becoming oneself in relation to Christ, but that Christ is mediating himself to us and within us:

There is a similar process in the becoming of Christ as man: and in that case he was becoming himself with reference to us. In both cases the fundamental theorem, as it were is transforming evil into good, absorbing the evil of the world by putting up with it acts as a blotter, transforms the situation, and creates the situation in which the good flourishes.

In other words, for Lonergan, believers can appreciate the gravity of Christ’s love for humankind by becoming a human being, entering the human condition, and offering Himself to us out of love, and by the fact that believers can be conformed to, co-associate, and be united with His cross by bearing their own crosses.

---

401 Ibid., 166.
402 Ibid., 167.
403 Ibid.
404 Ibid., 168.
406 Ibid.
For Lonergan, the Law of the Cross is found in Jesus as an individual person who suffered and died, and, as a result, transformed the evil of suffering and death. Furthermore, the Law of the Cross is also found in Christ as the Last Adam, the Head of the Body, the Church. As such, human beings bear the social, as well as the individual costs of sin, and in accepting the costs, they transform them into the occasion of greater virtue in Christ. As St. Paul said we are not to be overcome by evil, but we are to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). But the one and the same Law of the Cross is observed differently in Christ and in his members. The law is present in Christ as the principle of redemption; Jesus is the source of eternal life for all those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

Hence the law of the cross is instilled into us by both precept and example in its full universality, so that everything that is evil in matters concerning the human will is held to be punishment for sin, and that all should take up their cross daily (Matt. 16:24). The transformation of death into life was not only for Christ’s sake, but also for ours. For Lonergan, what took place in Christ becomes a law for His members, and His members include the men and women who are to be conformed to the image of the Son.

Delp’s witness testifies that the character of being rescued by the love of Christ is not a flight from the world into God, but a drawing of the human creature by the outpouring of divine love and becoming a channel of that love in the world. For Lonergan, an individual or civilization in decline,

Cannot be argued out of its destructive ways, for argument has a theoretical major premise, theoretical premises are asked to conform to matters of fact, and the facts of situation

\(^{407}\) Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good. (NAB)
\(^{408}\) Lonergan, “Thesis 3,” 140.
\(^{409}\) Ibid., 154.
produced by decline more and more are the absurdities that proceed from inattention, oversight, and unreasonableness and irresponsibility.\textsuperscript{410}

In a situation of evil, as Delp faced, the solution is not more reasons or even more human willing, but to witness love of God with one’s entire life. At the end of his imprisonment and prior to his trial and execution, Delp’s embodies such witness to love of God and fellow human beings by pronouncing Final Vows. Such commitment takes the form of the Cross. From the beginning of the rise of Nazism, Delp knew that his Jesuit identity and ministry would get him in trouble with the Nazis. His pronouncement of Final Vows deepens and underscores his commitment to his Christian and Jesuit identity, when he was put on trial.

The importance of Delp’s Christian and Jesuit identity came to light in the trial of the remaining captive Kreisau members, which took place between 9 and 11 January.\textsuperscript{411} The Kreisau Circle members, who had been in constant but furtive contact with one another while in prison, had coordinated their defence. The common cause of the members was that they had not taken part in any direct activity against the National Socialist government but had rather been discussing constitutional possibilities. They were to be tried by the People’s Court, (\textit{Volksgerichtshof}), established in April of 1934.\textsuperscript{412} According to the Court, “The case against the accused was that

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{410} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 55.
\textsuperscript{411} From 9 January to 11 January 1945, the People’s Reich Court tried and sentenced to death Helmuth James von Moltke, Alfred Delp, Eugen Gerstenmaier, Josef Ernst Fugger, Theodor Steltzer, Franz Sperr, and Franz Reisert.\textsuperscript{412} The People’s Court was an initiative of Adolf Hitler, who was dissatisfied with the time the German Supreme Court took to prosecute and sentence Marinus van der Lubbe to death for supposedly torching the Reichstag. The judicial proceedings lasted more than nine months, culminating in van der Lubbe’s execution on 10 January 1939. The origin of the People’s Court is to be found in Hitler’s \textit{Mein Kampf}. The new court took over from the Supreme Court jurisdiction for offences against Nazi Germany and quickly made its presence felt. In 1939, the vice president of the court, Karl Engert, insisted that the judges be Nazi members first and judges second, and the senior prosecutor argued that the sole aim of the People’s Court was not to dispense impartial justice “but to annihilate the enemies of National Socialism.” As a consequence, any hopes for the separation of powers in the National Socialist state were extinguished. Individual persons lost their juridical rights; all that mattered at this point was an ideology. The new
‘they had together undertaken to change the constitution of the Reich by force, and to deprive the Führer of his constitutional power and thereby, at the same time, to give assistance at home to the enemy power during a war against the Reich.”

The People’s Court represented the evil of National Socialism that had corrupted the German legal system that was to be overcome with the goodness of the Christian testimony of the members of the Kreisau Circle. Overall, the People’s Court offered the National Socialist regime nearly unlimited scope for the persecution and liquidation of any form of opposition.

The presiding judge for the trial was Roland Freisler, known as “Red Roland” because of his tendency to work himself into a state of rage. During trials targeting Nazi resisters, Freisler would shriek so loudly that sound engineers told him he was damaging the microphones. As presiding judge, Freisler ensured that all defendants would appear in an undignified state. The defendants would receive brutal treatment at the hands of the Gestapo before the trial. They were poorly fed and had to hold up their pants because their belts and suspenders had been confiscated. Freisler reduced all the other participants in the trial to mere extras: the accused, their court-appointed defense attorneys, the prosecutors, and even his colleagues on the panel. As in the case of Alfred Delp and Helmuth James von Moltke, he berated, vilified, and mocked the conspirators. Freisler characterized many of the accused as “idiots” and “half-wits” and he noted that

court’s status and influence increased. It began to assume responsibilities for a whole series of assignments beyond its original jurisdiction over cases of treason and high treason. These new responsibilities included prosecution of persons who failed to report cases of treason and high treason as well as cases of economic sabotage, evading military service, being absent from the military without leave, undermining morale, and engaging in espionage. (Ingo Müller, Hitler’s Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991], 140-43).

Roon, German Resistance to Hitler, 278.

Bleistein, 374.

Ibid.

Müller, Hitler’s Justice, 150.
he was conscious of his prejudices: “I am fully aware of the fact that I administer justice in a one-sided way, but I do this for a political purpose. I have to prevent with all the strength at my disposal, a repetition of the events of 1918.”\(^{417}\)

Freisler believed that every death sentence he meted out would contribute to National Socialism’s survival. Freisler noted, “It is not a matter of dispensing justice but of destroying the opponents of National Socialism.”\(^{418}\) The lives and dignity of the defendants did not matter to him. A woman who attended the trial of the Kreisau members recalls, “Roland Freisler’s defendants are the playthings of his intellect. He juggles with people’s lives and provides the unexpected twist, the lighting and colour he needs in order to turn something unimportant into an impressive piece of theatre, to present the tragedy that he has already planned.”\(^{419}\) It would be inappropriate, however, to designate Freisler as the cause of state-sponsored terror. Guido Knopp writes: “The language of the judiciary, which did not permit any true justice but simply gave expression to a purely arbitrary will to destroy, did not find exclusive justification in the demonic nature of [Roland Freisler].”\(^{420}\) For Knopp, the figure of Freisler did not just represent the blind fury of an individual, he represented the language of a tyrannical regime and its judicial branch.

Alfred Delp was the first defendant called to the stand. Freisler began the questioning in a normal tone of voice that may have given the defendant the impression that he would receive a

\(^{417}\) The ‘events of 1918’ refers to a theory that the German military was not defeated during the Great War, but rather, Jewish politicians and Marxists undermined the German war effort. Many ordinary Germans were persuaded this theory to be true, because the German army was still occupying French territory, and the Russian army had conceded. (Guido Knopp, *Hitler’s Hitmen* [Stroud, Eng.: Sutton, 2006], 233).

\(^{418}\) Ibid., 236.

\(^{419}\) Ibid., 250.

\(^{420}\) Ibid., 237.
fair trial.\textsuperscript{421} Freisler asked how Delp had come to know Moltke and the others. What did he discuss with them? What did he know of the other meetings held by the Kreisau members? What was discussed at the Kreisau meetings? Why did the Kreisau meetings, concerned with a future German society, not include a single National Socialist representative? Delp stood calmly and with composure, responded to each question in a low, even tone. Freisler’s voice gradually began to rise as he pushed further: What were the aims of such meetings? What future German society were you discussing—one that would exist after the defeat of the Nazis? “Defeatism!” Freisler shouted. He screamed that such talk amounted to treason and launched into a tirade against Delp:

You miserable creep, you clerical nobody—who dares to want the life of our beloved Fuhrer taken … a rat—that should be stamped on and crushed. Now tell us, what brought you as a priest to abandon the pulpit and get mixed up in German politics with a subversive like Count Moltke and a troublemaker like the Protestant Gerstenmaier? Come on, answer."\textsuperscript{422}

Delp calmly and firmly responded with the following:

I can preach forever, and with whatever skill I have I can work with people and keep setting them straight. But as long as people have to live in a way that is inhuman and lacking in dignity, that is as long as the average person will succumb to circumstances and will neither pray nor think. A fundamental change in the conditions of life is needed.\textsuperscript{423}

In the case of his trial, Delp understood that fidelity to his God-given mission required him to suffer the evil of being imprisoned and mocked. The Nazis’ reign of sin and oppression were absorbed by Delp’s courageous fidelity to his Christian and Jesuit identity.

The following day, it was Moltke’s turn to face Freisler’s interrogation and continued assault on the Christian faith and the Jesuits. The initial questions were calm. Then, in expected

\textsuperscript{421} Coady, 161.
\textsuperscript{422} Bleistein, 377-78.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., 378.
fashion, Freisler began to raise his voice when broaching the issues related to Moltke’s anticipation of a German defeat and his plan for a new German society. Freisler exploded:

All Adolf Hitler’s officials set about their work on the assumption of victory, and that applies just as much in the High Command as anywhere else. I simply won’t listen to that kind of thing—and even were it not the case, it is clearly the duty of every single man for his part to promote confidence in victory.  

Freisler’s final tirade targeted Moltke’s collaboration with Delp and the Society of Jesus:

And who was present [at these meetings]? A Jesuit father! Of all people, a Jesuit father! And a Protestant minister, and three others who were later condemned to death for complicity in the 20 July plot! And not a single National Socialist! No, not one! And the provincial head of the Jesuits, you know him, too! He even came to Kreisau once! A provincial of the Jesuits, one of the highest officials of Germany would not touch a Jesuit with a barge-pole! People who have been excluded from military service because of their attitude! If I know there’s a Provincial of the Jesuits in a town, it is almost enough to keep me out of town altogether! And the other reverend gentleman! What was he after there? Such people should confine their attentions to the hereafter, and leave us here in peace! And you went visiting bishops! Looking for something you lost I suppose! Where did you get your orders from? You get your orders from the Fuhrer and the National Socialist Party. That goes for you as much as any other German!”

Moltke’s final letter to his wife Freya highlights two important points. The first was that the members of the Kreisau Circle were not being condemned for something they were accused of (participating in the assassination attempt against Hitler), but rather for having considered an alternative to Nazi Germany. Moltke write:

The beauty of the judgment on these lines is the following: it established that we did not want to use any force; it established that we did not take a single step towards organization, did not talk to a single man about the question of whether he was willing to take any post.
The second point Moltke’s letter highlighted concerned the Christian faith of the Kreisau Circle. Throughout the trial, Freisler insisted that the members of the Kreisau Circle owed Adolf Hitler their loyalty, whereas the accused argued that they had a higher duty of fidelity to God. It was significant, for Moltke, that the members of the Kreisau Circle were being condemned for their Christian convictions. The decisive moment in the trial, according to Moltke’s letter to Freya, was the following utterance of Freisler: “Herr Graf, we National Socialists and Christianity have one thing in common and one only: we demand the whole man.”\textsuperscript{427} Moltke reflected on this statement in his letter:

I don’t know if the others sitting there took it all in, for it was sort of a dialogue—a spiritual one between [Freisler] and myself, for I could not utter many words—in which we two got to know each other through and through. Of the whole gang, Freisler was the only one who recognized me, and of the whole gang he is the only one who knows why he has to kill me. There was nothing about a “complicated man” or “complicated thoughts” or “ideology,” but the “fig leaf is off.” But only for Herr Freisler. We talked as it were in a vacuum. He made not a single joke at my expense, as he had done with Delp and Eugen. No, this was grim earnest: “From whom do you take your orders? From the Beyond or from Adolf Hitler? Who commands your loyalty and your faith?” All rhetorical questions of course. Anyhow, Freisler is the first National Socialist, who has grasped who I am, and the good Muller [Gestapo chief] is a simpleton by comparison.\textsuperscript{428}

Overall, Moltke’s last letter to his wife about the trial shows relief, gratitude, and joy. In this trial, he recognized that Freisler had confessed to the incompatibility between Nazism and Christianity. It was an incompatibility that the regime had always been at pains to conceal or deny, but now the hostility was out in the open:

Was it clear what he said there? Just think how wonderfully God prepared this His unworthy vessel … [H]e endowed me with this socialistic leaning, which freed me as a great landowner from any suspicion of looking after my own interests. Then he humbled me as a great landowner as I have never been humbled before, so that I had to lose all

\textsuperscript{427} Ibid., 409.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid.
pride, so that at last I understand my sinfulness after 38 years, so that I had to learn to beg for forgiveness and to trust in his mercy ... Then he endows me with faith, hope, and love, with a wealth of these that is truly overwhelming. Then he lets me talk with Eugen and Delp and clarify things. And, then he gives to Eugen and Delp, through the hope, the human hope they have, the weakness which makes their case secondary, and thereby removes the denominational factor; and then your husband is chosen, as a Protestant, to be above all attacked and condemned for his friendship with Catholics, and therefore he stands before Freisler not as a Protestant, not as a big landowner, not as a nobleman, not as a Prussian, not as a German—all that was explicitly excluded in the trial... but as a Christian and nothing else.429

After the two-day trial, Delp was sure of his fate. The prosecution had asked for the death sentence. He began to write his farewell letters to family, friends, and brother Jesuits. In a letter addressed to Marianne Hapig and Marianne Pünner, Delp wrote, “The way the trial was carried out has provided my life with its true life-and-death purpose.”430 He believed that the grounds for the charge against him during the trial were informed by four incriminations: thinking about a future for Germany after a possible wartime defeat; desiring to “re-Christianize Germany”; being a Jesuit, which was akin to being an enemy of Germany; and promoting Catholic social teaching as the basis for a future socialism.431

In his testament “After the Verdict” – composed in the days between his sentencing and execution – Delp wrote,

What is God’s purpose in all of this? ... But one thing is gradually becoming clear—I must surrender myself completely. This is seed time, not harvest. God sows the seed and some time or another he will do the reaping. The one thing I must do is to make sure the seed falls on fertile ground. I must arm myself against the pain and depression that sometimes almost defeats me. If this is the way God has chosen—and everything indicates that it is—then I must willingly and without rancor make it my way. May others at some future time find it possible to have a better and happier life because we died in this hour of trial. I ask my friends not to mourn, but to pray for me and help me as long as

429 Ibid., 410.
430 Coady, 181.
I need of help. And to be quite clear in their own minds that I was sacrificed, not conquered.\textsuperscript{432}

In his letter to his Jesuit brethren, he writes that the reason for his condemnation was that he happened to be a Jesuit.\textsuperscript{433} Moreover, in Delp’s final testament and letters, the theme of self-surrender to divine providence as the solution to the evil of Nazism emerges. The following lines from Delp’s testament are particularly poignant: “I must willingly and without rancor make it my way” and “a Jesuit is \textit{a priori} an enemy and betrayer of the Reich.” This statement draws from Delp’s steadfast commitment to his Jesuit identity, particularly his pronouncement of Final Vows a few weeks earlier. His only choice is to stand before a Nazi court, sit with fettered hands awaiting sentencing, and then await execution in a solitary cell. He understands that his very self-identity as a Christian and a Jesuit is the offence for which he is condemned. In light of the Law of the Cross, Delp makes the most radical surrender of self to Christ, acts and testifies through Christ, and associates with Christ, so that he may be assimilated and conformed to Christ’s living and dying. Delp abandons himself to the will of God, so that God can convert the evils into a good through the weakness of the Cross. Such self-surrender witnesses that God not only has the first word in Delp’s life, but also the last word.

\subsection*{2.6 Conclusion}

While Delp was awaiting execution, he wrote two more reflections. The first was on the Lord’s Prayer and the second on the Holy Spirit. In the first consideration, God is recognized as

\textsuperscript{432} Alfred Delp, \textit{The Prison Meditations of Father Delp} (New York: MacMillian Company, 1963), 163-64.

\textsuperscript{433} Ibid., 166.
a bond between him and his friends that not even the Nazis can destroy. Entering into prayerful dialogue and relationship with God enabled Delp to deepen his relationships and conversations with his friends. He writes,

[Praying] the Our Father—and all at once the chasm is spanned. Suddenly we see the truth that in God, through God, we have always possessed the shortest route to reach our neighbor. Man knows himself to be at one with all who pray and believe and love. The common centre, the personal God, who speaks to us, and to whom we speak, makes one a person and the community a genuine whole.434

Further on in the same reflection, Delp reiterates the importance of prayer and its relationship to authentic freedom. He states, “Prayer is our way to freedom, and education in the method of prayer is the most valuable service that can be given to humankind.”435 Delp’s reflection on the Holy Spirit was written in the third week between his death sentence and execution. It is his longest and final meditation. Communication with Christ takes place in the Holy Spirit and shapes and transforms the human person. For Delp, nearing the end of his life, what matters most becomes evident: conversion, surrender to, and prayerful dialogue with God.

After composing these two prison meditations, Delp engaged in writing letters to friends, family, and Jesuit brethren. Delp’s letter written to Jesuit Franz von Tattenbach on 18 January 1945 offers a glimpse of his inner peace:

I’m still alive… An interior strength allows me more and more hope and confidence. As I sit here on call, though, I certainly don’t want to minimize the situation and have convulsions doing it. The time for convulsions is definitely past (in Plötzensee, they’re only physiological and, therefore, don’t count). I’m living in great peace and freedom.436

434 Ibid., 102.
435 Ibid., 110.
436 Coady, 194.
On 23 January 1945, Delp’s friend and companion Moltke was hanged in Plötzensee Prison.

Writing to his wife Freya, Moltke revealed the profound impact Delp had had on him by acknowledging humorously that he was dying “as a martyr for St. Ignatius of Loyola.” Moltke’s line evokes the fruits of moral and religious conversions. As mentioned, moral and religious conversions are not solipsistic happenings, but rather lead to persons collaborating to bring about shared values and a deep-seated solidarity among men and women. In Delp’s last letter to his fellow Jesuits, he wrote:

Dear Brethren,

The actual reason for my condemnation was that I happened to be and chose to remain a Jesuit. There was nothing to show that I had any connection with the attempt on Hitler’s life, so I was acquitted on that count. The rest of the accusations were far less serious and more factual. There was one underlying theme—a Jesuit is a priori an enemy and betrayer of the Reich. So the whole proceedings turned into a sort of comedy developing a theme. It was not justice—it was simply the carrying out of the determination to destroy. May God shield you all … And I will do my best to catch up, on the other side, with all that I have left undone here on earth. Toward noon, I will celebrate Mass once more and then in God’s name take the road under His providence and guidance.

Delp’s last correspondence was a letter to Marianne Hapig and Marianne Pünder written on 30 January 1945; he wrote only, “Pray and have faith.” The letter was written on a prison order form.

On 2 February, the day of the Feast of the Purification, Delp was hanged at Plötzensee Prison. His last words to the chaplain were “in half an hour, I’ll know more than you do.” No official reason was given for the three-week delay in Delp’s execution. On 10 February, Father

437 Moltke and Ruhm von Oppen, Letters to Freya, 404.
438 No exact date is provided. See Delp, The Prison Meditations of Father Delp, 166.
439 Ibid., 206.
440 Bleistein, 408.
Tattenbach, and the secretary of St. Georg’s Parish, Luise Oestreicher, went to Berlin from Munich with the hopes of retrieving Delp’s personal belongings and receiving his ashes. They were able to retrieve his clothes in a suitcase, but there were no ashes to be received. On 15 February 1945, the official notice of Delp’s death was sent to his mother, Maria Delp. It read, “The clergyman Alfred Delp was sentenced to death by the People’s Court of the German Reich. The sentence was carried out on 2 February 1945. The publication of a death notice is forbidden.” Maria Delp kept the suitcase with her son’s clothes under her bed until her death in 1968.

By presenting certain aspects of Delp’s ministry and writings, this chapter revealed Delp as a human being who underwent intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. The intellectual conversion occurred during theological studies, when Delp, as editor of his school’s journal, devoted the journal to producing homilies against the Nazis, highlighting their distortion of the Christian faith. The moral conversion was revealed in Delp’s commitment to assisting Jewish refugees and working with Moltke to plan for a German society based on the values of Catholic Social Teaching. The most profound religious conversion for Delp occurred during his imprisonment. During this period, Delp experienced the love of God and surrendered himself over to Christ. A fruit of his self-surrender to Christ is his friendship with the Kreisau Circle members maturing into a spiritual kinship. During his trial, it became clear that the real reason for his execution was his Christian faith. Freisler made it known that there could be no room for

441 According to Coady, immediately after the Jesuits got word of Delp’s death, Tattenbach went to notify Delp’s mother that her son had been executed. Yet before he could speak, she pleaded with him to take her to Berlin to see her son one last time. Tattenbach could not break her heart, so he left without delivering the sad news. Only on the third attempt was Tattenbach able to muster the courage to tell her of her son’s death.

442 Bleistein, 411.
a Christian in Nazi Germany. National Socialism’s previously concealed hostility to Christianity was openly revealed in the trial.

Peter Steinbach, a contemporary German scholar on the issue of Christian resistance in Nazi Germany, quoting Eberhard Bethge, a friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, identifies five stages of the German resistance against Hitler and National Socialism.\textsuperscript{443} The first stage, mere passive resistance, is followed by stage two’s ideological opposition by individual members or leaders of the Christian churches, such as Martin Niemöller and Clemens August Graf von Galen. The third stage consists of active conspiracies to replace the National Socialist government, represented by the efforts of Graf von Stauffenberg and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The fourth stage involves planning for a post-National Socialist society: members of the Kreisau Circle carried out such work. The fifth stage of the resistance occurred when the Nazi government began to crack down on resisters after Stauffenberg’s botched assassination attempt against Hitler; resistance groups were dismembered, and many of their members were arrested, tortured, and executed. Isolated individuals without the support of institutions or groups carried on the resistance.

I suggest that there was another stage that emerged after the destruction of the resistance groups. My argument does not reject Bethge’s thesis that resistance against National Socialism was left by and large in the hands and minds of isolated individuals, yet a form of communal existence emerged among those in the Kreisau Circle. By praying together the imprisoned members, led by Alfred Delp, were transformed into a more cohesive group of friends and co-witnesses to Jesus Christ: The men of the Kreisau Circle, as evinced by Delp’s writings, defied

the Nazis’ attempts to dehumanize them. Indeed, Delp became profoundly more human, as he was led deeper into intimacy with Christ and the redemptive work of Christ. Alfred Delp became progressively more free in spirit as he surrendered himself to Christ in dialogical prayer. His deepening relationship with Christ enabled him to build a spiritual kinship with the non-Catholic members of the Kreisau Circle and to endure, resist, and testify against National Socialism. Indeed, as a Christian martyr, Alfred Delp showed that martyrdom is, at heart, not a rejection of society but an embrace of people and a rejection of any attempt to dehumanize them.

The following chapters offer a theological analysis of Delp’s writings on his relationship with Christ. His most profound identity was rooted in a deeper unitive relationship with Christ. His imprisonment, trial, and death illuminated the transcendent nature of the human person, emphasizing the telos of all human persons as being a relationship with God and the whole of created reality. Far from being an antisocial creature, the Christian martyr, as exemplified by Delp, testifies to being in love with God and being in a deep-rooted solidarity with fellow human persons. The possibility of Delp’s encounter with Christ is facilitated by the work of the Spirit as experienced through the medium of prayer. In exploring this, Balthasar’s Christology will be helpful. For Balthasar, it is axiomatic that there can be no Christology without Trinitarian theology. An intimate Christological encounter entails Christ interceding with the Father so that the Spirit may be given to persons.

Chapter 3 Devotion to the Heart of Jesus as Spiritual Formation

3.1 Introduction

The first chapter discussed the issues surrounding Christian martyrdom. It demonstrated that certain studies have characterized the martyr as a person lacking in rationality, freedom, or concern for society. Other studies have concluded that the martyr is either a person who embodies the greatest personal freedom or possesses a significant concern for the persecuted and poor members of society. The previous chapter explored Alfred Delp’s life, ministry, and writings, with a particular focus on the events that transformed and prepared him for his martyrdom. The first part of the chapter argued that of Delp’s 1935 anti-Nazi homilies represented an intellectual conversion. Moreover, the chapter argued that Delp’s care for the persecuted and his collaborative and ecumenical work to prepare for a humane postwar German society functioned as elements of a moral conversion. It also interpreted Delp’s imprisonment in the winter of 1944-1945 as an occasion for a religious conversion. It showed that the fruits of Delp’s prayer were an encounter with Jesus Christ that led to an intense commitment to following Christ even unto death. The chapter maintained that his tertianship diary from 1938 revealed such an experience as well. A hallmark of the diary is Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

The aim of Chapter 3 is to explore Delp’s transformative relationship with Christ using his spiritual reflections and meditations, particularly his devotion to the Heart of Jesus, as a critical lens. It examines the connection between the theology of conversion and devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The chapter argues that this devotion, which Delp understands as essential to the Christian life, transforms the hearts of believers and brings forth acts of reparation as a response to humankind’s sins. A converted heart constitutes the human person’s openness to God and the foun-
dation of his acts of reparation. Reparation is the response of self-surrender to and means of participation in the redemptive work of Christ.

It is clear from the previous chapter that Delp’s relationship with God played a significant role in his life, strengthening the bond of friendship between him and the other members of the Kreisau Circle, particularly Helmuth James von Moltke, and preparing them for their eventual trial. Delp experienced a personal relationship with God and that relationship helped to constitute Delp’s identity and prepare him for his martyrdom. Delp understood God’s love for him as a creative, rescuing love that remained faithful unto death. In his prison reflection *The Fate of the Churches*, composed towards the end of his imprisonment, he writes,

We must get back to the ideal of service. By that I mean meeting the man in the street on his own ground, in all circumstances, with a view to helping him master them. That means walking by his side, accompanying him even into the depths of degradation and misery. “Go forth,” our Lord said—not “sit and wait for someone to come to you.”

Delp is acutely aware that Christian praxis has its origins in prayer, because Christian discipleship is a life that depends upon constant listening to God. According to Delp, the Church’s task involves forming men and women who find their fulfillment in doing God’s will:

Fullness; the word had a special attraction for St. Paul. It applies today even more forcibly than it did then. Fulfilled pious men and women—not pious caricatures. People who are genuinely impregnated with the spirit of their calling, people who have prayed with all sincerity: make my heart like thine. . . . Only then will they see God’s requirements with clear eyes even in the darkest hours. Only then will their willing hearts beat with a compassion that sweeps aside as negligible the old stubborn attachment to being “right after all.” Their hearts will beat with one desire—to help and heal in God’s name.

---

446 Ibid., 97-98.
In the original Greek (πλήρωμα, as used in Colossians 2.9), the word *fullness* can refer to persons who are complete or lack nothing. In the passage quoted above, fullness is linked to the phrase “make my heart like thine,” which comes from traditional prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This devotion concerns the Heart of Jesus, which represents God’s deepest love of and desires for His people. Furthermore, as Delp indicates, the request for one’s heart to be made like Christ’s is intimately related to service—healing in God’s name. Prayer is not distinct from Christian praxis; it is the beginning of praxis. Hence, Delp is describing the workings of the love of Christ through prayer. Authentic prayer is not tantamount to thinking about Christ, but rather to living in and with Christ so that a new self emerges. Thereby, the human person’s response to the love of Christ is important. Such a response requires that the human person set aside his “stubborn attachment to be right,” so that he may follow Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). It is here that the connection between the theology of conversion and devotion to the Heart of Jesus becomes important.

Delp articulates this life-transforming and prayerful relationship in a particular Christological manner in the form of devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus pervaded Delp’s prayer during his tertianship and was an important part of his prayer in prison. His writings on the Heart of Jesus appear prominently in four places: his tertianship journal, the first prison meditation, the second prison meditation, and an Advent homily on the

---

447 In the previous chapter, I maintained that religious conversion entails the Divine initiative, awakening a human person with Divine love to a deeper understanding of God, reality, and the self. Such awakening results in a renewed and more profound commitment to God.
Heart of Jesus written during the war.\textsuperscript{448} I suggest that Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus is Christological and Trinitarian in form and helps to prepare him for martyrdom. Delp recognized that devotion to the Heart of Jesus suffers from a kitschy description and that a precise theological presentation is needed to actualize its potential. A genuine devotion to the Heart of Jesus empowers a believer to enter into a profound relationship with Jesus in order to glorify the Father with and in Jesus, facilitated by the Spirit. Furthermore, the Trinitarian setting of the devotion sheds light on the deep meaning of reparation. A theology of reparation involves an act undertaken by one on behalf of another in order to restore harmony between estranged parties.\textsuperscript{449}

The foundational theological understanding of the role of reparation in devotion to the Heart of Jesus is as the atonement, which Christ has made for humanity to the Father in his redemptive sacrifice. Only Jesus could restore the harm done by sin and make the reparation owed to God in justice through a redemptive love.\textsuperscript{450} At the same time, believers become sensitive to the need for reparation. In the devotion, Christ opens his Heart to believers so that they may join him in his redemptive love for the world. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus allows Delp, as this

\textsuperscript{448} It is important to note that Delp was neither a professional theologian nor an academic. His writings on the Heart of Jesus were composed as fruits of his spiritual life.

\textsuperscript{449} The theological idea of reparation was given a wider profile by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), who received visions from the time she was twenty years old. In these visions, Christ instructed her to spread the devotion of His Sacred Heart. She insisted that the redeeming love that issues from the Heart of Jesus grows forth from the human person a reparation in the form of love for this Heart. For St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, this is the most valid response to Christ’s redemptive love. See Josef Stierli, “Devotion to the Sacred Heart from the End of the Patristic Times down to St. Margaret Mary,” in Heart of the Saviour (New York: Herder and Herder, 1958), 59–108.

\textsuperscript{450} The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives a synopsis of this theology: “It is the love ‘to the end’ (Jn. 13:1) that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now ‘the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died’ (2 Cor. 5:14). No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and to offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine Person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all. See Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), #616.
chapter will show, to pray to and worship Christ under the aspect of His redemptive love, and, as a result, to participate in that redemptive love. This joining of the believer’s self to the redemptive work of Christ is not brought about primarily through the human person’s act, but rather through Divine grace, which has its source in Jesus Christ. For Delp, human participation in the redemptive work of Christ requires a contrite and humble heart, which is no longer “stubborn” and does not desire “to be right after all.” Rather, the contrite and humble heart seeks to recognize, understand, and do God’s will. Such a converted heart is the response to the love of Christ’s perfect heart.

As a result of this devotion, Jesus Christ manifests himself to Delp, engendering complete self-surrender yet engaging Delp’s human freedom. Delp shows us that the martyr is one who discovers the fulfillment of his humanity in an encounter with Jesus Christ in prayer and who has been transformed by Christ’s self-giving love. Prayer, for Delp, is a dialogue with God, which entails listening to Christ and being led by the Spirit into a deeper involvement in Christ’s redemptive work. Delp’s witness illustrates that prayer, an action facilitated by the work of the Spirit,\(^{451}\) enables him to live out a self-giving love as encountered and identified in Christ.

This chapter incorporates a dialogue with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology of prayer and his soteriology to illuminate Delp’s spiritual transformation and self-sacrifice. It first discusses Balthasar’s writings on prayer as the medium for Christological and Trinitarian encounter. This theology of prayer then serves as a framework for investigation of Delp’s own recognition of the importance of prayer in his life. More specifically, Balthasar’s writings on prayer are brought

\(^{451}\) The examination of the work of the Holy Spirit in the witness of Alfred Delp will also be discussed in the next chapter.
into dialogue with Delp’s tertianship diary. The chapter argues that Delp’s prison meditations on the Heart of Jesus demonstrate his recognition of a God who has a particular love for humankind in its brokenness. It is in this place of vulnerability that God re-creates human persons. Balthasar’s insight concerning the kenotic love of God in Jesus, laid out in the five biblical soteriological motifs, is then brought into dialogue with Delp’s spiritual reflection on the salvific and re-creating love of Christ. Aidan Nichols notes that for Balthasar, “the kenosis of divine love, not the assumption of human nature, is the primary message of the Incarnation.”

3.2 Theology of Prayer and Standing under God’s Seal

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most salient characteristic of Delp’s prayer during the Spiritual Exercises was devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which he considered central to the Christian life because it enables people to encounter and be transformed by Jesus Christ. Such transformation leads to a deeper involvement in the redemptive work of Christ. For Balthasar, the Christian person’s growth moves from a reception of God’s love to a committed discipleship, and the coextensive life of prayer and discipleship consists in self-surrender to God and, consequently, greater conformity to Christ. This process of transformation of self by God, surrender of self to God, and serving others according to God’s will enables the believer to

453 Victoria Harrison points out that the growth and transformation of the self is lived out in a dramatic existence. See Harrison, The Apologetic Value of Human Holiness (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 85.
experience a life that integrates acts of faith and love. Such integration then allows the believer’s relationship with Christ to come to fruition through a lifelong act of witnessing.\textsuperscript{454}

Balthasar conceives of faith as the response of the whole person to the call of Christ. Furthermore, through a self-surrender to God, the Christian disciple also arrives at a resonance with Christ; the disciple finds his self-fulfillment in being led deeper into the redemptive work of Christ. Traditionally, Christian thought has made a distinction between the intellectual response of the person to God, the affective response of the human being’s spirit to God, and the concomitant sensory consolation. Balthasar, however, stresses the unity of the response;\textsuperscript{455} the integration of the response, which he describes as an “attunement” to God, is one in which the believer has a resonance with the object of faith, Jesus Christ. The unity of the response emerges as a dialogical and interpersonal phenomenon: the whole man comes to his self-fulfillment in the encounter with God. Thus, genuine prayer, for Balthasar, goes beyond “incessant repetition”\textsuperscript{456} and is ultimately

\textit{a conversation between God and the soul. . . . Prayer is a dialogue, not man’s monologue before God. Ultimately, in any case, there is no such thing as solitary speech; speech implies reciprocity, the exchange of thoughts and souls, unity in a common spirit, in a common possession and sharing of the truth. Speech both demands and manifests an I and Thou.}\textsuperscript{457}

Because prayer is a dialogue, it involves a hearing—or more precisely an obediential listening—especially on the part of the human person. In the Christian tradition, God always takes the initiative to convert the hearts of persons:

\textsuperscript{455} Ibid., 243-46.
\textsuperscript{457} Ibid.
All the same, man too must be involved in this first turning toward God through grace; in acknowledging the truth of grace, man must acknowledge that he is in the wrong. In confessing grace (confiteri Domino), man must of necessity go on to confess his guilt (confiteri peccatum). This is all, perhaps, so hidden and so simple that it can scarcely be put into words: "Your light, my darkness! Your sweetness, my bitterness!" But the fact is that mature contemplation can lend a greater depth and permanence even to such a simple awareness.  

For Balthasar, the conversion of one’s whole life is a Divine gift that requires the cooperation of the human person. The love of God incarnate in Jesus shepherds persons to their conversion, forgives them, and transforms their lives by drawing them into the Divine work of redemption. At the same time, God respects the freedom of persons. Prayer brings a person to a profound union with Christ and invites the person on a mission with Christ. Prayer offers the possibility of a transformation of self, enabling a person to enter into a life of service:

It is meant to spur him on to simple gratitude to his divine Saviour, not to dialectical speculation. His life is a service, leitourgia, of the gracious God, lived out in full personal responsibility, but also as part of the entire company of the saints, which gives his service value in God's sight.

In Balthasar’s own meditation on the Heart of Jesus, he reflects that listening to God requires a conversion of hearts and self-surrender to God. For Balthasar, the Heart of Jesus liberates the human person from sin, the prison of his narcissism, because such self-love ultimately destroys the human person. The human person can hide his self-absorption in good works, but not from himself and not from God:

I am a practicing Christian. I am a good Catholic. Sundays I’ve always been in church. I’ve made my Easter duty. I’ve paid my tithes. I’ve given alms. I’ve always said my morning and evening prayers. I have often been to confession and they’ve always been

---

458 Ibid., 125.
459 Ibid., 126.
461 Ibid., 91-92.
valid. I have made the nine First Fridays (which, after all, give me a kind of insurance before God, sanctioned by the Church). I’ve gone to Communion every Sunday. I’ve communicated daily. “I have, I have.” What I’ve done with my religion is raised up walls against God. By my practices I have stopped up my ears to God’s call.\footnote{Ibid., 95.}

From Balthasar’s perspective, a Christian does not become fulfilled and cannot love the world without first listening to God:

He who will not listen first of all to God has nothing to say to the world. He will, like so many priests and laypeople today, be anxious and troubled about many things—to the point of unconsciousness and exhaustion—and will thereby miss the one thing needful; indeed he will tell himself many little lies in order to forget or justify this omission. . . . Yes, indeed, if God is served first, then our entire life in the world can take on the meaning of service of God, then our slave service in the factory of mankind can be an act of free commitment and acceptance, then our constant and unavoidable encounter with what is utterly worldly can be sustained and guided by an encounter with God that accompanies it all the more powerfully, returning to mind everywhere the more emphatically it is established at the origin of our life in faith.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{Who Is a Christian?} trans. Frank Davidson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 84-85.}

Indeed, God takes the initiative in the conversation with the human person, who must open his heart to God. For Balthasar, what makes discipleship possible is the transformation by Christ’s love, the intimacy with Him, and the life of service created in His love.

These theological insights are particularly relevant to Delp’s tertianship experience. Delp had been a Jesuit for twelve years and had been involved in a variety of ministries. He devoted his time and intellectual energy to confronting the Nazis’ distortion of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, in the midst of his “school of the heart” he saw himself as a man with insufficient love, who needed a deeper encounter with the love of Christ. The essential thing for Delp is to truly “hear God’s word and discover from it how to respond to him”\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{Prayer}, 15.} with his entire self.
The significant impact of prayer on Delp and his outlook on the world is evidenced in his diary of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which he undertook as a tertian in the autumn of 1938. Tertianship, the last stage of Jesuit formation, provided an extraordinary period of prayer for the young Jesuit priest. The diary describes his encounter during this period with the person of Jesus Christ. These writings reveal a process of discovery and maturation in Delp’s relationship with God, who does not permit him to be imprisoned within the Nazis’ false construction of the human person. In the first diary entry, dated 8 October 1938, Delp acknowledges that he needs God’s transformative presence in his life:

> God has serious work to do with me, and I have serious work to do with him. He must have more worth in my life. I must always stand under his “impression.” This daily examination [of conscience] is an exercise on which I must work. To pray: to have a personal relationship with God. This must be the end result of the Exercises. I want, therefore, to pray, that I have the joy of God. That my heart feels free and joyful before him and not so much burdened and anxious.  

Delp’s diary suggests that the process of maturation and transformation is not a solipsistic journey. This call to dependence on God becomes increasingly prominent as he approaches his death. The ultimate spiritual and intellectual goal of the Spiritual Exercises is a deep openness to God—

*to stand always under His impression.* Indeed, Delp acknowledges that he has been living as though everything in his life depended on his actions:

> The uncertainty of my life up to now, the timidity and the ignorance come as a consequence, when I put too many things on myself. I have not brought them . . . to the heart of God. If we are in the will of God, that is our great peace and advantage. There

---

Delp understands that human fulfillment is not to be found in self-actualization, but rather in devotion “to the heart of God.” In Balthasar’s terms, the core of Delp’s tertianship diary is informed by a conviction that he must recover a Christological centre. That is, Delp recognizes that if he is to encounter genuine happiness, he must reflect on God as his source and fulfillment, instead of merely on himself. Moreover, in a Balthasarian spirit, Delp focuses this encounter with God on Jesus, particularly in devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Both Delp and Balthasar understand devotion to the mystery of Christ’s loving heart as a preparation to the path to self-surrender to God.

Thus, as he journeyed deeper into the retreat, Delp became more explicit about the object of his prayer. On 14 October 1938, he writes, “Reflection of the night, which I must write down. . . Heart of Jesus, doorway to the Trinity. The Heart of Jesus is the way of atonement and sacrifice.” This note anticipates the soteriological element of Delp’s reflections on the Heart of Jesus written during the Second World War, in which his theology of the Heart of Jesus fully emerges. Towards the end of the Spiritual Exercises, on 1 November 1938, Delp recognizes that it is in fact in the Heart of Jesus that he gains the ability to approach God and be drawn into Trinitarian life:

---

467 Gedanken der Nachtbetrachtung, den ich festhalten muß... Herz Jesu, Tor der Trinität. Der Herz Jesu-Weg der Sühne und des Opfers gehen (ibid., 1:249-50).
468 The notion of atonement is discussed in the next section, which argues that the Heart of Jesus effects reconciliation in the human person by incorporating him into the life of Christ and forming him in Christian praxis.
I must live intimately with my God; I to you; intimacy; and have joy in Him and meet Him with the heart. Trinitarian living and praying. From the Father in the Son through the Spirit to the Father. To stand face-to-face with Christ; the Heart of Jesus, the door to the Trinity. The Heart of Jesus is the way of sacrifice, of fidelity, of passion; His Heart leads me to the Father. Only the Lover can be the true man. Everything else is a sham and a fraud. In the Kingdom of God, there is no self-made man. An open heart [receives] the thoughts of God. An open ear [receives] his guidance. Life either comes to grips with the great Heart or nothing else. 469

Here, Delp acknowledges that authentic knowledge of God and the self emerges from a conscious intimacy with Jesus Christ, who is the archetype of the relation between a human person and God and, as such, the perfect realization of human existence. Furthermore, human persons should look to Jesus for their fulfillment. According to Balthasar, the dynamic of discipleship becomes possible only in relationship with Christ, who enables the person to lead a life of self-sacrifice.

For both Delp and Balthasar, the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the Divine and the human are harmonized, is the object of devotion. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus helped Delp to recognize that following Christ engages all of a person’s abilities and draws them into Christ’s work of redemption. In Delp’s prayer, the desire to know his life’s purpose in relation to Christ’s redemptive work entails a disposition of selflessness:

I must get away from myself—and learn how to serve and sacrifice. I am a great egoist. . . . Love learns with Jesus Christ on the way of the Cross. A person pays attention because

---

God loves him. . . I have been created and called to love God, to serve God, for joy in God. . . Personally pray. Pray more and pray honestly.470

The Heart of Jesus, which symbolizes the unconditional and merciful love of God, represents Delp’s call to conversion in the presence of God. For Balthasar, the Christian God is not a distant God, but one who personally touches the centre of a person’s existence, inviting him to open his life to God. A person cannot find or establish his own purpose in life; it is only in intimacy with Christ that a person can understand the meaning of his existence:

In obeying his calling a person fulfills his essence, although he would never have been able to discover this, his own archetype and ideal within himself, in his nature, by descending into the center of his natural being, his superego or his subconscious, or by studying his own predispositions, yearnings, talents and potentials. Simon the fisherman could have explored every region of his ego prior to his encounter with Christ, but he would not have found “Peter” there.471

A life of discipleship is rooted in Christ.

Moreover, Delp describes the relationship between Christ and the human person as an intimate friendship:

The homeland is inside where the soul and God meet. Therefore, now, the future life begins with the Adoration of the Trinity, which [begins] in me. It gives to the eye the keen vision and to the heart security and a homeland . . . [God], however, is not a system, but the personal tri-person God as revealed in Christ. My [faith] must become a personal relationship with my God; to personally pray and speak with Him. . . It is not only a task, a responsibility, and a concern, but it is about friendship, joy, and goodness.472

470 My free translation of: Von mir selbst wegkommen. Dienst und Opfer lernen. Ich war ein großer Egoist... Lieben lernen bei Christus Jesus, auf dem Kreuzweg. Die Menschen achten, weil Gott sie liebt... Ich bin geschaffen und berufen zur Liebe Gottes, zum Dienst für Gott, zur Freude an Gott... Persönlich beten. Viel mehr beten und ehrlicher beten (ibid., 257-58),
471 Balthasar, Prayer, 60.
472 My free translation of: Die Heimat ist drinnen, da wo Seele und Gott sich begegnen. Deshalb soll das künftige Leben jetzt beginnen mit der Adoratio der Trinität, die in mir gegenwärtig ist. Das gibt dem Auge den Tiefenblick und dem Herzen die innere Sicherheit und Heimat... Übernatür aber nicht als Ordnung, sondern als persönliche Beziehung zu diesem meinen Gott werden. Persönlich beten, sprechen mit ihm... Es ist nicht nur Aufgabe und Verantwortung und Sorge, sondern es ist Freundschaft, Freude, Güte (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Geistliche Schriften, 1:258-9).
According to Delp, intimate friendship with Christ opens and enlarges the human heart, and such closeness and confidence enables people to give themselves to others. The true person “is a Lover. Only he is the full man.” At the same time, Delp acknowledges the lack of love in his life: “I am so poor and small and nothing because I have loved so little. I must let go of myself and give myself away. A large heart for God and [His] people—an open heart to surrender, serve, give away, sacrifice.” This call to self-sacrificial love deepens for Delp as he ministers to people during the Second World War and as he approaches his death. Prayer is Delp’s response to the offer of God’s love, and his relationship with God in prayer transforms him, because he is “standing under the impression of Christ” and is following the guidance of Divine “grace and mercy.” Such transformation is not for himself alone but for others—both God and other people—as well. For Delp, prayer does not take him away from the world towards God but is rather a reception of God’s love for the sake of others.

From a Balthasarian perspective, it is through prayer that Delp is drawn into the mystery of God’s love, and it is in intimacy with Christ above all else that Delp can fruitfully serve others. The kind of prayer that Delp describes in his tertianship entails an encounter with God in Christ and a profound listening to what God says. Human beings, at their core, are relational beings; their most crucial relationship is with the transcendent and immanent God. Prayer, as Delp writes, “receives the thoughts of God” and involves an active response by the “hearer” or “listener.” This response entails surrendering to God and giving oneself away in love and service to

473 The full German text reads: Der eigentlich Mensch aber ist der Liebende. Nur er ist der volle Mensch (ibid., 259).
474 Ich bin noch so arm und klein und nichts, weil ich zu wenig geliebt habe. Ich muß mich loslassen und hergeben. Ein großes Herz haben für Gott und die Menschen. Großmütig hergeben, dienen, schenken, opfern (ibid.).
others, as Delp indicates in his retreat diary. For both Delp and Balthasar, encountering and responding to God demand the involvement of the whole person, because “faith, the organ of hearing, has to do with the whole person.”

A life of self-giving does not initiate the path of conversion; rather, conversion is the root from which such a life can spring forth. Conversion entails first the Divine initiative and an obediential listening. In true devotion to Jesus, prayer becomes more than the fulfillment of a religious obligation:

You can pray the nearby God away to a distant God. You can pray so ardently that you are totally consumed by your own words and have no time or possibility left to listen to God’s voice. . . . By fulfilling these religious obligations — or, what is still nobler, by voluntary exercises of piety—you have spared yourself having to listen to the troublesome voice. Believe me, this method is by far the best, and if you remain faithful to it, sooner or later you will succeed in putting your own religion in place of His.

Thus, a converted humbled heart is the foundation for a life of self-giving. The human person surrenders himself to God’s Heart and gives himself to others with a renewed heart. Conversion occupies the beginning and the centre of the Christian life. Such transformation is grounded in the Divine initiative. As Delp notes:

Everything is based on God’s grace and mercy. You will lead me, I must listen to you. He will lead me, I must trust Him. Life ceases being a lonesome and laborious monologue; it becomes a dialogue; it becomes more like: Cor ad Cor loquitur.

Making the Spiritual Exercises enabled Delp to see and confess to the missteps in his life with an open heart. He began to see discipleship more like an intimate relationship than a rigorous discipline or performance. Discipleship is not ultimately concerned with his preoccupations.

---

475 Balthasar, Prayer, 229.
476 Balthasar, Heart of the World, 127.
477 My free translation of: Das Ganze aber aufbauen auf der Gnade und Güte Gottes. Sie wird mich führen, ich will auf sie hören. Er wird mir helfen, ich will auf ihn vertrauen. Das Leben hört auf, ein einsamer, mühsamer Monolog zu sein; es wird Dialog es wird mehr: Cor ad Cor loquitur (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Geistliche Schriften, 1:259).
Rather, it concerns Delp’s relationship with his personal God. It is only when Delp seeks to understand his life in conversation with Christ that it becomes clear what following Christ entails, what self-sacrifice is. At its most profound, prayer, as exemplified by Delp’s spiritual practice, is a dialogue of love with Jesus Christ. It is an act that manifests the call of Christ and hence leads, through dialogue with Christ to human maturation.

From the time of his tertianship experience to his travails in prison, Delp’s service to his fellow human beings as well as his relationship with God underwent change. It went beyond the fulfillment of religious obligation to an enactment of sacrificial love. The maturation is the result of God’s initiative and guidance. The transformation in his relationship with God arose from a deepening involvement in the redemptive work of Christ. Delp moved from clandestine activities (such as hiding Jewish people and planning a postwar Germany), to forming an ecumenical movement among the imprisoned members of the Kreisau Circle, to finally, testifying and dying as a Christian. Love remained the key component of his dynamic relationship with God. Prayer grounded in love involves faithful, patient, and humble service, as Balthasar would claim. Delp accompanied others from the intellectual discussions of the Kreisau Circle to the degradation and misery of imprisonment, because he was inspired by the love of God made known to him preeminently in prayer.

---

3.3 The Heart of Jesus and Christological Incorporation

The previous section examined Delp’s transformative encounter with Christ in devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Conversion is the way to God, because it empowers a human person to give himself entirely to God. A person’s essential identity is revealed in such a relationship with Jesus. Using Balthasar’s Christology as a framework, the following sections explore Delp’s two meditations on the Heart of Jesus, written in Tegel Prison, and a homily on the Heart of Jesus that he gave to his parishioners at St. Georg’s Parish on 7 December 1942. The key distinction between these meditations and his tertianship journal, in addition to the meditations’ more sustained and comprehensive spiritual examination of the Heart of Jesus, is their salient contemplation of sin. In the homily and meditations, Delp reflects on the significance of intimacy with Jesus in the midst of human wickedness and brokenness occasioned by the Second World War. For Delp, human beings are divided from each other as a result of the constricted existence of self-preoccupation. In his first prison meditation, the Heart of Jesus represents the offer of a loving, merciful friendship from God that heals human persons entrapped by sin. Delp is drawn into Christ’s own self-giving with such intensity that he gives his life over to God in order to be renewed. In the second prison meditation, the Heart of Jesus represents Christ’s entry into the human condition: Christ returns human existence, presently characterized by division and alienation to its genuine dynamic of love and communal existence. Towards the end of the second prison meditation, Delp relates the Heart of Jesus to the Jerusalem Temple, the core of every aspect of ancient Jewish life, and its high priestly theology. In the view of the Jewish people, the
Temple constituted the dwelling place of God; it was the place in which sacrifices were undertaken by the high priest and the ritual cleansing that atoned for people’s sins and served as a framework for their spiritual purification and elevation was performed.\(^{479}\) In his Advent homily on the Heart of Jesus in 1942, Delp speaks of human persons discovering the centre of their existence in the Crucified Christ so as to be guided into making acts of reparation. For Delp, in a world ravaged by war and injustices, the abandonment of self to Christ may lead one to suffer for another. The implication of these reflections on the Heart of Jesus is that the Divine initiative to save humankind in its wretchedness and isolation operates by restoring humanity’s relationship with God through self-sacrificial love.

To identify the crux of Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus as it relates to the dilemma of human sin, I turn to Balthasar’s Christology, according to which Christ is missioned in the Spirit by the Father to restore man’s capacity to respond to God’s call to be in relationship with Him. In the following subsection, I establish a theological approach that explains how Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus during the Second World War communicate a redemption from sin. I do so by examining Balthasar’s five motifs of soteriology\(^{480}\) and integrating them with Delp’s spiritual awareness of the healing and saving love encountered in devotion to the Heart of Jesus. In the Introduction, I suggested that Balthasar’s five motifs show that the Triune God’s selfless love is made known by the Incarnation and the death of Jesus Christ and that human


\(^{480}\) (1) The Son gives himself, through God the Father, for the world’s salvation. (2) The Sinless One “changes places” with sinners. Although in principle, the Church Fathers understood this in a radical sense, it is only in the modern variation of the theories of representation that the consequences are fully drawn out. (3) Man is thus set free (ransomed, redeemed, released). (4) More than this, he is initiated into the Divine life of the Trinity. (5) Consequently, the whole process is shown to be the result of an initiative on the part of Divine love. See Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama IV: The Action}, 317.
Maturation is one of the results of the encounter with the selfless love of Jesus Christ. Firstly, Jesus Christ willingly allows himself to be delivered up; He is not simply passive. Secondly, this self-giving is accomplished by what the Church Fathers described as *a commercium*, an exchange of place with us; as we shall see, Balthasar’s theology deepens this motif. Thirdly, Christ’s exchange of place with us liberates us from the slavery of sin and evil. Fourthly, we become adopted sons and daughters of God and are drawn into the redemptive work of Christ. Fifthly, the process of redemption belongs to the loving initiative and mystery of God. After setting forth Balthasar’s five biblical soteriological motifs, I explore Delp’s two prison meditations on the Heart of Jesus. The analysis begins with a consideration of the end of Delp’s second prison meditation, which relates the Heart of Jesus to the Jerusalem Temple. The Temple analogy brings to mind that Jesus Christ is the high priest who atones for human sinfulness; he offered Himself up to the Father, took on human brokenness, and poured out his life so that others could live. I then return to the beginning of the first prison meditation, which reflects on Christ’s offer of loving friendship that liberates and transforms humankind in the image of Christ. I explore this meditation in light of the third motif of soteriology—Christ’s redemptive love liberates human persons from the entrapment of sin. Thereafter, I investigate Delp’s Advent homily on the Heart of Jesus from the perspective of the fourth motif of biblical soteriology—humankind is drawn into the redemptive work of Christ. The chapter concludes with a general assessment of Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus in light of the comprehensive fifth biblical soteriological motif—redemptive love belongs to God’s initiative.
3.3.1 Balthasar’s Five Biblical Soteriological Motifs

The first motif states that the Son gave Himself up for humankind. For Balthasar, the self-giving of Jesus Christ is intelligible, only if there is something preexisting in the Trinity that grounds it. The essence of Balthasar’s resolution to this question lies in the Father’s ur-kenosis:

[The Father] makes Himself destitute of all that He is and can be so as to bring forth a substantial divinity, the Son. Everything that can be thought and imagined where God is concerned is, in advance, included and transcended in this self-destitution, which constitutes the person of the Father, and at the same time, those of the Son and the Spirit. God as the gulf of absolute love . . . contains in advance, eternally, all the modalities of love, of compassion, and even of “separation” motivated by love and founded on the infinite distinction between the hypostases—modalities which may manifest themselves in the course of history of salvation involving sinful mankind.481

This total surrender of the Father in begetting the Son is the ur-kenosis of the Triune life, which underpins all subsequent kenosis. Moreover, in the Father’s self-giving to the Son, who is infinitely other than the Father, there is a relationship within the Trinity that encompasses all possible extremes of intimacy and distance. Because God the Father does not just lend His divinity to the Son, but gives it away so that the Son possesses it in an equally substantial way, there exists a separation of God from Himself so incomprehensible and unique that it includes and grounds every other separation.482 As a result, the Incarnation “grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain, and alienation in the world and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-

---

482 Balthasar, Theo-Drama IV, 323.
giving, interpersonal relationship and blessedness.”

Jesus “is not the direct identity of the two but their presupposition, sovereignly surpassing them.”

For Balthasar, the Son can be God only by following the Father’s pattern of self-giving. If Jesus is the incarnational expression of the Son from the Father, then the relationship of Jesus with the Father communicates to humankind something of the eternal relationship between the Son and the Father. Jesus is receptive to the Father and expresses the Father’s love for the world simultaneously. Jesus in his earthly ministry reveals an obediential self-emptying that points back to the Father who sent Him. The obedience of Christ, which goes so far as death on the Cross, makes evident “the expression of the Son’s Trinitarian love,” which “reveals itself as the hypostatic obedience of the eternal Son.” Jesus’ obedience manifests his love for the Father and indicates that He is not in charge of Himself; He “has handed himself over to another”

The second motif states that Jesus Christ’s self-giving for humankind’s sake entails an exchange with us; Jesus “substituted Himself for us by ‘expropriating’ us into Him in a reconciliation achieved before any agreement by us to this changed state of affairs—though it falls to us to make it fruitful in our own lives.” Christ identifies with His mission to save humankind and adopts its brokenness, taking on the entire burden of sin. That is to say, Jesus experiences the effects of sin interiorly, not just exteriorly. It is in the self-abasement of the Cross that Jesus takes

---

483 Ibid.
484 Ibid., 325.
on the burden of humankind’s sins. He “is made sin, where perverse finite freedom cast all its guilt onto God, making him the sole accused, while God allows Himself to be thoroughly affected by this.”\textsuperscript{489} The Son experiences the full consequences of His act of \textit{commercium}, in which His solidarity with sinners becomes an alienation from the Father. He is burdened with the world’s sins. In Balthasar’s view, Christ takes on sin when He substitutes Himself for sinful humankind, a substitution that “goes as far as taking our place and allowing the whole weight of human guilt to fall upon Him.”\textsuperscript{490} The piling of the world’s rejection of Divine love onto Jesus occurs because Jesus is willing and able to bear it.\textsuperscript{491} While remaining sinless, Jesus nonetheless appropriates “what is ungodly and hostile to God, an identification with that darkness of alienation from God into which the sinner falls as a result of his No.”\textsuperscript{492} Jesus’ identification with sin is not only an expression of solidarity with sinners in their punishment for sin, but also a co-experiencing sin, in the \textit{peirasmos}\textsuperscript{493} of the very essence of that negation.\textsuperscript{494} As a representative of humankind, Christ goes so far as to take the place of sinners in their existential condition of alienation from God. It is important to note that Balthasar does not imply that Christ experiences sin as we do by sinning, but rather that Christ experiences the reality of separation from God that sin entails. Such is a vicarious representation that embraces both sides: Christ represents alienated humankind to God and represents God to alienated humankind. He endures the conflict “not only as the God offended by man, but also as the man whom God threatens with death, the man

\textsuperscript{489} Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama IV}, 335.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 297.
\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., 335.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., 334-335.
\textsuperscript{493} This is a Greek word meaning a period or process of testing or trial.
\textsuperscript{494} Balthasar, \textit{Mysterium Paschale}, 137.
who entered into the likeness of the ‘flesh of sin’ and is actually ‘made to be sin’ for us.” 495 Balthasar’s interpretation of the act of atonement does not remain external to the guilty, but is an encounter grounded in Jesus Christ who is the mediator between God and creation. 496 Moreover, the suffering of Jesus is not limited to His assumed human nature such that the Trinity remains detached from the brokenness of the world. God permits Himself to be thoroughly immersed in the consequences of the sinful human condition, “being thoroughly affected by this, not only in the humanity of Christ, but also in Christ’s Trinitarian mission.” 497 The Triune God’s commitment to redeem humankind’s evil in this radical manner is carried out by the Father’s making known the Divine will to the incarnate Son through the Holy Spirit. 498

The third motif of Balthasar’s understanding of Christ’s saving love is the release of humanity from sin. Human sin is fundamentally an attempt to grasp freedom and power apart from God. Therefore,

in seeking to arrogate this power [Divine power] to itself, finite freedom does two things: it separates power from self-giving goodness and sets itself up against the absolute good—thereby incurring the judgment of the latter. Judgment reveals that the usurped is actually God’s power over the usurpers. The one who attempts to seize absolute power is overwhelmed by it; he has no defense against it. Seeking “liberation” through total autonomy, he is so fettered by it (for total autonomy belongs to God) that release can only come from God. We have already seen this in the fact that sin is a lie; the freedom that refused to acknowledge God was bound to maintain this lie. 499

According to Balthasar, the liberation that God offers human beings is freedom from the desire for power and for grasping autonomy apart from God. The relationship between God and sinful

495 Balthasar, Theo-Drama IV, 346.
496 Ibid., 260–61.
497 Ibid., 335.
498 Nichols, No Bloodless Myth, 169.
humanity is taken up into the relationship between Father and Son. Jesus Christ is now identified with the sinful condition of humankind’s alienation from God and remains, at the same time in His own relationship of loving obedience to the Father. It is out of loving obedience to the Father that Jesus fully assents to suffering and death on the Cross, an obedience that constitutes the entirety of His whole motivation for undergoing the experience of suffering and death. Consequently, all extremes of humankind’s sinful alienation and disobedience are overcome by a greater act of loving obedience.

Thus, the goal of Jesus’ vicarious representation is to draw sinful humankind into the inner attitude of Jesus’ representation. As a free person, Jesus exercises renunciation on behalf of a human beings, whose freedom is compromised and who are at spiritual risk due to the enslavement and evils of sin. He bears the risk, suffers, and dies for humanity’s sake. It is a representation that consciously establishes and enlivens friendship, drawing men and women out of alienation and beckoning them into relationship. For Balthasar, “a person is called to experience the mystery of divine fellowship in a deeper way on behalf of many.” It is the power of this inclusive quality of the encounter with Christ that invites a response, seeking to draw the sinner from the condition of alienation into an intimate relationship with Christ and other human persons.

In light of the third motif, Jesus liberates humankind from sin so that creaturely freedom can be restored and that human persons can consequently respond to the call of God and do good. Such is the purpose of Jesus’ pro nobis. Human freedom, having been degraded by sin, is

502 Ibid., 350.
restored by Jesus Christ, so that persons can resume their proper role as finite beings ordered to love and serve God and neighbour. Jesus’ own act of vicarious representation breaks open in the most expansive manner conceivable the possibility for Christians to perform similar actions. Disciples such as Delp who have encountered the freeing and transformative love of Jesus can act “for another.”

The healing of our fallen human condition is achieved when sinners are brought into the “place” of the Divine relations in fulfillment of a verse in Colossians: “snatched from the force of darkness and brought into the reign of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). The sinner is not divested of his agency, but his agency is restored to its proper role. This transformation is accomplished with the healing and unification of the sinner’s capacity for the love of God and capacity for the love of the neighbor. The harmonizing of these loves is the foundation and goal of humankind and its relationship to God.

3.3.2 The Heart of Jesus and Priestly Theology

Delp’s exploration of the first two soteriological aspects begins towards the end of his second prison meditation, where he reflects on the Heart of Jesus as the “Infinite Majesty” of God and as the “Holy Temple of God.” In these two brief reflections, Delp associates the Heart of Jesus with the Jerusalem Temple and describes the Heart of Jesus as the new dwelling place for God. In view of Delp’s martyrdom, his evocation of the Temple as a major Christological symbol can hardly be overestimated. Delp’s symbolic reference to the Temple in his meditation on the Heart of Jesus, I argue, sheds light on the relationship between the discourse of Christ in Delp’s writings and the high priestly Christology of the Letter to the Hebrews. The Christology of Hebrews is intimately associated with soteriology, because the primary purpose of identifying
Christ as the high priest of the Temple is to establish the significance of Christ’s atoning work. This atonement—the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of the human relationship with God—were key elements of Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus. As I will show, atonement and kenosis are intimately linked.

For Delp, the term “Infinite Majesty” expresses the “abundance” of love in the Heart he has encountered: “This loving heart has a limitless power of love because its reality is maiestas: elevated, superior to everything…” Maiestas here implies that God is always greater than any image or concept devised to represent Him. It also refers to the presence of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple. We read in Ezekiel that “the majesty of the Lord went into the Temple” (Ez. 43:4). And the second book of Chronicles states that “the majesty of God filled the Temple” (II Chron. 7:1). Temple’s theology of atonement, which describes a self-sacrificing love offered to heal broken relationships, is strikingly relevant to Delp’s prison meditation on the Heart of Jesus.

Delp’s reflection “stems from the ritual language of the Old Covenant. It is the expression with which the Temple and through it the guaranteed special relationship of God with the people of the Covenant are meant.” According to the Old Testament, the purpose of the covenant between the Lord and His people is fellowship and a symbol of this fellowship is

---

504 The Hebrew kabod can be translated as “majesty,” “glory,” or “greatness.”
505 Diese und die folgenden Anrufungen stammen aus der kultischen Sprache des Alten Bundes. Es sind sie Ausdrücke, mit denen der Tempel und das durch ihn verbürgte besondere Verhältnis Gottes zum Volk des Bundes bezeichnet wurde. (Delp: Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:259)
506 According to Margaret Barker, the covenant associated with the atonement ritual of the Temple is “the covenant of peace, the covenant of the priesthood of eternity, elsewhere called the covenant of eternity or, more recently, the
Yahweh’s dwelling place in the midst of His people, first in the Tent of Meeting and later in the Temple in Jerusalem: “I consecrate this house you have built; I place my name there for ever; my eyes and my heart shall always be there” (1 Kings 9:3).\textsuperscript{507} When the covenant is broken, the fabric of creation starts to disintegrate and chaos sets in.\textsuperscript{508} Such was the tragic state of the society in which Delp lived. For the ancient Jewish people, the source of healing and restoration lay in the Temple. For Delp, the Temple is now the Heart of Jesus, “where the entire abundance of divinity dwells.”\textsuperscript{509} It is the “sanctuary,” “a sacred place of prayer,” and “the focus towards which our faith and love is set.”\textsuperscript{510} The word sanctuary refers to the Holy of Holies in the Temple, which housed the throne of God, understood as the heart of God and the source of creation.\textsuperscript{511} Thereby, devotion to the Heart of Jesus replaces the Temple and its sanctuary as the “location” where God can be called upon in times of need and healing—when the bonds that hold creation together are crumbling and require healing.

Accordingly, Delp describes the Heart of Jesus as the “new Temple” where believers can encounter God’s love, which forgives sin and heals broken relationships:

What used to be the temple: the only gathering place for the faithful people – the only place to meet God—the only altar of the valid sacrifice: this is now all from Christ. The

\textsuperscript{507} In this OT passage, the description of God’s eyes and Heart conveys that the Lord is consciously there. The “heart” is here the focus of God’s covenant love – communicating availability and concern.
\textsuperscript{508} Margaret Barker, \textit{The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy} (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 45.
\textsuperscript{510} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{511} Margaret Baker, \textit{Temple Theology} (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 18.
exclusivity of the order brought about in Christ is something we have to say again today against much softening and which we have to stress to ourselves. And there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4: 12).  

Delp understands that in the Heart of Jesus one encounters the God who is the source of salvation and “holds all things together” (Col. 1:17). Devotion to the Heart of Jesus enables people to be renewed by God’s love, just as the Temple offered the sacrifices pertinent to those who had been excluded by sin and thus renewed the people. The Temple worldview envisaged a covenant of wholeness that encompassed the entire creation: this covenant bounds all parts of the visible creation to one another and the whole to God who is its source.  

Anything that fractured these relationships was, by definition, sin. Delp provides a vivid description of the bonds of relationships integral to creation in the second prison meditation: “Part of a healthy nature is the law of openness towards each other.” Moreover, referring to an eternal order, which has resonances to the eternal covenant and its system of bonds, he goes on to say:

Let’s recall the order of things and their entire and eternal relations. We will then learn care, taste, the sense of worth, and dignity again. And we will no longer force things into self-defence as a result of our assault, which we inflict upon them. We will enable to once again have its innermost fountains flow and sing if we return to the old eternal order. The eternal belongs to the contemporary, the spiritual in the sensual, the otherworldliness in the worldly just like the divine belongs in the reality of the salvation [of the world]. . . . The path of short circuit, of wiping away the eternal, the spiritual, and the otherworldliness, these are far too easy, blatant and fraudulent solutions. But, over the long haul they are deadly.

---

513 Baker, Temple Theology, 24-27.
515 My free translation of: Laßt uns die Dinge zurückrufen und ihre ganzen und ewigen Zusammenhänge. Wir werden dann die Behutsamkeit wieder lernen und den Geschmack und das Wertgefühl und die Vornehmheit. Und wir werden die Dinge nicht mehr zur Notwehr zwingen, durch unsere eigene Vergewaltigung, die wir ihnen antun. Wir
For Delp, the healing and repairing of the world damaged by the destructive lies of sin can be encountered in devotion to the Heart of Jesus, whose soteriology has roots in the Temple theology. The greatest rite of healing was the Day of Atonement, which entailed a ritual involving animals, to restore the broken covenant bond and to heal the relationship between God and creation, especially humankind. The logic of the ritual entails that the blood of the sacrificed bull represented the cleansing life that was applied to the Temple and the impurity was first absorbed by the high priest who performed the atonement, and was then laid upon the goat. One may see the rationale for cleaning the deleterious effects of sin and for the restoration of the relations between God and His people. Nonetheless, Christianity takes this logic one step further. Sacrificing a bull and transferring sins from human persons to a goat are spectacular symbolic acts but they seem to fall short with the nature of sin as a breakdown in a personal relationship with God. The animals were not in relationship with humankind in the way the incarnate Son was, nor could they freely give of themselves to humankind as Christ did. In Christ, the giving of self and the taking on of sin come together to express a Divine love that rescues and transforms the lives of human persons.

516 In the ritual, the high priest of the Temple sacrificed a bull and took its blood into the Holy of Holies. He then moved outward from the sanctuary and sprinkled the altar within the Temple with the blood. In the Temple’s context, the priest’s act of sprinkling the blood to cleanse and consecrate represented God restoration of the creation’s relationship with Him, which had been sullied by sin. The high priest concluded the rite by emerging from the Temple and placing his hands on the head of the scapegoat, thereby putting all the sins of the people onto the goat, who was then sent out into the wilderness.
The language of kenosis, an element of soteriology, and the language of the sin offering, a foundation of atonement theology, are not mutually exclusive. They corroborate one another. That is, any accounting of the redemptive love of Christ, especially as encountered in devotion to the Heart of Jesus, includes the costliness of His self-sacrifice. Christ entered a world of suffering, violence, and hatred. Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus occurred in a world not so dissimilar. Christ’s generous, self-giving love takes the form of self-sacrificial love in a world that has been damaged by sin. Margaret Barker suggests that the mysterious Suffering Servant depicted in Isaiah 52:13—53:12 inspired the Day of Atonement ritual. She notes that in Isaiah 52:15, which reads “[The Suffering Servant] shall startle many nations,” the verb “startle” translates the Hebrew yazzeh and literally means “sprinkle.” The same verb is used in the atonement ritual (Lev. 16:19). “The Servant does not ‘startle’ many peoples; the original Hebrew says he ‘sprinkles.’” The passage does not suggest that the Servant “carries away” the transgressions of others but that he takes them upon himself and bears and endures them (Isa. 54:4-5). As Barker notes, “the Servant makes his life a sin offering (Isa. 53:10)” implies that the pouring out of his blood redresses the dilemma of sin. According to Jewish understanding, the life was in the blood of the sacrifice and hence was poured out. Barker states that this passage inspired one of the earliest interpretations of Jesus’ death, Philippians 2:5-11. The phrase “emptied himself” (Phil. 2:7) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “he makes his life a sin offering” in Isaiah 53:10, because the process of making a sin offering was to pour out the blood

---

517 Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 53-54.
519 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. (NAB)
symbolizing life. Barker mentions that the Servant figure in Philippians is then exalted much like Christ the High Priest in the Letter to the Hebrews. All this suggests that Christ poured out his blood and took on humankind’s sin to the point of suffering its consequences—death and alienation from God—in order to restore human wholeness.

In other words, the Letter to the Hebrews takes up the Temple’s high priestly theology in order to associate it with Christ. The structure of the Letter, according to Balthasar, illuminates the first motif of biblical soteriology—Jesus’ free gift of Himself on humankind’s behalf. He notes that the second chapter of Hebrews alludes to the self-emptying of the Son. He became “‘a little lower than the angels’: in the suffering of abandonment by God (2:9), he ‘learns obedience’ (5:8) and ‘tastes death for everyone’ (2:9), in order to free all from the curse of the devil and from the fear of death (2:14).” Thus, in its opening chapters, Hebrews identifies Jesus as the Son of God and as the high priest who is in solidarity with his fellow brothers and sisters:

He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of people. Because He Himself was tested by what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested. (Heb. 2:17-18, NAB)

Moreover, the self-emptying of the Son and His solidarity with human kind are for the sake of atonement. In 4:15-16, Hebrews presents the qualifications for Jesus’ priesthood: He is the high priest who is able to sympathize with human weakness except sin; as such, persons can call upon

521 Ibid., 55.
Him “in time of need.” The notion of Jesus’ solidarity with all of humankind in its weakness is associated with the notion of His role as a “merciful and faithful” high priest. In essence, the restoration of fellowship with God starts with His concern for humankind’s being lost in sin. In Delp’s view, devotion to the Heart of Jesus encounters people where they have fallen and testifies to an authentic love amidst the lies and destructiveness of sin:

> We are in the midst of world misery. We, the people, with an eternal longing in our hearts and a burning desire for an encounter, happiness, and freedom in the soul. We run around as the pressured, the hunted, and the threatened. We sit in the shadows as the shackled and the imprisoned. As the alienated, the lost, and the wretched, we call upon others. . . . Here the message of the Heart of Jesus meets us in our misery.  

Both Delp and Balthasar understand that sin destroys relationships and subverts solidarity. Hence, it is because there is no sin in Christ that His acting on humankind’s behalf can be without limitation, since it is sin itself that limits acting on behalf of another. In Christ, God lovingly condescends to restore our covenantal relationship with Him within the human condition.

The biblical and etymological connections between kenosis and the sin offering provide an interesting framework for the theology of kenosis as it relates to the Incarnation. As discussed above, kenosis relates primarily to the selflessness within the Trinity, which is turn is the basis for subsequent kenosis. Kenosis is the most apt expression of the eternal life of love within the

---

523 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet apart from sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NAB)  
Godhead.\textsuperscript{525} The Incarnation does not diminish the Trinity, but rather involves both the glory and drama of the Divine involvement in and for the sake of the world.\textsuperscript{526} It is because Jesus is the unique bearer of the world’s sin and because His unique relation to the Father is the source of His identity that we can say that the Incarnation is the work of Divine freedom and power. “God’s almighty power blazes forth in the powerlessness of the Incarnate and Crucified Son.”\textsuperscript{527} According to Delp, when Christians pray to the Heart of Jesus, they “call upon the Heart of the Son of the Eternal Father. Here [they] call upon the love of God. . . . [This] Heart is the symbol of the interiority of God and His basic relationship to us.”\textsuperscript{528} Because the Incarnation is ordered to the Cross, the self-giving of Jesus, including His death on the Cross, is the perfect expression of the eternal willingness of Father and Son to be love for each other. The kenosis of the Son is embodied in the love of Christ, who gives expression to His being of the Father and His total dependence on Him in the form of obedient love unto death.\textsuperscript{529}

Therefore, for Delp and Balthasar, if the sin of humankind sullied creation and the covenant with God, then God’s love, as manifested in the loving obedience of Jesus atones for the transgressions. Jesus, who is the source of creation, understood Himself to be the Son, looked on God as “Abba,” and lived in a Father-Son relationship. Jesus’ Sonship was expressed in His obedient attitude towards the Father. This obedience comprised not just acts of obedience but also a disposition of loving self-surrender. This is the first biblical motif of salvation; Jesus was not passive, but gave Himself to the Father for the sake of the world. In this context, Jesus, as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{525} Balthasar, \textit{Mysterium Paschale}, viii.
\item \textsuperscript{526} Ibid., 82.
\item \textsuperscript{527} Ibid., 35.
\item \textsuperscript{528} Delp, \textit{Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis}, 4:248.
\item \textsuperscript{529} The entire Trinity is involved in this event. See Balthasar, \textit{Mysterium Paschale}, 35.
\end{itemize}
“the high priest,” surrendered Himself in obedience to God. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus emptied Himself of His own wishes in favour of continued engagement in the mission granted to him.530 On the Cross He asks His Father to forgive those responsible for killing Him. He embraced the way of loving obedience to the Father.531 To defeat sin, Jesus chose obedience and defenseless love rather than violence.532

Here, the term obedience requires further explanation. In Balthasar’s theology, it carries a dual significance. Firstly, it pertains to Jesus’ witness of loving constancy in rejecting violence even in the face of suffering. Secondly, it pertains to Balthasar’s understanding of the journey of human transformation, because of the painful effort sinners must undertake to cooperate with God. Nevertheless, if sin is indeed an attempt to grasp autonomy apart from God, then obedience effectively counters sin:

By the grace of the Lord, renunciation leads the apostle not only to a new and promising fullness of earthly as well as heavenly gifts . . . and to [the] freedom of . . . Christ . . . but also to an explicit sharing in the fruitfulness of the Lord’s redemptive sacrifice. . . . Only in the eyes of the world are the renunciations of Christendom something negative.533

If we are to understand obedience properly, we must see that it is rooted in conversion. It is inspired by God’s love, a dialogue of love with God. Moreover, it must be made clear that Jesus’ obedience to the Father is an active, not a passive, choice regarding how to respond in the face of evil. In the drama of Good Friday, Christ transforms the hatred and violence inflicted upon Him

530 See Matthew 26:36-46.
532 Balthasar, Mysterium Paschale, 117-18.
into an expression of Divine love. Christ’s obedience becomes “the place where the glory [of God] may give utterance to itself”\textsuperscript{534} and manifest itself as infinite “self-giving love.”\textsuperscript{535}

Christ puts Himself in the midst of human misery and wretchedness, not just in solidarity with humankind, but in a transformative revelation of the intra-Trinitarian selfless love, “taking over their burden from them, which is suffering not just like theirs, but in their place or stead.”\textsuperscript{536}

The biblical antecedents for the exchange of places, the second biblical motif of soteriology, have been explored with respect to the cult of the Day of Atonement and Isaiah’s figure of the Suffering Servant. The Letter to the Hebrews, appropriating the sacrificial tradition of the Old Testament, interprets Jesus’ loving obedience unto death as the manner in which this restoration of the covenant between God and humankind comes about. In Hebrews, the death of Jesus is interpreted as the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement,\textsuperscript{537} describing Jesus as a high priest who took His own blood into the sanctuary. Because Jesus entered the true and heavenly sanctuary, He is the mediator of the new covenant.\textsuperscript{538}

This covenant is understood not as an external code, but an interior reality. Sin has been overcome by the abasement of the Son in the Incarnation and the free-loving offering of Christ unto death. For Delp, language of redemption is related to devotion to the Heart of Jesus:

[Devotion to the Heart of Jesus] is about the devout finding the love of God, of His salvation for His people. Only those who know and acknowledge this can say: “Have

\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., 283.
\textsuperscript{536} Dermot Power, \textit{A Spiritual Theology of the Priesthood: The Mystery of Christ and the Mission of the Priest}, 43.
\textsuperscript{537} Barker, \textit{Temple Theology}, 64.
\textsuperscript{538} Jesus’ high priesthood surpasses the Temple’s priesthood. Firstly, whereas the Temple priest offered animals in a blood sacrifice, Jesus offered His own blood in sacrifice. Secondly, whereas the Temple priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year, Jesus’ sacrificial death was once and for all. The singular sacrifice of Christ deals adequately with sins, because it is the Son’s perfect offering of Himself to God.
mercy on us”. . . . Therefore, [this devotion] concerns a relationship of personal intimacy between Christ and me. By grace, words are said back and forth and a genuine supreme love flows from the core of the heart of humankind and encounters the Heart of God in order to discover there everything, call, awakening, and the capacity to stay en route until home, that all this is merciful and creative call of the Divine Heart of Jesus.\footnote{My free translation of: Es geht um die gläubige Erkenntnis der Liebe Gottes, seines Heilswillens zu uns Menschen. Nur wer diesen kennt und anerkennt, wird ehrlich sagen: erbarme Dich unser. . . Es geht deshalb ein Verhältnis persönlicher Intimität zwischen Christus und mir. Daß da geheime Worte hin und her gesprochen werden und eine echte, hohe, Liebe aus des Menschen Herzmitte aufbricht und die Herzmitte Gottes finde, um dort zu entdecken, daß alles—Anruf und Aufbruch und die Fähigkeit, unterwegs zu bleiben bis hierher in die Heimat—daß dies alles schon gnadenvoller, schöpferischer Ruf des göttlichen Herzens war. (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:249-50).}

Jesus’ Heart is the centre of all hearts; the New Covenant is given to humanity in the Heart of Christ. Because Delp encounters God in the context of a nation afflicted by evil, devotion to the Heart of Jesus entails a vision of healing and hope. Acknowledging the dynamic of the \textit{commercium}, Balthasar maintains that the Letter to the Hebrews is an account of the Divine love:

\begin{quote}
That out of love takes upon itself the sins of the world; and this love must have a double character, as the love of God the Father, who allows God the Son to go into the absolute poverty and self-abandonment where he can be nothing else than the total object that receives the divine “wrath”, and as the love of God the Son, who identifies Himself out of love with us sinners (Heb 2:13), and thereby fulfills the will of the Father in free obedience (Heb. 10:7).\footnote{Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord VII: Theology of the New Covenant, 207.}
\end{quote}

In a not dissimilar manner, Delp describes Jesus as the “only altar of valid sacrifice” in his meditation on the Heart of Jesus. These words reference the sacrificial system of the Temple, in which the high priest is both the sin bearer and the offerer of sacrifices. Jesus has surpassed this system in his own sacrificial death. Unlike the Temple’s high priest, Jesus does not sacrifice another life and does not transfer the sins of the people onto another animal. As a high priest, Jesus takes on the sins of the people and offers His own body as a sacrifice of atonement to God. Moreover, because Jesus is a high priest who imbues his work of atonement with mercy, He
understands and sympathizes with the human condition. His sacrificial death is vicarious: the Son becomes human so that he might taste death for everyone out of love for the whole of humankind.

Accordingly, Delp states that we find faith, love, and life in the Heart of Jesus. “The new centre of life is not the immobile temple and its set rituals. The new centre is the heart of the Son of God. The demanding and loving heart of the Lord.” Delp’s message to Christians is striking: it is through an encounter with the love of God in the Heart of Jesus that people will encounter healing and the restoration of their relationship with God. In the old covenant, this was the role performed in the old covenant by the rituals of atonement at the Temple; now, the Heart of Jesus is the focus of human faith and love.

3.3.3 The Heart of Jesus as Liberation from Sin

The topics of healing, a restored relationship with God, and new life, all of which are found in Delp’s first prison meditation on the Heart of Jesus, leads to the third motif of biblical soteriology—the release of humankind from its attempt to grasp freedom and power apart from God. The starting point is the self-humbling of Christ, which includes His offer of friendship to human persons, which restores the relationship between God and humankind. Friendship with God in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, who offers mercy and care for the destitute, constitutes the beginning of Delp’s prison reflections. He begins by stating that the devotion communicates

\[542\text{ Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:261.} \]
the offer of “friendship with the Lord to a collection of like-minded frail souls and hearts dedicated to Him.” For Delp, the language of friendship is the language of love, which is ultimately the language of prayer. He writes, “The language, like the theology of this prayer, is the language of love. Many a good theologian who remained a rationalist or something similar shies away from saying the word heart at all.”

Moreover, the language in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus characterizes Jesus’ love as a rescuing friendship. According to Delp, the devotion involves God’s desire “to save human-kind from its contemporary distress.” Describing Jesus’ friendship as a response to the “scream and forsakenness of the people” and “an offer of mercy from God to save a threatened humankind,” the devotion evokes a God who offers mercy and looks after the destitute and the forsaken. In Delp’s view, the devotion is both prayer and communication of Christ’s friendship to humankind in the midst of its brokenness. As Balthasar relates, prayer involves a conversation between God and the human person for the sake of the human person’s fulfillment. Prayer takes on greater urgency in the midst of sin because the conversation with God becomes a means of salvation.

543 Dort handelt es sich um eine Erscheinungsform der mystischen Freundschaft mit dem Herren, um eine zarte Gesellschaft einzelner, hochmögender Seelen und tief eingeweihter Herzen zum Herrn (Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus dem Gefängnis, 4:243).

544 Die Sprache auch der Theologie dieser Andacht ist die Sprache der Liebe. Mancher gute Theologe, der aber menschlich Rationalist oder was ähnliches blieb, scheut sich, das Wort Herz überhaupt ernsthaft in den Mund zu nehmen (ibid., 4:243).

545 Es handelt sich hier wirklich um eine Maßnahme Gottes zur Rettung von Menschen, ja, wenn auf die Absichten Gottes eingegangen würde, zur Rettung der Menschheit aus ihrer heutigen eigenartigen Not (ibid., 4:242).

546 Hier aber handelt es sich vom Menschen aus um einen Angstschrei aus Not und Verlorenheit, von Gott her um ein Gnadenangebot zur Rettung eines bedrohten Geschlechtes (ibid., 4:243).
Delp sees devotion to the Heart of Jesus as a liberating dialogue between God and the human being—a transformation of the person into a Christlike servant of others. Delp states:

The appeal to the personal individual is two-fold: for [the individual’s] salvation and healing and inner transformation into the likeness of Christ [and] into the willingness and ability to become an effective and fruitful instrument of the Lord’s redemptive-salvation.⁵⁴⁷

In Delp’s view, the devotion reminds people that God is encountered not in abstract thought but in the person of Jesus Christ, whose gift of loving friendship with Christ entails mercy. He refers to the encounter with Jesus and His offer of mercy as a double rediscovery. In a society that is mired in war and has forgotten that the transcendent God cares for the forsaken, the devotion calls people back to the basic truth of the Christian faith:

Now it becomes apparent here [in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus] that this double rediscovery of Christ, or better, this double re-communication of the message of God and His relationship to humankind, appeals to a very specific person and has a very specific contemporary intention. . . . It is God’s way to save humankind inside and outside the Church.⁵⁴⁸

Knowing Christ includes an encounter with His love that rescues persons from a sinful culture. Though it possesses a long history, devotion to the Heart of Jesus is especially pertinent to the spiritual needs of the twentieth century, with its world wars and mass killings.⁵⁴⁹ In Delp’s society, fascism’s false idols and persecution of minorities have estranged human persons from God

---

⁵⁴⁷ My free translation of: Der Anruf des persönlichen Menschen geschieht zweifach: zu seiner Rettung und Heilung und zur inneren Wandlung in die Form Christi, d.h. in die Bereitschaft und Fähigkeit, selbst als Instrument des erlösenden und suchenden Heilswillens des Herrn wirksam und fruchtbar zu werden (ibid.).

⁵⁴⁸ My free translation of: Hier nun wird sichtbar, daß diese doppelte Wiederentdeckung Christi, oder besser, diese zweifach-erneute Mitteilung der Botschaft von Gott und seinem Verhältnis zum Menschen einen ganz bestimmten Menschen anspricht und eine ganz bestimmte zeitgeschichtliche Absicht verfolgt... Sie ist eine Maßname Gottes zur Rettung dieses unseres Geschlechtes innerhalb und außerhalb der Kirche (ibid., 4:244).

⁵⁴⁹ Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:244.
and one another. Balthasar makes a similarly urgent appeal for people to encounter and become attuned to Christ:

What is at stake, at least in a perspective of depth, is an altogether decisive turn-about in the way of seeing God. God is not, in the first place, “absolute power” but “absolute love,” and his sovereignty manifests itself not in holding on to what is its own but in its abandonment—all this in such a way that his sovereignty displays itself in transcending the opposition, known to us from the world, between power and impotence.  

Such an encounter with Christ reveals that the Divine self-abasement is integral to the biblical God. The Incarnation is an extension of the eternal “eucharistic attitude” of the Son. Jesus’ giving up of self for the world’s salvation is understood as the descent of Divine love towards humanity:

The primary reality is, not man’s movement from below up to the absolute, in order, if possible, to disappear in it, but rather, as Ignatius of Loyola emphatically repeats, the movement de arriba, coming down from above, in which God empties himself out in order to fill man up with his loving self-expropriation.

Such self-emptying is the antidote to human sin, defined by Balthasar as the arrogating of power to oneself. The person who usurps power is eventually enslaved by it; sin is seeking the false liberation of total autonomy. In devotion to the Heart of Jesus, the human person encounters God in the person of Jesus Christ, who gives His complete self to humankind to release it from sin and renew its relationship with God.

---

551 For Balthasar, the Father holds nothing back in giving Himself away to the Son, and “the Son, in responding to and accepting his Father’s self-giving, is ready to pour himself forth in any way the Father may determine.” See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama IV*, 330.
Delp moves on to describe the spiritual wretchedness of his time—the result of a modernity that has attempted to establish a false notion of freedom and complete autonomy. He asserts that the progress promised to society by the movements of modernity has distorted human existence:

The space of time from the 17th to the 20th century sees the emergence of our contemporary world. There are ever new attempts and movements of enlightenment: positivism, idealism, realism, capitalism, technoscience, the modern State, and socialism. All of them together put forth a picture of the universe which applies today and at the same time: it is the secret burden and concern of mankind. These ideologies proclaim their own image of God, their own worldview, and their own image of humanity. 554

According to Delp, such ideologies of modernity proclaim that the way to fulfillment is to be found in the world, either in an unfolding mechanical collectivism or an atomism. 555 They seek to establish a world in which humans wrest power and autonomy from God. Consequently, these ideologies create a world devoid of meaning and hope and one full of distress, where human beings have become servants of systems. Such movements have created an atrophied and paralyzed image of the human being, resulting in the isolation of human beings, the breakdown of relationships, the powerlessness of people in civic life, the commodification of human beings, and an increasing ruthlessness in interpersonal relations. 556 Such destruction of human life and relationships recalls the reason for the Temple theology of atonement. When the people disregarded the


556 Ibid., 4:246.
statutes and laws of the ancient Jewish covenant, the result was chaos. Isaiah states, “The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant” (Isa. 24:5, NAB). When the transgressions were atoned for and the covenant restored, creation was healed and made anew.

Delp’s diagnosis of the spiritual atrophy of the human condition in his meditation is echoed in Balthasar’s meditative exploration of the Heart of Jesus. Balthasar describes the human condition as “hardened into sin”; humankind’s self-absorption “has eaten away the tissues of his soul like a cancer.”557 Sin has alienated the human person from God and neighbour, consequently impoverishing him:

The rich heart, which God bestows on man, flared full of desires and consumed itself with melancholy. Every attempt to break out of this interior prison cast man into a more ruthless servitude. Grown pliant to coercion, he began to glorify the hard labor he had despised, erecting a rampart and digging a trench around the tyrannical castle of his ego.558

Both Delp and Balthasar recognize that sin disrupts life, damages the sinner, and brings harmful consequences in people’s relationships with one another and with God. The way out of human atrophy comes from an encounter with Christ, whose gift of Himself to humankind is the answer to the dilemma of sin and its consequences. Furthermore, the atoning love of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus acts as a liberating antidote to the ideologies that have paralyzed and atrophied human existence. Delp writes that the Heart of Jesus brings news of the nearness of God’s love

557 Balthasar, Heart of the World, 41.
558 Ibid.
and of “a consecrated destiny” for the world. He addresses the theme of liberation from sin in the midst of human brokenness:

Mankind is addressed most intensively in his own unique and personal atrophy. . . . The God of nearness and salvation is simply the overcoming of powerlessness, cruelty, and helplessness. Now let Christ, who is the bringer of salvation, atonement, completed deliverance, and of loving and sacrificial and strong intention, meet this person. Will his chains fall to the ground? Won’t his loneliness be overcome and his powerlessness from the most interior point of his being be suspended? Won’t this person be pulled out of the massification/commodification of humanity and shown the Word of the Lord God? Does not the law of mercilessness of this time in all its arrogance collapse? Moreover, doesn’t the eternal Spring start to flow and stream again under the blessing of fac cor meum secundum cor tuum? It will be like it was in the beginning. Fecit hominem secundum imaginem suam (Gen. 1:27). This person understands the urgency and becomes an image of the Lord or he stops being a person and dies.

The pairing of Latin phrases at the end of this meditation is significant. The phrase fac cor meum secundum cor tuum, which means “make my heart like your heart” or literally “make my heart according to your heart” is found at the end of the Litany to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and is the responsorial. The phrase fecit hominem secundum imaginem suam, taken from Genesis 1:27, means “make humanity according to your image.” The juxtaposition of the two indicates that Jesus Christ remakes or renews the human being according to His likeness.

The final part of the first prison meditation is a reflection on what it means to be interiorly transformed into what Delp calls “the form of Christ.” Here, Delp uses the word *image*, which has great biblical significance. The term conveys an anthropological view that originates from the creation story in Genesis.\(^{561}\) The opening chapter of Genesis states that God created man and woman “in His image” (1:26). The subsequent narrative relates that God “formed man [*adam*] from the dust of the ground [*adaman*] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (2:7).\(^{562}\) Biblical scholar Nahum M. Sarna points out that the creation of human beings in Genesis is an exception to the rule of creation by Divine fiat:\(^{563}\)

> Solely in the case of man is the material from which he is made mentioned. This implies a unique position for man among created things and the special relationship to God. . . . Only by virtue of this direct animation did man become a living being, drawing directly from God his life source.\(^{564}\)

Thus, it can be argued that man and woman are human persons because they are made in God’s image and are in relationship with God. In this way, an image in the biblical sense is not a static entity; it expresses a relational dimension.

In the Christian spiritual tradition, the notion of image takes on a greater importance, where the goal of contemplation is the figure of Christ. He is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) and “the stamp of God’s very being” (Heb. 1:3). He is “the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus himself man” (1 Tim. 2:5). This “mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 9.15; 12:14), being himself a man, is God’s perceptible image. The Greek word for image used


\(^{563}\) Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 14.

\(^{564}\) Ibid., 14.
in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians is εἰκόνα, which means a material image, a likeness, a representation, an exact image, a resemblance, or a portrait. The phrase “image of the invisible God” presents Christ as the new Adam, the head of the new creation (Col. 3:10). Adam has been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and commissioned to rule over all the earth (Gen. 1:28), but he has disobeyed God. Jesus Christ, who is the new head of humanity, saves humanity from sin. For Delp, the saving love of Jesus Christ, which demonstrates to human beings the purpose of their existence, encounters persons in their brokenness, isolation, or paralysis, and such love redeems human persons by re-creating them in the image of God. Christ, as the Second Adam, re-creates human beings. Humanity is meant to go beyond the original Adam, and model itself on the Second Adam, who is the ground in which a person’s entire “I” is rooted, “whence it draws its nourishment and derives all its best and most distinctive features.”

Thus, we find in Delp’s powerful denouement to the first meditation a dramatic reversal. Christ enters the impoverished human condition and rescues it by renewing humankind in His image. Just as the Temple high priest performs a ritual sacrifice to atone for the transgressions of the people and restore the bonds of creation, Christ atones for humanity by making his life a sin offering and pouring out his blood. In Delp’s meditations, in turn, the Heart of Jesus mediates Jesus’ most personal love for Delp. Such love transforms Delp, purifying him, opening his own

568 At the end of his first prison meditation on the Heart of Jesus, Delp sees the devotion as the disclosure of Jesus’ redemptive love for human persons in crisis, and His desire is to liberate them from the “chains” of modern ideologies. Delp writes that individuals are mere shadows of what they are meant to be; alienating forces are disabling and manipulating people as though they were puppets, and therefore, human faculties are disordered. See Delp, *Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, 4:246-47.
heart, and as we will see, allowing him to be joined to Christ’s self-offering. Delp will view his martyrdom as a sharing in Christ’s redemptive, sacrificial love for the sake of others.

Sharing in Christ’s redemptive work involves liberation from sin, which entails being in relationship with Christ and renewed in His image. Being transformed by the encounter with Christ enables the human person to engage with and act authentically in the world. Delp remarks critically that the religious crisis of his time is partially the result of the exclusion of love from theological thinking. He writes that modern religion suffers from two evils: “Either it is caught up/bogged down in thought, in reflection, in philosophy or theology; the end that leads to personal fulfillment does not happen here. This religiousness is without a decision and a heart.”

For Delp, theology that is mired in a certain technological rationalism keeps humanity’s affective life at the periphery. A religion based on such a theology, which would be lacking in compassion (or even paralyzed by fear in the face of atrocities and persecution), would be unable to engage with and act in the world, because it would be too abstract and too distant from people’s lives. Delp, however, does not encourage an irrational and superficial theology of love. Such a false theology of the heart is heinous:

That other basic evil, which is one of thoughtless piety, pure show, pure convention, movement and excitement of emotions. This religiousness is inhuman and subhuman, and very often a stage of development to complete ungodliness.

__________________________

569 Entweder bleibt sie im Gedanken stecken, in der Reflexion, der Philosophie oder auch der Theologie; die Vollendung bis zur personalen Verwirklichung geschieht nicht. Diese Religiosität ist ohne Entscheidung und ohne Herz (ibid., 248).

570 My free translation of: Oder aber—das andere Grundübel—die Frömmigkeit ist gedankenlos, reiner Affekt, reinen Herkomen, Bewegung und Erregung des Gemütes. Dieses Religiosität ist unmenschlich und untermenschlich und sehr oft ein Entwicklungsstadium auf dem Wege zur völligen Gottlosigkeit (ibid).
Such emotionalism is largely chaotic and incapable of commitment. Far from both a spiritual paralysis and thoughtless piety, devotion to the Heart of Jesus communicates a security or sanctuary from which persons can act in the world. Delp writes that the merciful love of the Heart of Jesus propels “people beyond themselves.” Such empowerment entails not an escape but an engagement with a reality that requires making hard decisions. Here, Delp’s insight into the empowering relationship with the Heart of Jesus and the witness of his life challenge the criticisms of Christian martyrdom as irrational, suicidal, and oblivious to the world. Accordingly, the aim of Jesus’ sacrifice is to convert human hearts and to bring sinful humankind into the inner attitude of Jesus. As a free person, Jesus exercises self-renunciation on behalf of persons who are enslaved by sin. His atoning love restores and animates fellowship with God and with other human persons.

This going beyond oneself and empowerment to engage reality are rooted in being in a transformative loving relationship with the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ:

[The devotion to the Heart of Jesus] is about the devout encountering of the love of God, of His [offer of] salvation to people. . . . It is about a personal relationship between the 2nd person of the Trinity and the human person—me. The uniqueness of the Christian religion lies in the fact that its association with Christ co-determines every reality of life, tempers it interiorly, consecrates it, and, above all else, enables and creates it. It is therefore about a relationship of personal intimacy between Christ and me.\(^{574}\)

\(^{571}\) Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:248.
\(^{572}\) Ibid., 4:249.
\(^{573}\) Ibid., 4:248.
A Christian exists as one who has been given an identity by virtue of the saving love of Christ. The healing entails permitting Christ’s saving love to address the human person at the core of his existence. Moreover, because Christ has entered into complete solidarity with sinful humankind, God takes up a concern for all aspects of our lives, including those aspects that are sinful. Thus, Christ transforms the human person, one so unfit for speech, into a dialogue partner with God.\textsuperscript{575} Both Delp and Balthasar understand Christ as the criterion of what it means to be a human person.\textsuperscript{576} As stated earlier, the defining mark of a human person’s relationship with God is God’s rescue of the person, permitting God to impress the form of Christ onto the finite person.\textsuperscript{577} Delp’s meditation on his experience in prison reflects this theology of becoming attuned to God through prayer. He writes at the start of his second prison meditation on the Heart of Jesus:

> Between heaven and earth there is no great chaos and, also, no great silence or a sort of generous neutrality, but rather, that living relationship, which goes back and forth—from this truth prayer, adoration, and religion live, and I have utterly and completely lived from it during the last few weeks. Moreover, it should remain that way.\textsuperscript{578}

Here, Delp acknowledges that his following after Jesus proceeds from his encounter with and transformation by Christ. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus assists Delp, because the merciful love of God in Christ encounters Delp in his sufferings and transforms the sufferings into prayer, into a dialogue with God in the midst of forsakenness. The message of the Heart of Jesus thereby

\textsuperscript{575} Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama II}, 72.
\textsuperscript{576} Ellero Babini, “Jesus Christ, Form and Norm of Man according to Hans Urs von Balthasar,” \textit{Communio} 16.3 (Fall 1989): 447.
confers a meaning on Delp’s imprisonment it would not have conferred otherwise, a meaning that entails a participation in Christ’s work for the redemption of the world. True human existence entails being led by the Divine towards the likeness of Christ.

Moreover, the human person does not leave behind his creatureliness for a pseudodivinity. On the contrary, the human person is taken up along with his creatureliness into the Divine life to become the person he is meant to be:

Whenever the Lord touches a creature, He leads it to its own perfection and fulfillment and, at the same time, beyond itself. He does not destroy the addressed “you” but instead makes it a more complete “I” than it could have become on its own.  

This passage asserts that relationality is fundamental to human existence. The human person does not exist principally in himself, but rather realizes himself in God. Meanwhile, the person who rejects God’s offer of friendship by intending “to assert himself and realize his potential (on his own) goes inward and shuts himself off and sits small, tight, and cramped within himself.”

Delp’s reproof is drawn from his critical stance towards contemporary German culture, which had been dominated by ideologies and a totalitarian system, declaring itself to be Divine and endeavoring to remake the image and destiny of the human being apart from God. Delp believes this culture had delivered humankind into a way of death, which had alienated people from the world and from each other. It had “made [the world] too small. Only just ‘worldly.’” Delp


580 Während der andere Mensch, der im Willen, sich selbst, durchzusetzen und zu verwirklichen, sich in sich verschließt, klein und eng krampfig in sich sitzen bleibt und von den großen Weiten und Wundern keine Ahnung hat (ibid., 4:252).

581 Ibid., 4:254.

582 Ibid.
remarks that these ideologies and systems had severed the creative tensions of existence: the eternal from history, the spiritual from the sensual, the individual from the social. The destruction of these tensions had resulted from people wanting to take “the path of the shortcut” in life, but over the long run, it had produced injustices and damaged the human capacity for relationship.\textsuperscript{583} For Balthasar, such people opt to serve for “their ‘I’ instead of God’s selfless love,”\textsuperscript{584} and this choice results in alienation. Both Delp and Balthasar understand that the soteriological love of God in Christ works to counteract and free humanity from sin. Both acknowledge that sin is basically the creaturely attempt to wrest power from God and to be godlike in the sense of being absolutely autonomous.

Though ideologies have damaged the creaturely capacity for relationship, they have not destroyed it. Despite humanity’s fallen condition, the image of God in the human person is not completely lost or irrevocably damaged. The love of God made known in Christ meets the human being in his brokenness and awakens in the human person his dignity and relationship with Christ. In Delp’s meditations, the Heart of Jesus communicates the Divine love poured out in Jesus Christ, who meets people in their isolated alienation and liberates them:

The person needs to know that a heart is beating here which can do more than the little or the many things which a human heart is capable of. O, a lively heart is quite powerful. It overcomes distance. It climbs over walls. It breaks through loneliness. It redeems forlornness that nobody else has the courage to address, who first wants to think and then help. “Love can do everything,” says Paul (1 Cor. 13:7).\textsuperscript{585}

\textsuperscript{583} Ibid., 4:257–58.
\textsuperscript{585} My free translation of: Der Mensch soll wissen, daß ihm hier ein Herz schlägt, das mehr aufbringt als das Viel oder Wenig, dessen ein Menschenherz fähig ist. O, ein lebendiges Herz ist schon mächtig. Es überwindet Entfer-
The ability to restore creative tension and relationship lies in the one who maintains the relationships between the eternal and the temporal, the spiritual and the sensual, and the individual and the social. In addition, the restoration of the bonds of creation and human relations requires an atoning high priest. The one who is the source of all existence and redemptive love is Jesus Christ:

[In the Heart of Jesus], our unfathomable peril is outwitted and overcome by the alliance of human experience of peril and divine blissful joyfulness. . . . With confidence let us move away from all alienation, because we have met a heart, and we have offered ourselves to this heart that knows peril thoroughly, which is committed to healing our perils by having God commit Himself to us.586

In order to ransom the human condition from within, God infiltrates the prison of human alienation not through power but through the love of Christ within human existence.

For both Delp and Balthasar, the mission of Christ is not simply to assert God’s love for people, but to rescue human persons and lead them into friendship and partnership with God. Such a graced relationship with Christ is made possible by the Incarnation, which inaugurates reconciliation with God and the possibility of the fullness of life:

Everything that lives before God lives through Him and because of Him. Even if a person realizes this only very late, he nonetheless drinks from this source. This is not intended to be a hardening [of the person], not a restriction, but freedom, and only those who are secure are capable of this.587
For Delp, devotion to the Heart of Jesus communicates a relationship with and guidance from a merciful God. It reveals that the desire for autonomy will lead humankind to its ruin. Such attempts to seize absolute power and autonomy are reflected in Delp’s remarks concerning the movements of modernity—capitalism, socialism, and scientism—that seek to remake the world in their own image. In Delp’s reflection on the Heart of Jesus, the love of God helps to heal the human person by restoring his relationship with God and with others. According to Balthasar, this saving love opens up a kenotic disposition for human beings, inviting them to live in a manner contrary to the distorted desire to seek power and autonomy. Rather they are to embrace a freedom constituted by self-giving and loving relationships. In the love of Jesus, as exemplified in the Heart of Jesus, Delp finds a liberated manner of living. In light of sin, God acts to return the human person to his true self from the perverse world in which he has been lost. The Divine initiative brings the person into the depths of his own being, in which he recognizes himself as a creature made in the image of God. Finally, the conversion of the human person leads him to surrender himself to God and draws him into the redemptive work of Christ. These dynamics find their centre in Jesus Christ and are expressed theologically in devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

3.3.4 The Heart of Jesus as the Pattern of a Self-Sacrificing Life

Delp’s prison meditations indicate why he so clearly wrote in his tertianship prayer journal that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the preeminent devotion of Catholic life. Delp’s reflection on the unfathomable depths of Christ’s love led him to understand the possibility of a transformation of the self and its being drawn into the redemptive work of Christ. Though Delp did not complete the meditation on the Heart of Jesus, it is clear that worshipping Christ under the aspect of this devotion enables a certain way of participating in Christ’s redemptive love. In a homily to
the parishioners of St. Georg during an Advent Holy Hour on 4 December 1942, Delp preached that a life devoted to the Heart of Jesus ought to bear the guilt of others. For Delp, a life characterized by self-giving as shaped by devotion to the Heart of Jesus is understood as reparation. If God the Father has redeemed humankind by the representative atoning love of His incarnate Son, this entails that in and through Christ, God has enabled human persons to share in Christ’s redemptive work through acts of reparation.\(^{588}\)

Delp begins the homily with an acknowledgement of his parishioners’ fears and anxieties. He comforts them by confirming that Advent celebrates a God who earnestly seeks humankind until “people’s hearts and God’s heart beat together in one rhythm.”\(^{589}\) Moreover, he appeals to his parishioners not to think of their own concerns but to be “representatives and intercessors for a troubled, beaten, and spiritually helpless mankind.”\(^{590}\) For Delp, taking on such tasks requires the heart to be awake and ready to receive the Lord—instead of encrusted, embittered, and deadened.\(^{591}\) Advent prepares us to receive “the form to [our] existence,”\(^{592}\) that is, the Heart of Jesus. Delp preaches that the Heart of Jesus proclaims a God who is and shows Himself to be the goal of human existence:

*Cor Jesu* [the Heart of Jesus] stands before humankind with the wounds He bears in the center of His heart. A deeply essential feature of our life is visible here. Even from the

\(^{588}\) As stated, a theology of reparation includes an act done by one on behalf of another in order to restore harmony between parties. The most important way in which reparation is comprehended theologically in devotion to the Heart of Jesus is the atonement, which Christ has made for humanity to the Father in his redemptive sacrifice. In this thesis, atonement is ascribed to Jesus, whereas reparation is ascribed to human persons.


\(^{590}\) Ibid.

\(^{591}\) Ibid., 81.

\(^{592}\) Ibid.
natural perspective, the idea of sacrifice belongs to the pattern of life, and it belongs even more to the pattern of the Christian [life].

This poignant passage illustrates for Delp’s parishioners that the Word is not merely made flesh but is “made” into a pierced heart. He reminds them that the Heart of Jesus evokes the Divine initiative to save humankind. They are led to see that the Divine pro nobis summons them to a conversion and invites them to be partners in the redemptive work of Christ. For Delp, if a human being “does not come out beyond himself into such intimacy with God, letting the Divine merciful reality flow in,” then he becomes “less than himself.”

To be fully human and free, for Delp, involves living selflessly. This notion of self-giving in Delp’s homily involves serving one’s community and taking on its brokenness. For Delp, the Heart of Jesus illuminates this feature of Christian discipleship:

> Whoever is not capable of standing before one’s community, one’s brothers [and sisters], and somehow taking their deepest needs upon yourself—coming before the Lord God and taking on the guilt, taking on the punishment—without this capability, then one still lacks a great deal before one can call oneself a Christian.

Delp shows that devotion to the Heart of Jesus demands a life of self-giving in the form of acts of reparation. Nonetheless, Delp is not demanding that people perform impressive acts; the commitment to one’s brothers and sisters in need does not require great works but rather a greatness of heart: “God does not need great pathos or great works. He needs greatness of heart. He cannot calculate with zeroes.” Persons who are confronted by Christ’s love in the Heart of Jesus understand that genuine love entails a total commitment. Here, true devotion to the Heart of

---

593 Ibid., 82.
594 Ibid.
595 Ibid.
596 Ibid.
597 Ibid.
Jesus is not just a private act tending towards excessive sentimentality, but involves the recognition that sin is marked by a perverted self-love and the falsehood of autonomy. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus calls human persons to the love of God when they have gone astray. The implication of Delp’s homily is that the Heart of Jesus calls and transforms persons, enabling them to form loving relationships and to be a light for the world. Inseparable from the devotion is the grieving over the sins of humanity undertaken by those who are seized by the love of Jesus’ heart and their desire to participate in reparation. For Delp, the atonement of Jesus enables human persons to realize in their own lives what Christ has offered on their behalf and gratuitously invites them into the redemptive work of Christ. This way of looking at the human commitment to reparation can be further explored in Balthasar’s theology.

The invitation to participate in the fruits of Christ’s redemptive love is discussed in the fourth motif of salvation: Christ’s saving love is the invitation to respond to the freedom from sin won by Christ. His self-sacrificial love has consequences for Christian discipleship, which is conceived to be a life of service.597 Here Balthasar transitions from the notion of ransomed individuals saved from death and the futile search for autonomy to the incorporation of the Christian into the redemptive work of Christ. Human persons are invited to let go of their resistance to God and enter into a relationship with the Son to find their true mission and personhood. The believer is “given a unique participation in the Son’s uniqueness,” resulting in the “inexhaustible multiplication of what is once-for-all and unique.”598 This participation permits each individual person

597 Powers, A Spiritual Theology of Priesthood, 41.
598 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Theo-Drama II: Theological Dramatic Theory: Man in God (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 270.
to fulfill himself in an utterly distinct manner within the realm of infinite freedom.\textsuperscript{599} Drawing on Balthasar’s theology, Ellero Babini writes

Consequently, the Christian, like Christ, becomes one sent: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). Christ is the principal actor or protagonist of the “drama,” and he enables man to recite his part and become a Mitspieler, a co-actor. As in Christology, so in anthropology the keystone is provided by the category “mission.”\textsuperscript{600}

A key to appreciating Balthasar’s anthropology is the concept of mission. The mission of Jesus is the historical and human continuation of the eternal procession of the Word of God.\textsuperscript{601} Balthasar stresses that Jesus’ mission is unique due to its universal eschatological significance—the salvation of the whole world—\textsuperscript{602} and human beings are liberated by Christ and invited by him to participate in his continuing redemptive work.

For Delp, “to stand under the impression of Christ” is to allow Christ “to take shape” in a person. Balthasar’s discussion of mission involves his understanding of personhood. The word \textit{person} derives from the Greek \textit{prosopon}, which originally meant “mask” and evolved to imply “role.” The meaning of \textit{person} therefore originated in the context of ancient Greek theatre, particularly in relation to the masks worn by actors. Balthasar re-appropriates the word’s original meaning by equating the Christian’s mission with a “role” in the Divine-human drama:

In the identity of Jesus’ person and mission, we have the realization par excellence of what is meant by a dramatic “character”: namely a figure who, by carrying out his role, either attains his true face or unveils the hidden face. . . . Thus, in the theo-drama, he is

\textsuperscript{599} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{600} Babini, 447.
\textsuperscript{602} Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama IV}, 159.
not only the main character but the model for all other actors and the one who gives them their own identity as characters. Because Jesus reveals God by fulfilling His role—that is, by performing His mission—both the role and person of Jesus are central to Christian revelation. Balthasar is indebted here to St. Thomas Aquinas’ explication of the Divine mission, in which the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit presuppose and manifest the eternal procession from which Balthasar concludes this explication that in Jesus, personhood and mission are united. Jesus is the “sent” Son; His mission is linked with His personhood. Jesus’ heartfelt obedience to the Father is at the heart of the New Testament proclamation. Jesus’ obedience to His mission is central to His preaching of the Kingdom; it is for the sake of the Father’s love that Jesus gives Himself unconditionally to His mission. Moreover, it is this unconditional self-giving that Balthasar identifies as the inner disposition of love that qualifies Jesus’ life as a gift of self, a self-sacrifice to renew the human relationship with God. Because Jesus is the archetype of what it is to be a person, as well as the source of all personhood,

[other humans can] claim to be persons only by virtue of a relationship with him and in dependence on him. In the case of other persons, we cannot speak of an identity between the “I” and the mission, as it exists in Jesus; but we can say that their conscious subjects are endowed with a part or aspect of his universal mission. . . . There is room within the incomparable uniqueness of Christ, who is exclusively authorized to represent God and his kingdom in the world, for others to have analogous, unique, personal missions. In this light, the human being is created in the image of Christ and is destined to grow into an ever-fuller likeness to Christ. In Christ, every human being can cherish the hope of not re-

604 Ibid., 207–08.
605 Babini, 447.
maining only an individually conscious subject. They can receive the “Christ-form” from God and become a person with a mission that is, likewise, defined in Christ. Each human being has a purpose, and it is through prayer that each one is oriented towards his purpose. In contemplative dialogue, each human person becomes open to God, who then reveals to each person the purpose of his existence. This revelation involves the human being receiving a God-given mission, which fulfills his personhood.

Taken together, the writings of Delp and Balthasar communicate that the Christian believer is incorporated into the death, Resurrection, and mission of Jesus, formed in Jesus’ praxis, and led to his truest self. Jesus opens up a dimension of Christian mission in which the human person becomes configured to Jesus Christ and can be given a share in His redemptive work. In Delp’s meditations, the pierced Heart of Jesus clarifies what true freedom is and is not. Proud persons who arrogate freedom for themselves and try to rebel against God travel the road to slavery. Jesus’ freedom is different. He knows Himself as a gift from the Father, and in gratitude He freely gives Himself back in love and loving service. As a result of their sinfulness, human persons are unfree and are unloving, but thanks to Christ they have been liberated by His love and can share in His love for the Father and for their fellow human beings.

God’s communication of His love in Jesus Christ is what enables the Christian pattern of selfless giving. Through Delp’s reflections on the love of Christ in devotion to the Heart of Jesus, one can trace a spiritual journey anchored in God’s saving love in Jesus Christ and reflected in Balthasar’s soteriology. In Delp’s meditations, human persons are invited into the Paschal Mys-

Discipleship, for Delp and Balthasar, is simply a choice to surrender self to Christ’s love and live from that in life of a self-giving that includes giving oneself to one’s community and taking on people’s deepest needs and burdens. As indicated above, the healing and re-creating love of Jesus Christ brings human persons to a more complete “I” than they could ever merit on their own, and the transformative love of Christ moves a person out of his “I” into the “we” of the community. In the choice to follow Jesus, disciples make space for God to define what humanity should be and abandon their definition of creaturely fulfillment and happiness. Discipleship entails becoming an instrument of Christ’s redemptive love in the world.

Christ being “for us” means that His atoning death restores sinners to their relationship with God. Jesus’ pro nobis does not disregard the human person as a free subject, but rather draws the human person out of his sinful self-preoccupation in a mode of conversion. Jesus enables the human person to be truly himself vis-à-vis God. Throughout the process of conversion, the human person turns his back on the path of sin, humbles his heart before God, surrenders his self to God, and becomes committed to reparation. For Delp, converted human persons, oriented towards the Father in the Son, can “take on the deepest needs” of their fellow brothers and sisters. Delp further specifies this responsibility to one’s neighbours as taking on their “guilt” and “punishment.” Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus and Balthasar’s soteriology suggest that conversion involves not just a turning away from sin, but also a confrontation against sin in which the believer bears sin by participating in Christ’s redemptive sacrificial love. Reparation cannot be understood apart from conversion and forgiveness. In this way, the discussion of conversion and reparation in this chapter complements the previous chapter’s discussion of the Law of the Cross. Lonergan understands the Law of the Cross as the manner in which God wills from eternity to confront evil by transforming it into a greater good. The Law of the Cross is found in
Christ as the Head of the Body of Christ. Believers are transformed by and conformed to Him, united to His Cross by bearing their own crosses. Thus, disciples bear the costs of sin in order to transform them into a greater virtue in Christ. Taking on the deepest needs of one’s neighbour is thus not a penalty but a means of participation in Christ’s redemptive work. It is in this way that Christians can enter into the life-giving redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

The fifth motif of Christ’s saving love is the most comprehensive. It identifies Divine love as that which initiates the entirety of God’s movement towards creation. The first significant aspect of this motif is that it is the Trinity that loves.\(^{607}\) The Cross is pure love, a testimony both to God’s unfathomable love and power to forgive sinful human beings. Christ’s self-emptying cannot be separated from Trinitarian love. Furthermore, it is a loving Triune God who effects salvation, and this love is most definitive in the Incarnation itself. This is clear in the beginning of Delp’s second meditation on devotion to the Heart of Jesus, in which he asserts that to call upon the Heart of the Son is to call upon the Father.\(^{608}\) The devotion allows Delp to experience Jesus’ interior disposition of free and self-giving love. It allows him to encounter Jesus’ loving relationship with the Father. Defined by filial love, intimacy, and surrender and obedience, the Divine relationship of Son and Father filled Jesus’ human heart. The Father’s love flows to the Son and, in Him and through Him, to humankind. And the purest human love, the authentic love of humankind, flows to the Father from the Heart of the Son. Thus, for Delp, the Heart of Jesus symbolizes the innermost dwelling of God and His fundamental relationship to human beings, which includes God’s desire to return a humankind gone astray to the Father by means of the

\(^{607}\) With this thought, we reject the charge that Christianity believes in an abusive divine Father. 

love of Christ.\textsuperscript{609} In the contemplative texts of Delp, one understands that God loves created the world and desires humankind to be sharers of His love. The Triune God is not detached from the sufferings of the world.

In the context of the Nazis’ attempt to deconstruct human persons by destroying their relationships, the Heart of Jesus conveys a certain smashing of idols—of the notions of a solitary and aloof God and a human being either condemned to atomization or deemed “superfluous.” The image marks an opening towards a God who can be found at the lowest points of the world, like the streets and the cold, dank prisons. The sovereignty and power of God is expressed among the very least, and devotion to the Heart of Christ, for Delp, becomes the place where the brokenness of his world and the smallness of his heart meet the expansive, healing love of God:

From these depths [of the Heart of Jesus] comes the inexhaustible and the untiring heart of salvation. It is Divine [love] that makes this heart and flows from it. Divine immensity and depths... Here there is immeasurable comfort for the great peril of the world to which we have all fallen ill.\textsuperscript{610}

In Delp’s life history and in his writings, the Heart of Christ far from imposing itself on the human being with absolute power, leaves space for the person to be who he is meant to be and carries him through the darkest periods. The Heart of Jesus, in Delp’s writings and life, reveals a God whose sovereignty is found in self-emptying service, transformative suffering, and making room for the other.

\textsuperscript{609} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{610} My free translation of: Aus diesen Tiefen stammt die Unerschöpflichkeit und die Unermüdlichkeit des Heilandsherzen. Es sind göttliche Quellen, die sich diesem Herzen geben und aus ihm strömen. Göttliche Unermüdlichkeit und Abgründigkeit... Hier liegt unermesslicher Trost bereit für die große Weltnot, an der wir heute alle krank sind (Delp, Gesammte Schriften: Aus dem Gefängnis, 4:257).
3.4 Conclusion

The Christian martyr Alfred Delp encountered and was transformed by Christ into a more loving human person during his imprisonment. Being drawn into Divine love demands a uniting with others in the context of a greater whole—a commitment to the world. Balthasar writes, “When a human being becomes a person, theologically, by being given a unique vocation and mission, he is simultaneously de-privatized, socialized, made into a locus and bearer of community.” The real effect of encountering the rescuing love of Christ is the fulfillment of the self and a deeper solidarity with others than could otherwise have been realized by human agency alone.

The martyrdom of Alfred Delp was the consequence of living out of an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Intimacy with Jesus, according to Balthasar, is a deliberate attuning of the self to the accord between Christ and the Father. He maintains that humans must learn how to look to Christ if they are to discover the truth about themselves. To be truly conformed to Christ, the human being must pray, and the kind of prayer Balthasar has in mind is one that entails an encounter with God in Christ and a devoted listening to God. Balthasar describes this dynamic as the hearing of faith, which should be understood not as a passive experience but rather as an experience that involves the listener’s active response. Because God takes the initiative in prayer, a receptive disposition of listening is paramount. What takes place in listening during prayer is an openness to be drawn into intimacy with God. As such, listening is the willingness to be changed, to be converted. This chapter argues that Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus em-

\[611\] Balthasar, Theo-Drama III, 271.
\[612\] Nichols, Divine Fruitfulness, 260.
phasizes that the saving friendship of God is addressed to the human heart in order to transform the human person. The next chapter explores this transformed identity as an act of the Holy Spirit. Delp did not achieve a deeper understanding of and friendship with Christ on his own, but on the basis of the Holy Spirit’s agency. Chapter 4 explores the transformed identity of Delp and his imprisoned Kreisau Circle friends as an ecumenical phenomenon. The work of communicating Christ and establishing the body of Christ belongs to the Spirit.
Chapter 4 Prayer as Entrance into New Life

4.1 Introduction

In the earlier sections of this thesis, I have discussed positive and negative assessments of Christian martyrdom and pointed out aspects of Alfred Delp’s life that illustrate how his self-giving unto death is grounded in his relationship with Christ. Using the writings of Bernard Lonergan, I noted that Delp’s journey entailed a profound conversion and deepening self-abandonment to the saving love of Christ. In the previous chapter, I explored the significance of prayer and the saving love of Christ in the narrative of Alfred Delp. I also examined Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus, a devotion focusing on an encounter with the saving love of Christ. Using the writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar, I explained that this love encountered in friendship with Christ is grounded in the selfless love of the Triune God, a response to save humanity from its sin and brokenness. The experience of profound friendship with Christ involved Delp being drawn into the redemptive work of Christ in healing a broken world.

This chapter argues for the importance of the Holy Spirit in the maturation of Delp’s relationship with Christ: Delp’s last prison meditation is on the Spirit. The first section of the Chapter introduces the argument, while the second explores Delp’s writings on the Spirit as the one who renews humanity by helping persons to recognize their brokenness and to offer them forgiveness. Delp’s pneumatology is brought into dialogue with Balthasar’s pneumatology in the following subsection. The Spirit who renews humanity is the Spirit of Christ, who saves humanity by initiating humanity into Christ’s redemptive work. The third section examines Delp’s writings on Christian discipleship as informed by the Spirit: for Delp, the Spirit prepares men and women for a relationship with Christ and guides them in following Christ. This third section is
divided into two subsections, the first of which explores Delp’s Advent and Christmas meditations from prison in the light of Delp’s insights on the Spirit. In these two meditations, we see saints and martyrs associated with the Advent and Christmas seasons. For Delp, these holy men and women represent models for following Christ during difficult times and offer us examples of self-giving witness rooted in the Cross. The second subsection brings Delp’s insights on discipleship into dialogue with Balthasar’s theology of the saints, whom Balthasar explains are disciples who respond to Christ’s call to be a part of God’s salvific process. He argues that holy men and women are best understood in light of the saving love of Christ as witnessed on the Cross. Disciples are concrete examples of the kenotic disposition.

4.2 Delp’s Meditation on the Spirit: Giver of Kenotic Life

After his trial and sentencing, Alfred Delp was held in prison for another three weeks before his execution on 2 February 1945. During this time, he wrote two more meditations, one on the “Our Father” and one on the Holy Spirit. A passage from the latter, which is a reflection on the Pentecost hymn “Come, Holy Spirit,” describes the Spirit as the love of God with which God loves Himself and all humanity:

The Holy Spirit is the passion with which God loves Himself. Man has to correspond with that passion. He has to ratify it and accomplish it. If he learns how to do this, the world will once again become capable of true love. We cannot know and love God unless God seizes hold of us and tears us away from our selfishness. God has to love Himself in and through us, and we shall then live in God’s truth, and love will once more become the living heart of the world.\footnote{Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ: Prison Writings, 148.}
The Dominican theologian Yves Congar interprets this passage as an example of the Spirit liberating human persons. This Spirit-given freedom is not dependent on human whim, which would be an illusory freedom or a caricature of freedom which, in fact, destroys freedom if it is taken too far.\textsuperscript{614} The Spirit, who liberates persons, places within them the law of love; such a law does not restrain people but rather frees them to do what is good.

Delp’s meditations and prayer diary show that his practice of prayer went beyond the individual person praying, went even beyond the impression that what is taking place is a coupling of two dissimilar monads: God and the human person at prayer. The act of prayer is communal in that the instigator of prayer is the Spirit who works for the good of the whole Body of Christ. In Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus, he does not go, as it were, to Christ, but Christ draws close to him in prayer. Prayer involves God, who is “more than an idea, a proposition, or an aloof spectator.”\textsuperscript{615} It entails a God who offers the human person an intimate relationship:

And, in spite of the necessary submission on the part of the creature, the whole of religion is a truly personal relationship, and of nothing is this more true than of the divine intimacy between Creator and creature. It is intimacy, a true friendship.\textsuperscript{616}

Friendship with God, which transforms the human person into the likeness of Christ, is not the result of the human but the divine initiative:

[The Spirit] is the giver; through Him we can be shaped to the likeness of the Son. He gives us new life and makes us capable of living. He heartens us, strengthens our will, heightens our understanding so that we may believe and hope and love—that is, we may

draw nearer to God and live in unity with Him... There is only one way to progress, and that is by praying and praying in the right way.\textsuperscript{617}

The paramount role of the Spirit in Delp’s prayer and formation as a disciple is affirmed when he speaks of the Spirit as dwelling and working within the centre of our being:

[H]ere, in the very centre of our being, the temple of the Holy Spirit should be established. It is the very nature of the Holy Spirit to penetrate and blend with the life impulses, purifying and completing them and thus imbuing them with its own intensity and assurance.\textsuperscript{618}

For Delp, the human person’s rescue and re-creation in the image of Christ do not take place without the Spirit’s assistance. The dialogue of prayer, which entails the suspension of one’s own agenda, is not a communication between the solitary individual and a divine monad:

The one indispensable condition is that we remain receptive, \textit{listening for the inner voice}. . . That is why our prayer today must be [in] the Creator Spirit, who works in us and fulfills our needs, bringing us to our true selves in our personal lives.\textsuperscript{619}

For Delp, the Spirit acts within the human person to guide him to God and in this way to true self-fulfillment. It is the Spirit who empowers the person to surrender him- or herself to God, who is the one who teaches the creature to pray. Such intimacy with God in the Spirit is encountered as an experience of interior healing and renewal. The actualization of our freedom lies in the surrender of ourselves to God’s healing Spirit, who is more interior to us than we are to ourselves:

God is within us like a fountain, and we are guests invited to refresh ourselves. We must discover this fountain within ourselves and let its healing waters flow over the parched land of our lives. Then the desert will blossom . . . From within, you will receive the strength and the spiritual assurance to conquer. How often have I proved this in the stress of these last dismal months of burden and depression—suddenly renewed strength would

\textsuperscript{617} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{618} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{619} Ibid., 124-25.
flood my whole being like a sunrise. . . Unless we find these inner fountains, these healing waters, no outward rest, no relaxation, will help us.620

Delp states that though the Spirit does renew the heart, he does not suggest an irrational theology of the heart. As in his meditations on the Heart of Jesus, the quickening work of the Spirit is not one of exuberance to the point of “thoughtless piety” and the “excitement of emotions.” The perfecting work of the Spirit purifies the immature emotions that prevent a human being from properly engaging the world:

Coolness in heat; the Holy Spirit as the source of our power to cope with the contingencies of life. God’s passion for Himself, which finds expression through the human spirit, burns up a person’s incipient passions. . . Such a person is equipped to meet the trials that assail him from both within and without; his decision is unerring because he keeps the end in view and the measure in his hand. A courageous person is filled with the Holy Ghost; he is calm and clear headed. His chariot may indeed be drawn by spirited horses, but they are well controlled.621

Moreover, the Spirit acts within persons to enable them to recognize humanity’s broken condition, its lack of truth, and its abuse of freedom. A poverty of the human spirit and the misuse of finite freedom are the cause of much suffering:

I am not concerned here with the material needs of humankind but with our degeneration, our blunted faculties and spiritual poverty. . . Just as there are virtues that can also be acquired, so also there are faults that result from repetition such as habitual unawareness of individuality, perpetual relinquishment of powers of decision, permanent weakening of the sense of reality, and so on. Faced with these shortcomings we find ourselves under a terrible strain and utterly helpless. These are the misfortunes we might suffer, but they do not come [from] any limitations of human nature. Rather they come from the wrong use of human freedom. Hence, one must accept responsibility for the misuse of one’s free will.622
The Spirit liberates individuals for rightful possession of their freedom, providing them with the ability to act accordingly.

The Spirit allows persons to be conscious that they will be judged on their actions or omissions. Delp writes that the path to salvation demands that human beings confront their abuse of free will. When human beings fail to repent of their abuse of freedom, they allow themselves to remain in conditions of helplessness. The Spirit helps human persons to perceive their faults:

But the healing, creative intervention of God cannot be dispensed with, and this is the most potent at the moment of contact with the Holy Ghost. It is in the bliss of that contact that we come to an awareness of our human limitations and the unworthiness of sin.

Then the creaturely response is to surrender to God’s Word – Christ. Nonetheless, it is clear that Delp emphasizes the divine initiative of the Spirit in the healing of human persons.

The Christian, as typified by Alfred Delp, does not gaze into the mystery of God’s healing and renewing love at a distance. The Spirit, as the divine gift, takes up residence in the deepest recesses of the human person and incorporates him into the mystery of God:

Our prayer applies to the terms of personal intimacy on which we ought to live with the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. . . Intimacy with the Holy Spirit is grace in the concrete form. Left to ourselves we are incomplete, not quite human. God is part of the definition of a human; inner unity with God is the primary condition for a fulfilled and successful life. The decision to recognize this is the greatest that we can make and the only one that will rescue us from the chaos in which we are involved.

623 Ibid., 137.
624 Ibid., 137-38.
625 Ibid., 133.
The persons who live based on intimacy with the Spirit can draw on a love that enables them to bear trials and hardship of their own and others. The Spirit comes to persons in times of distress and offers them solace and the nearness of God.626

There is no fiber of our being that the healing Spirit cannot reach as long as we are willing to let it do its creative, healing work. It goes on in silence within us and we should remind ourselves constantly that in alliance with God we possess powers of recuperation which enable us to endure the most grievous wounds without flinching and go on meeting the demands life makes on us.627

The Spirit gives persons assurance that human life is not in the hands of a merciless fate.

The Spirit purifies the finite heart so the person can love God and the world in a proper manner. In prayer, the Spirit engages the dilemma of spiritual paralysis, which Delp in his first two prison meditations described as inertia in the face of evil. Here, he characterizes it as that “which induces us to betray the fundamental laws of our existence.”628 Humanity is caught up in living in view of self-preservation, which reveals a spiritual rigidity and paralysis. This spiritual disorder hinders our capacity to receive others and give ourselves to others in love. Genuine love does not hide from the world’s ailments, but rather makes one vulnerable, because love reaches out to others:

Dangerous is that inner paralysis which induces us to betray the fundamental laws of our existence. No longer living to all truth, to all goodness, we pull up short apart, rest on our laurels and lead the life of a pensioner. We no longer strain with all our might to achieve ideals, reaching for the stars. The command to love God with all one’s heart, with all one’s mind, and with all one’s strength no longer has any meaning for us.629

626 Ibid., 125.
627 Ibid., 143.
628 Ibid., 144.
629 Ibid.
Thus, the Spirit draws us from falsehood and brokenness into Christ and greater depths within ourselves:

> Wash what is stained. This must be the prayer for all who long for unity with God in the core of their being. . . Humans cannot live without this creative contact with their Maker, and these fountains are unsealed by honest and complete surrender. This is the indispensable act on our part—surrender and prayer.\(^{630}\)

We do not identify with the Spirit, but we identify with Christ. Nevertheless, it is the Spirit that empowers us to relate to Christ and thus, to relate to our genuine selves for our healing and salvation. Self-abandonment, for Delp, begins at the start of one’s journey with Christ.

Delp maintains that the person has a dialogical dimension made possible by the Spirit, who is an integral aspect of human existence. An existence without the Spirit is characterized as a hardening and numbing of the heart:

> A numbed person deludes himself into believing that he cannot hear the inner voice that calls on him to shake off this numbness and rise out of himself. He is bound and fettered to himself and wastes away in that condition. He becomes incapable of living faith, as he is incapable of dialogue, the fundamental form of creative life in every aspect. True faith, reverence, respect, love, adoration—all these are forms of the dialogue, and all of them are stifled in the numbness brought about by the hardening of the heart.\(^{631}\)

The Spirit works within the spiritually rigid and paralyzed human person to change him from the inside out. Paul’s Letter to the Thessalonians sheds further light on Delp’s reflections, when Paul advises Christians against “sleeping” through sin or negligence and urges believers to “stay alert and sober. . . [and to put] on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation” (1 Thess. 5:6, 8). The Greek word for “sleep” is καθεύδω, which can mean being prone to spiritual laziness and indifference. The Spirit’s task entails prompting individuals from

\(^{630}\) Ibid., 138.

\(^{631}\) Ibid., 146.
being mere spectators to putting on their spiritual armour and helmet and caring for the world. Delp writes that the Spirit, who works from within human persons, can rescue them by rousing them to their spiritual destiny in God and enabling them to perceive their egoism and petrified existence.632

4.2.1 Delp’s Pneumatology in Dialogue with Balthasar’s Pneumatology

There are four marks of the work of the Spirit in Delp’s meditations. The first mark is that the Spirit enables the human person to pray, which conforms the person to Christ. The second mark involves how the Spirit heals the human person’s spiritual paralysis and enables the person to engage the world’s difficulties. The third mark concerns the Spirit’s renewal or deep conversion, which does not bring the person to an irrational state of being but a controlled passion. The fourth mark includes the Spirit being more interior to us than we are to ourselves.

Delp’s insights on the work of the Spirit in prayer follow in accord with the Christian tradition, which speaks of the Holy Spirit as the one who prays in and through human beings on their behalf. The Spirit takes them up into a prayer that is not originally their own. For Balthasar, the pattern is that the Spirit transforms people through prayer, not that they change themselves:

It makes a great difference to the act of contemplation [prayer] whether I see myself as an isolated subject, who is assisted by God’s grace; or whether in faith, I have the conviction that my own inadequate attempt to understand is supported by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, that my acts of worship, petition, and thanksgiving are borne along and remodeled by the Spirit’s infinite and eternal acts in that ineffable union by which all human doing and being has been lifted up and plunged into the river of eternal life and love.633

632 Ibid., 145.
633 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Prayer, 76.
Arguably, Christian theology typically understands the Son as sending the Spirit and enabling our relationship with the Spirit. The Spirit, however, also enables our relationship with the Son.

Aidan Nichols explains:

Insofar as the Spirit makes this possible for us, we can speak not just, as hitherto, of an antecedent role of the Son making possible our relation with the Spirit but also an antecedent role of the Spirit enabling our relation with the Son.  

Balthasar speaks of the sending of the Son and the Spirit as two phases of the action through which God the Father communicates divine love. In Christian prayer, the focus is on Jesus Christ, however, the Spirit enables the praying Christian to bear witness to the truth of the Son. Bearing witness communicates “a staking his entire being on it.” Balthasar continues,

In theological terms this “testimony” is not given in the presence of someone, or for someone, but as a disclosure and surrender of what is one’s own to someone, which, if it is accepted, becomes a movement into someone. . . The Spirit’s introduction into this milieu of love, which is truth, is also the Spirit’s self-surrender to the person who receives this testimony.

Without the Spirit, the praying person cannot encounter Christ. Christians must contemplate the Son’s love through the Spirit.

Delp’s reflection on the Spirit’s work of healing the interior paralysis and rigidity of human persons and renewing them corresponds to Balthasar’s dramatic soteriology. Delp makes clear that the work of the Spirit is never separated from the work of the Son; the Spirit facilitates the human person’s prayer, healing and renewing the person, and conforms the person to Christ. For Balthasar the primary message of the Incarnation is the salvation of humankind, and salva-

---

634 Aidan Nichols, *Divine Fruitfulness*, 268.
636 Ibid.
tion involves the work of the Persons of the Trinity. As it became apparent in the previous chapter, the starting point for the attempt to know and reflect on the Trinity is the revelation of the saving love of God in Jesus Christ, especially in the events of the Cross and the resurrection. The heart of Christianity resides in the revelation that God became a human being because He eternally loves sinful humanity. The love that becomes concrete in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a divine love into which the world is invited. 638 God’s fullness is by its nature ever continually pouring itself forth as love. 639 Indeed, for Balthasar, it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the essence of God as “ever-greater” love:

God, from his very origin in the Father, is the miracle of that love whereby He can be Himself in giving Himself. This miracle is performed in the Holy Spirit because He, the excess of love, is “always more,” is the incomprehensible and unsurpassable peak of absolute love. Deus semper major, not only true for us, but also for God Himself. 640

The genuine love between divine Persons goes beyond themselves and eternally brings forth new life. 641

Here, Balthasar’s notion of the Spirit as inexhaustible, eternally ever-greater, and ever-new divine love can help us to understand Delp’s insight on the Spirit as the source of healing and renewal. For Balthasar, the Spirit carries the promise of newness, 642 and it is important to note that the Spirit as the newness of divine love is not a different love. The Spirit does not

638 The Son is the expression of the Father’s self as begotten love. He witnesses the Father’s selfless love insofar as He surrenders Himself to this love. This devoted relationship in which God is the Father as the Begetter and the Son as the Begotten is a total, mutual surrender in love: being for another. The fruit of this selfless surrender is the Spirit. The Spirit is the ever-greater love between the Father and the Son.


demonstrate Himself but demonstrates the truth of the Son, who makes known the love of God the Father.\textsuperscript{643} The Spirit reveals in new concrete forms the love of the Father poured out in the Son. The Spirit does not permit “his divine freedom to blow elsewhere than in the sphere of the love of the Father and Son,”\textsuperscript{644} but because this love is always greater, there are constantly fresh directions in which He can go.

From this perspective, Balthasar speaks of the Spirit both as the expression of God’s innermost being as love and as the expression of God’s outermost being, the outpouring of divine love:

In the Spirit, there has been a breaking forth out of limitations [Entschränkung] that was “intended” from the beginning. But what was able to take place only between two determinations becomes in the Spirit [an absolute] bursting asunder of bonds [Entschränkung-überhaupt]. Even in this respect, the Spirit is the inner essence of God’s communication ad extra.\textsuperscript{645}

God’s ability to relate to creation is a communication of God’s freedom. It is because God is love that God can be both self-giving and self-exceeding, and the most poignant and greatest expression of God’s self-giving and self-exceeding love is found in the Cross of Christ.

In the previous section, Delp cautioned us that the renewing work of the Spirit does not bring the human person to an irrational and overexuberant state of being but rather to a state that can deal with the difficulties of the world as God would demand. According to Balthasar this experience of the Spirit, which elicits the human person’s response and self-giving in return, is “not an ecstasy in the sense of inspired inebriation or of divesting oneself of created reality.”\textsuperscript{646}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[644] Balthasar, \textit{Explorations in Theology III: Creator Spirit}, 156.
\item[646] Balthasar, \textit{Prayer}, 79.
\end{footnotes}
For Balthasar, such behaviour would violate the work of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. In Balthasar’s theology, the Spirit establishes the human existence and mission of the Son and the Spirit guides the Son in His mission for the sake of the world’s salvation. Balthasar refers to this as Trinitarian inversion. The Son freely hands over His self to the work of the Spirit in accordance with the Father’s will. As Edward T. Oakes comments:

In the immanent Trinity, the Spirit is the breathed-forth “product” of the mutual exchange of love between the Father and the Son, and that this exchange is so total that the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is constituted as His own person, whose relational identity binds and ratifies the bond of the Father and the Son. Just as the Son owes His entire identity as the Son to the Father’s act of generation, so too does the Spirit owes His entire identity to the mutuality of love between the Father and the Son. And that means as the “last” of the Trinitarian Persons, the Spirit is in a special way determined by the Father and the Son. But in the Incarnation it is the Son who is determined by the Spirit, who . . . serves as mediator and prompter of the Father’s will.

In the immanent Trinity, the Spirit is the proclamation and witness of the love between Father and Son. In the economy of salvation, the Spirit directs the life and mission of the Incarnate Son, and the Incarnate Son’s relation vis-à-vis the Spirit is one of receptivity and obedience. The Spirit’s “rule” in relation to Christ and Christ’s obedient “yes” to the Father’s mission are not alien, arbitrary, and external legalism. The manifestation of the Son’s obedient love for the Father in the Spirit presents itself on the Cross.

Jesus thus loves with the selfless love that is of the Trinity, but Jesus’ self-sacrificial love meets the resistance of human selfishness. For Balthasar, Christ’s self-giving, or what is the same, His obedience to the Father, reaches its perfection on the Cross and in the descent into Hell. Out of obedience, Christ travels under the guidance of the Spirit into suffering and

---

647 Balthasar, Explorations in Theology III: Creator Spirit, 118.
alienation. Balthasar writes, “The Son’s mission was, therefore, to take sinful death up into his self-surrender, which thus meant that his death would involve abandonment by God.”\footnote{Balthasar, 	extit{Theo-Drama V}, 251.} In the context of free, loving obedience to the Father in the Spirit, Jesus’ death, including His abandonment, is the expression of Trinitarian life.\footnote{Ibid., 252.}

True love for Balthasar, in a world conflicted with sin, includes the spectrum of joy and grief, unity and separation.\footnote{Ibid., 253.} The Cross and the descent into Hell represent the radical and immeasurable dimension of the love between Father and Son in the Spirit. Balthasar makes a distinction between the Cross on Good Friday and the descent into Hell on Holy Saturday, for his theological understanding is that Christ’s humiliation and abandonment took on a deeper dimension on Holy Saturday. In obedience to the Father in the Spirit and out of love for alienated humanity, the Son renounces perceptible contact with the Father to experience in Himself the sinner’s alienation from God.

For Balthasar, the God-forsakenness of the Son during His Passion is a profound bond with the Father in the Spirit. The Son’s loving surrender to the Father on the Cross and descent into Hell for alienated humankind is an expression of love. The Son’s gift of life in love comes from eternity, as God’s eternal love roots the redemptive mission of Christ and His “yes” in death and abandonment.\footnote{Ibid., 258.} At the Son’s farthest remove from the Father the Son is close to the Father, and it is the Spirit who stretches to accommodate the distance of the Son from the Father and keeps them in relation. Aidan Nichols writes, “Only in the Spirit, as \textit{vinculum amoris}
between Father and Son in the estrangement in the Descent, can the unity of the Revealed and the Revealer be maintained." The Spirit is the bridge between Father and Son in the Son’s descent into forsakenness. On the Cross and in His descent into Hell, Jesus carries God’s love to unfathomable and unforeseen depths. In loving obedience, He receives the joys and sorrows of the human condition and transforms them. It is a love that is greater than we can conceive. In the Son’s death and abandonment, the Spirit is the indefatigable love between the Father and the Son. Love of such strength can include and transform suffering and separation.

In the Paschal Mystery, Jesus sends the Spirit into the world, and this mission of the Spirit is the fruit of the Cross and is inseparable from the Son. The Spirit institutes the living, dying, and rising of Christ within the Church—the body of Christ. This living, dying, and rising of Christ continues to transform human suffering and evil. The Church helps carry forth the mission of the Son in the Spirit, providing a model for understanding how creation already is and will be included within Christ. As members of the Church, Christians are to be gifts to the world, and in the life of Christian disciples the Spirit works to enable a clarity of mind and heart in the human person that allows for proper discernment. The Spirit directs our being to the Son and opens our “eyes” to the truth of the Son’s “praxis.” This truth is possible because we have been given the Spirit, who is the “salve” that heals our eyes. For Balthasar, our actions (praxis) are proper insofar as they are the work of the Spirit.

---

656 Ibid., 191.
For both Delp and Balthasar, prayer is the fruit of divine assistance, a heartfelt and reasonable dependence upon the Trinity and is a communal activity. The Spirit moves human hearts from the inside, because it is characteristic of God to be more internal to human persons than they are to themselves. According to Balthasar, in prayer the Spirit permits us to see Christ as the one to whom we surrender ourselves in love. The Spirit draws us into the greater depths of ourselves in Christ. As a result of the Spirit’s facilitation, we become theological persons by virtue of our relationship with Christ, and we are given a mission in and through this relationship. In other words, we become more ourselves, when we give ourselves over to our God-given mission. The Spirit relates us to Christ by bringing us into an analogous participation in Christ’s way of being in the world. Just as Christ in the Spirit emptied Himself to receive others, Delp as an en-Spirited member of Christ’s body emptied himself to receive others. For Delp, one becomes a truly free and theological person when he receives from the Spirit a mission in Christ, even in the nadir of human conditions, and responds positively to this God-given task:

We should never despair even in our darkest hour. We should remember that God shares our life, that through the Holy Spirit we can always be on the most intimate terms with God and that God is always there, when the outward pressure is at its worst, helping us to carry our burdens over the roughest places on our weary path.  

Through the work of the Spirit, we come to be more like Christ and thus, more like our true selves. Thus, the salvific Trinitarian trope of cor ad cor loquitur in Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus flourishes. The Spirit lets himself dwell in the hearts of human beings, and conforms the human person to Jesus Christ – He shapes us in the image of Christ. He establishes

657 Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ: Prison Writings, 142.
658 Ibid., 125.
the conditions under which human persons can be in relationship with Jesus Christ, who, as Delp reflected, comes to us and undergirds our lives and struggles.

4.3 Pneumatic Existence

This section examines Delp’s Advent and Christmas meditations through the lens of a theology of the Spirit. The previous sections explored the work of the Spirit in prayer and the Spirit’s healing and renewing powers, and this section now examines Delp’s writings on Christian life as informed by the Spirit. By exploring Delp’s reflections on the lives of Christian saints and martyrs through the prism of the work of the Spirit, we can achieve a deeper illumination on how the Spirit heals, renews, and conforms men and women to Jesus Christ. In this section, we will investigate these works of the Spirit as facilitated by acts “unselving” persons of their selfishness and rendering Christ’s selfless love in persons. For Delp, such service of the Spirit is the fruit of the Cross. The object of Christian discipleship is a relationship with Jesus Christ by which persons are drawn into the redemptive work of Christ. The work of the Spirit prepares men and women for such a relationship and guides them in following Christ. In Delp’s prison reflections, Delp tells us that we need to be healed and made new. The person is re-created in the image of Christ by virtue of the Spirit.659

4.3.1 Advent: The Spirit as the Forerunner

For Delp, the first task in becoming like Christ and our true selves involves recognition of our personal sinfulness. We were created to be in relationship with God and to be witnesses of

659 Ibid., 119.
God’s love. As the summit of God’s creation, our creatureliness is not a problem, but sin is. In Delp’s writings, sin is the rupturing of relationship with God and others. The Spirit works to heal us of this alienation. The Spirit then readies the person for a relationship with Christ by preparing him to receive a God-given mission. The commitment to the mission entails humility:

Man must be brought to an absolute clarity about himself and others. He must come down from all the pedestals of arrogance onto which he always climbs. He must come down from the high horses of vanity and self-deception that, for a time, let themselves be trotted forth so proudly.\(^{660}\)

The descent from such heights leads to a life of humble service, authentic testimony, and praise. Here the figure of John the Baptist arises for Delp, and in his Advent meditation Delp describes John the Baptist as a human being who has given himself over to a God-given mission and assignment: the Baptist puts aside his own security and importance to assist others to see that true and full human existence is to be found only in the service of God and others.\(^{661}\) In Delp’s reflection on John the Baptist, a life rooted in prayer and open to God’s call is a life of self-giving, and to live otherwise, according to Delp, is to smear one’s image and to corrupt one’s self-knowledge.\(^{662}\) For Delp, genuine human existence is one of climbing down from self-concern and serving means going beyond oneself: “Through this openness, he will attain a great freedom, a freedom from cramps, delusion, and deterioration.”\(^{663}\)

Unlike National Socialism’s depersonalization and atomization of human beings, being beckoned forth and drawn to God calls for a going beyond oneself and an openness to the other. God takes the initiative to come and dwell in humanity, and His intimacy with humanity calls

\(^{661}\) Ibid., 109.
\(^{662}\) Ibid.
\(^{663}\) Ibid., 110.
human beings out of their self-enclosure or spiritual paralysis. The believer’s relationship with God is characterized by a movement from self to God, and Delp perceives the faith experience as a journey. The human person’s relationship with God, according to Delp, is characterized as a progressive entrance into greater life with God. Again, the abandonment to God occurs at the start of one’s spiritual journey, and such self-abandonment is not a once and for all act, but involves a continuous ever-more profound surrender of self to God.

Because sin alienates human beings from others and closes them in on themselves, the Spirit relates them to the Son through a process which Balthasar describes as an “unseling.”664 This process of “unseling” annihilates not the existence of the human person, but rather the sinful human tendency to close ourselves off from others.665 Balthasar describes the process of “unseling” as being drawn into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“It [the human ego] is forced out of its central position so that the essence of Christ may take up residence there: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ, who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).”666

The confession of one’s brokenness and sinfulness and the need for God’s presence in our lives is the first part of the “unseling” process. In his Advent meditations, written in Tegel Prison, Delp asserts that:

it is necessary to be conscious of God’s decision to enlarge the boundaries of His own supreme existence by condescending to share ours for the overcoming of sin. It follows that life, fundamentally, is a continuous Advent; hunger and thirst and awareness of lack involve movement toward fulfillment.667

667 Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ, 22.
That life is a continuous Advent communicates that there is no point in our lives at which fulfillment is completed. Christian life mirrors the “ever-more” of the Spirit of God. Authentic human existence continually calls us to be aware of our creatureliness and dependence on God:

While time lasts there can be no end to it all, and to try to bring the quest to an ultimate conclusion is one of the illusory temptations to which human nature is exposed. In fact, hunger and thirst and wandering in the wilderness and perpetual rescue by a sort of lifeline are all part of the ordinary hazards of human existence. . . God helps us to find ourselves by getting away from ourselves, back to him.⁶⁶⁸

Delp emphasizes that the way of human existence is the way of Christ the Saviour,⁶⁶⁹ but the arrival of and encounter with Christ do not come on our terms: God is the one who takes the initiative and approaches, and He does so in His own way.⁶⁷⁰ Our contribution involves the following:

An honest personal assessment, an open and receptive heart, willing obedience combined with a readiness to serve and a genuine acknowledgment of God—that is to say thanksgiving and praise. The person who approaches Advent in this frame of mind will experience the supreme encounter and the resultant liberation, for God gives freedom to those who make His coming their own personal experience, with all the comfort and support of that experience.⁶⁷¹

Human beings do not decide when and how they will be rescued.

For Delp, life as a continuous Advent is a constant surrender of self, in which one “ultimately realizes one’s true self by the direct intervention of God, who breaks the fetters [of sin], absolves guilt, and bestows the inevitable blessing.”⁶⁷² Delp’s life as a continuous Advent is contiguous with Balthasar’s life in the Spirit, which is life with Christ and life as adopted sons

---

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 22–23.
⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 25.
⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.
⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 36.
⁶⁷² Ibid., 37.
and daughters of God. Balthasar writes, “Faith’s effect of ‘unselving’ creates in us a ‘vacant space’ that is occupied by Christ and His Spirit, who confirms to us that we, like the Son, are children of the Father, sharing a relation through the Spirit, so that the imago trinitatis is fulfilled in us.”

Human beings become children of God as they are conformed to Christ, and the Spirit conforms people to Christ by drawing them out of their self-enclosure in “unselving” them or leading them beyond themselves. Indeed, the work of bringing men and women out of their enclosures is the gift of the Spirit, creating open spaces for those who believe. Balthasar puts it thus:

Love opens spaces where there were none, lays down paths, gives strengths. Love can do this because it always contains a promise. By arriving, love creates a future—not an empty future, but one that continually fulfills itself and, in fulfilling, promises anew. Love is essentially creative.

Thus, the Spirit’s activity of “unselving” is another way of describing love. The antidote to the recalcitrance of sin is a love that melts the hardened enclosure of the hearts of men and women, so that “unselved” men and women can be conformed to Christ and give to others. For Delp, love comes from God poured into our hearts:

Sin is like a handcuff – only the person with the key can unlock it. It does not matter how fervently I desire it; I cannot rid myself of my (spiritual) handcuff because I have no key. Moreover, sin is like the door of my cell – even if I had a key I could not unlock the door because it has no keyhole on this side.

Here, the Spirit works in two dimensions: first loving and then freeing. The freedom bequeathed to the individual is not a freedom that seeks escape from the problems of the world, but rather

---

one that engages the individual in alleviating the world’s problems; it is a responsible freedom. Delp writes, “We must not delude ourselves that we can find freedom by running away from history. We have to find freedom within this framework of history in alliance with God for the fulfillment of His purpose.”

This twofold task of loving and liberating human persons is for the sake of the reception of Christ’s friendship. The work of the Spirit is like that of Advent – preparing men and women for the indwelling of Christ in their hearts. Delp writes, “The Word of God cannot be embraced in fetters, cannot be heard when all human values are chained in fear and frustration and fatigue and are weighed down with an escapist urge to compromise.” Preparing the way for Christ in finite hearts is the task of the Spirit.

4.3.2 The Spirit Renders Love Incarnate

In Delp’s Christmas meditation, he writes that in the Incarnation God enters into history and becomes its master from within, and precisely because of that He makes Himself available to us everywhere:

History now becomes the Son’s mode of existence; historical destiny becomes His destiny. He is to be encountered on our streets. In the darkest cellars and the loneliest prisons of life, we will meet Him.

The greatness of the Incarnation is that God shared the condition of the human creature hurt by sin: Christ took the consequences of sin upon his shoulders without having sinned himself. The conditions of torture, imprisonment, and impending execution can impel human beings to care

---

676 Ibid., 48.
677 Ibid., 49.
678 Delp, Advent of the Heart, 164.
only for themselves – to make themselves the centre of a threatening universe. In Christ, there is another who comes to the rescue and shares the burden of existence. Delp writes, “All those hauling the same load feel it when a new, powerful shoulder places itself under the burden and joins in the carrying.” The encounter with Christ transforms a person (or group of persons) and enables him to have a ‘mastery of life,’ even in the midst of its harrowing situations:

Ever since that Holy Night, the divine-human life became the primordial model of existence, according to which all life will be formed by God if we do not resist this formation. The strength for mastery of life grows through the influx of divine life to those whom Christ has made himself known among the greater human community as well as small groups brought together by circumstance. We will be better able to cope with life, more efficient and capable of life if we open ourselves to the instructions of this coming night. Let us hike and journey onward, neither avoiding nor shunning the streets and terror of life.

After these words, Delp extends his reflection on the meaning of Christmas and the Incarnation by contemplating the figures of Christmas. Figuring prominently in Delp’s meditations are: Mary, the Mother of Jesus; Joseph; St. Stephen; the Holy Innocents; and St. Thomas of Canterbury. What binds these people around Jesus is the fact that each embraced and carried out the mission that fell to them within the context of Christ’s mission. As Balthasar indicates, they changed from isolated persons into unique theological persons, and because these individuals live out Christ’s mission in their own particular manner, they are to a certain extent universalized. For Balthasar, increasing personalization is accompanied by an increasing socialization. In embracing his or her mission, each person becomes more him- or herself for the sake of others.

In Delp’s reflections, these saints are portrayed as gifts from the Spirit to the Christian communi-

679 Ibid.
680 Ibid.
ty. These men and women have been transformed by God’s Spirit and found fulfillment in obeying God and serving others amid difficult situations.

As Delp indicates, the first figure of Christmas is Mary. He acknowledges that his short reflection does not do justice to Mary, whose message for humanity is timeless. Hers is a message of self-surrender to God, “offering herself to the point of complete obliteration of her personal will.” Delp writes that he belongs to a generation that is “completely wrapped in ourselves; we are always concerned with our self-fulfillment, our self-realization, our living conditions, and so on. Everything is organized for our self-gratification.” Our self-centredness impoverishes us. Delp writes, “Mary’s decision was a complete surrender to God, and it is the only thing that can lead to human fulfillment. Hers is a decision that obeys the law of life.”

The second figure in Delp’s meditation on Christmas is Joseph. He describes Mary’s husband as one who is constantly listening to God, “packing up” and “moving” according to God’s will. Delp imagines Joseph as a man who dreams of setting up an ordinary, quiet home for Mary, “attending to his business and worshipping God.” Instead, Joseph is given a life of difficult wandering:

Beset with doubts, heavy-hearted and uneasy in his mind, his whole life is disrupted, he has to take the open road, to make his way through an unfriendly country finding no shelter but a miserable stable for those he holds most dear. He is the man who sets aside all thought of self and shoulders his responsibilities bravely—and obeys. His message is willing obedience. He is the man who serves.

682 Ibid.
683 Ibid., 62–63.
684 Ibid., 63.
685 Ibid.
Delp interprets Joseph’s obedience as service of others and suggests it is found in self-effacement for the safety and well-being of his wife and the Christ child. This other-centred self is a stark contrast to what Delp considers as a society inclined toward opportunism and “self-expression.”

The themes of self-surrender and service are intensified in Delp’s meditations on the other figures who are liturgically linked to the Christmas Feast: St. Stephen, the Holy Innocents, and St. Thomas of Canterbury. Delp writes that St. Stephen saw that humankind was exalted through the Incarnation of God and the encounter with Jesus Christ. It is important to recall that obedience to the Divine does not lead to the destruction of our self but to its fulfillment. The radicalness of Delp’s prison meditation tells us that the agency of the Christian lies within God and His eternal dialogue of love. Such an encounter with God liberates humanity. This liberation is not a flight from the world, but is a call to bear witness to Christ and to a deeper responsibility in the world, even at the cost of one’s life. Perhaps hinting at his impending death, Delp recognizes that he is in a line of men and women who have been used to convey God’s justice and mercy. He writes, “Since Christmas, God is with us, and injustice and even murder [can be] sanctified and transformed into signs of grace and strength and salvation.”

Delp pursues this thought into a more challenging area when he meditates on the Holy Innocents, the children of Bethlehem who were massacred by an insecure King Herod. For Delp, they have a place in the Christmas Feast, “a share in the scene with Christ.” They remind peo-
ple of the battle between God and the anti-God, the Logos and the anti-Logos. Delp writes, “We have lost our awareness of that ceaseless duel – we so little realize that we have a share in the struggle that we ignore it completely.” In Delp’s view, the children of Bethlehem were part of the mystery of divine sovereignty and “serve[d] as a kind of honour guard to the Divine Child.” The destiny of these tiny children was sealed when God became human; an adult, according to Delp, becomes part of the “duel” and “honour guard” if he “voluntarily accepts the combat and enters it on God’s side.”

The Christmas Feast then provided Delp with a third figure for meditation on the mystery of Christian martyrdom: Thomas of Canterbury. Thomas gave up his life for God in order to protect the sanctity of the Church. In response to English laws that expected and compelled the Church to subordinate itself to the state, Thomas defended the Church and sacrificed his life for God. For Delp, the relationship between Church and state cannot involve the subordination of the Church. A genuine relationship must exclude all forms of compulsion, either idealistic or material: “The partner must have freedom to speak for himself, even to the point of being helped to speak his mind and express what he feels so that the dialogue may be truly reciprocal.”

On 28 December 1944, in the midst of writing his meditations on the martyrs surrounding the Christmas Feast, Delp wrote in his prison diary that:

689 Ibid.
690 Ibid.
691 Ibid.
692 Ibid.
693 Ibid.
694 Ibid., 70.
695 Ibid.
in the course of these last long weeks, life has become suddenly much less rigid. A great deal that was once quite simple and ordinary seems to have taken on a new dimension. Things seem clearer and at the same time more profound; one sees all sorts of unexpected angles. Moreover, above all, God has become almost tangible. Things I have always known and believed now seem so concrete; I believe them, but I also live them. How I often used to speak of the words hope and trust. But now I know from experience that I was so silly and foolish like a child. . . The one who believes, the one who loves, that is the person who senses the dimensions of humanity and sees God’s perspective.  

Here, Delp’s transformation is being accomplished in the Spirit, who helps Delp to experience the love of God made incarnate in Christ. According to Günther Saltin, this diary entry refers to a previously unpublished retreat talk on the Cross given by Alfred Delp in the midst of the Second World War.  

This talk, I suggest, sheds light on the concept of the inner freedom of a martyr. The retreat talk survives as a draft and is titled Das Kreuz—Geheimnis Gottes und Lebensordnung des Menschen (The Cross as Mystery of God and Way of Life for Humanity). The retreat draft referred to the Feast of the Veneration of the Cross on 14 September and was probably given in 1943. Saltin does not provide a theological reason this entry would refer to Delp’s talk on the Cross, except for mentioning martyrs who viewed reality through God’s perspective in the law of the Cross. What follows is my theological explanation of the relationship between Delp’s reflection on the martyrs of the Christmas season and his talk on the law of the Cross.

---

696 Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis, 4:70.
698 Ibid., 98.
4.3.3 Discipleship Subjected to the Way of the Cross

For Delp, the gift of the Incarnation at Christmas confronts the sins of the world throughout history, and this encounter includes the present time as Christ’s selflessness continues to respond to human suffering and evil. At the start of his Christmas meditation, Delp indicates that we are prone to conceal the meaning of Christmas with sentimental images that divert us from the work of Christian discipleship:

The comfort we derive from the externals is only the symbol of the far greater gifts this event, and the feast commemorating it, bestowed and continue to bestow on humankind. Since the birth of our Lord we have been confirmed in the hope with which we turned to God’s throne for grace: God is on our side. But as I have said before this does not mean that God has dethroned himself anymore than it means that human life has been turned into a primrose path by that stupendous event.699

The Incarnation means that God is with us in our “terrible human maladies,”700 and God in Christ “came to us as our ally.”701 Delp recalls, however, that God’s alliance with us involves God-given tasks, and that “we must not try to shirk the burdens he imposes on us.”702 He continues:

[These tasks] are his way of communicating with us and they are his blessing. Whoever is true to life, however hard and barren it may be, will discover in himself fountains of very real refreshment. The world will give him more than he ever imagined possible. The silver threads of God’s mystery will begin to sparkle visibly in his heart. His burdens will turn to blessing because he recognizes them as coming from God and welcomes them as such.703

699 Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ, 54.
700 Ibid., 58.
701 Ibid.
702 Ibid.
703 Ibid., 59.
The saints of the Christmas Feast discussed in the previous section show Delp what it means to take on God-given tasks or missions. They demonstrate the mystery of God and “the pattern which he has set for his relationship with humanity.”

To penetrate his mysteries, prayerfully and reverently to become aware of him, is one of the highest exercises of the mind and we are most likely to find the key to his perpetual, relentless, compassionate, gracious reaching toward us in the lives of those whom we call saints.

In Delp’s meditation, the Christmas season’s martyrs are persons who accepted the burden or task of yielding to God and of sharing in the drama of the world’s redemption with Christ. This insight allowed Delp to begin to catch a glimpse of existence from God’s perspective.

The retreat talk is Delp’s attempt to explore the salvific meaning of the Cross of Christ. The talk was given in the context of a celebration of the Eucharist. The draft of the actual retreat on the Cross explores the following themes: the fullness of reality; the dynamic source of life; the strength and greatness of form, conduct, and conviction; the conquest and victory of the just and the divine; the mystery of divine counsel and the order and beginning of human life.

He then writes that the Cross “touches the heart of the center of our lives.” For Delp, “this Cross is more than a symbol among symbols. It is one of the holy, untouchable symbols of humanity with which always more is meant than just the symbols themselves. It refers to a whole order of life; it applies to a deeper reality.” With the next train of thought, Delp lays out the cost of discipleship that the Cross represents.

---

704 Ibid., 60.
705 Ibid.
706 Günther Saltin, “Das Kreuz,” 98.
707 Ibid.
708 Ibid., 99.
For Delp, the law of the Cross represents the decision for Christ. There can be no neutral relationship with Christ. One’s decision to follow Christ does not depend on whether this sign of Christ’s Cross is beautiful. Delp points out that Thomas More, who was held captive in the Tower of London, drew crosses on the wall. Other English martyrs used wood and stalks to assemble the sign of the Cross on the floor of the prison in the Tower of London. For Delp, these depictions of the Cross came from authentic realization and were a more genuine commitment to faith than some famous masterpieces. 709 What Delp shared with his parishioners in 1943 foreshadows his meditations and dialogue with God in his cell at Tegel Prison in the winter of 1944-1945.

Delp emphasizes that we must “speak of this Cross, [we] accept it, because it is the sign of our lives and because our lives are subjected to the law of the Cross.” 710 His understanding of the law of the Cross is that life consists of suffering because of the sins of humankind. There will be losses and hurts, but the way out consists of sacrifices. 711 It demands an acknowledgment of and engagement with, not an avoidance of, broken and sinful reality. For Delp, the Cross of Christ enables individuals to confront sins, both their own and others, by taking on their personal cross as a sacrifice to participate in the redemption of the world. The divine initiative of God in Christ indicates that someone undergirds our lives, even our struggles: “Faith in the Cross of Calvary is faith in a God who [is] with humankind right down to the cellar of [creaturely] exist-

709 Ibid.
710 Von diesem Kreuz sprechen, es annehmen: weil es das Zeichen unseres Lebens ist, u. Weil unser Leben unter dem Gesetz des Kreuzes steht... (ibid.).
711 Ibid., 99-100.
ence. How different life looks [when] God has carried us—an experience of solidarity.”

The Cross represents God’s commitment to save powerless humankind, mired in iniquity and sin. It is the overcoming of powerlessness and iniquity.

God’s fidelity to His creatures irrevocably binds God to human persons and ultimately opens up and safeguards for humankind a path beyond itself. Christ on the Cross breaks through the prison walls of fate; He breaks through the slavery of irresolvable sins. Hence, because of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and His transformation of human existence from within, humankind can engage the “desolation” of its existence. Iniquity and sin have “been overcome since God has met us in our fate.” For Delp, in the Cross our forsakenness is defeated and “a first ray of meaning and sight has emerged.” The passion for the Cross is a passion both for God and for ourselves.

Delp’s spiritual reflections of the Cross relates to his insight on reparation in devotion to the Heart of Jesus. His exhortation to parishioners to confront evil by taking up their own personal crosses evokes his appeal to parishioners to take on the burdens and guilt of their neighbours in the 1942 Advent Homily on the Heart of Jesus. In both texts, Delp encourages believers to be involved in the struggle against sin as men and women whose hearts have been converted by Christ’s love, as persons who participate in the redeeming love of the One who has borne

---

713 Ibid.
714 Ibid.
715 Ibid.
718 The actual German reads: Leidenschaft zum Kreuz: Leidenschaft zu Gott—Leidenschaft zu mir selbst. (Günther Saltin, “Das Kreuz,” 104).
their sins. In other words, to be drawn into the redemptive work of Christ, for Delp, means to make acts of reparation in a world marred by sin. To deepen what Delp means by engaging sin and evil as the path of discipleship and being genuinely human, I turn to his reflection on the Sacrament of Penance. In the autumn of 1940, Delp gave a series of sermons on the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Addressing the Sacrament of Penance, he speaks of the need for honest acknowledgment of sin and evil. He refers to a few examples from Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Ariadne’s Lament* to illustrate the ways in which people minimize the phenomenon of sin and thereby block themselves from redemption. The path of the Christian is different; it is the way of penance. He writes that penance leads us back to the “underground” of human existence, where sin is to be redeemed. Here, the human person can encounter a merciful God whose offer of forgiveness can make “their nights, their falls, their sins” part of the condition for the possibility of salvation. Thus, one can find one’s identity and purpose in the face of darkness and death because God has entered into human history with all its misery and wretchedness. One can conform oneself to a God who finds “community with humankind” in its most difficult situations.

Delp’s spirituality of the Cross and the Heart of Jesus evokes Lonergan’s Law of the Cross, which is understood as the form Divine love takes in a sinful world. For Lonergan, the Triune God ordained that evil would be eliminated not by another act of violence but by an act of self-sacrificing love on the Cross. The disciple, who bears the social and individual costs of sin,
transforms them into the occasion of a greater virtue in Christ. It is not suffering that is the key concept of the law of the Cross in both Delp and Lonergan’s writings, but rather a Divine love that desires to break the cycle of sin and to enact human flourishing. Rather than being restrictive, the God who enters into history brings forth a transformation of one’s being, a conversion that generates the profound freedom to live to our fullest potential. On the Cross, God gives Himself to us. By this self-gift, we are healed of sin and become part of an intellectually, morally, and religiously converted society. Religious and moral conversions enable us to live in deep-rooted solidarity with others and on behalf of others. We become temples of Christ’s Spirit. The path to human flourishing entails confronting sin and evil. The law of the Cross, for both Delp and Lonergan, is more than just about becoming oneself in relation to Christ, but allowing Christ to mediate Himself to oneself and within oneself in a fallen world for the sake of others. As we see in Delp’s life and death, taking action against sin entails bearing it and testifying against it.

In Delp’s prison meditations, St. John the Baptist’s call for repentance leads Delp and his readers down the path of the martyrs that are encountered in the Christmas Feast. The images of the crèche and people singing Christmas carols can bring some comfort, according to Delp, but they are external to the message of Christmas. The comforts that these external images bring to people are not liberating, truth-seeking images. The “sentimental” images of the Christmas Feast do not “unselve” the human person: they bring us comfort but do not challenge us to go beyond ourselves. The martyrs of the Christmas Feast remind Delp that the crib points to the Cross, that the Incarnation is ordered to the Cross. Furthermore, these martyrs prompt Delp to

---

723 Delp, Alfred Delp, SJ: Prison Writings, 54.
realize “our lives are subjected to the law of the Cross.” We find our salvation through the law of the Cross, which requires a confrontation with sinful reality, not through power but through sacrifice. As Delp asserts it, it is by taking up personal crosses that we engage our sins and those of others and thereby participate in the redemption of the world.

The Spirit is the mediation of personhood and mission in the life of a Christian. As stated previously, Christian existence is life on mission. Each person receives a unique mission that constitutes his or her personal identity before God. It is important to make clear that the Spirit aids in the realization of the person’s unique mission by liberating the believer from the external law and replacing it with the law of interior freedom. This law entails entry into intimacy with the Son’s selflessness, which is expressed clearly in the Son’s loving obedience unto death on the Cross. In the case of Delp, he began to realize that what he said to parishioners in 1943, God was asking him to realize himself. The Church does not live in abstract ideas, but in concrete persons who live out their missions.

4.3.4 The Saints and the Self-Giving Fruits of the Cross

For Balthasar, the saints, holy men and women, represent the “living gospel.” Saints are the authentic interpreters of dramatic soteriology. The invitation to be part of Christ’s work

---

726 Mark McIntosh writes that, in Balthasar’s writings, the saints are the ever-flowing and ever fresh source of the theology of Christ’s saving passion. See Mark McIntosh, Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 16.
of redemption, integral to Balthasar’s dramatic soteriology, can elucidate the relationship between Delp’s meditations on the saints and martyrs and his insights on the Cross:

The same is true of the “images” of the Church saints, who come from the superfigure of the Cross and are readable only on the basis of the Cross. They, too, always stand, in one way or another, in the focal point where the paths between God and man meet and intersect, and they can do this only in the unconditional obedience that has received various names in the course of the Church’s history but has always remained the same: apathæia, self-abandonment, \textit{indifferencia}. This is always the point of fundamental acceptance of the embodiment of whatever God wills and is therefore a place of death (naturally this is the death of Jesus: 2 Cor 4:10). . . Certainly, an elementary love of neighbor will always grow out of this attitude, but the decisive thing is that it does not keep its own measurement in its hand but that faithfulness for the world and for humanity of the life that is surrendered to God is ultimately something God alone determines. The paths to the Cross in the Old Covenant and from the Cross in the New Covenant point from both sides to the place where the entire Covenant, the new and eternal Covenant, is established and sealed.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{Explorations in Theology III: Creator Spirit}, 63–64.}

This passage\footnote{Timothy Yoder points out that this passage represents Balthasar’s theology of the saints. It relates the saints with the Gospel proclamation and expresses a theology of kenosis. See: Timothy Yoder, “Hans Urs von Balthasar and Kenosis: The Pathway to Human Agency” PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 78, accessed August 11, 2015, Ecommons/luc_diss/918/\textit{.}} holds together some key characteristics needed to understand better Delp’s meditations on the saints and martyrs of Advent and Lent. The phrase “the images of the Church’s saints” connotes that the meanings of the saints and the Church are interconnected.\footnote{Balthasar writes, “The saint… the subjective following of Christ and the realisation of [Christ’s] holiness within the sphere of the human person – is simply unthinkable without the objective holiness of the Church, of her official ministry and of her sacraments.” See Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Bernanos. An Ecclesial Experience} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 260.} The saints are de-privatized, and their personhood is understood through the prism of the \textit{communio sanctorum}.\footnote{Balthasar writes, “[I]n the degree to which the innermost self [of the particular saint] is ‘inhabited’ by the yet more interior Trinity—Deus trinus interior intimo meo—it is laid open to the Church and to the communion of saints at the deepest level; in fact, this communion can only be conceived as a dwelling together of all persons in the Trinity who, in turn, dwells in them all.” See Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Two Sisters in the Spirit: Therese of Lisieux & Elizabeth of the Trinity}, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 95.} Balthasar explicates:

\begin{itemize}
\item This passage\footnote{Balthasar writes, “The saint… the subjective following of Christ and the realisation of [Christ’s] holiness within the sphere of the human person – is simply unthinkable without the objective holiness of the Church, of her official ministry and of her sacraments.” See Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Bernanos. An Ecclesial Experience} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 260.} holds together some key characteristics needed to understand better Delp’s meditations on the saints and martyrs of Advent and Lent. The phrase “the images of the Church’s saints” connotes that the meanings of the saints and the Church are interconnected.\footnote{Balthasar writes, “[I]n the degree to which the innermost self [of the particular saint] is ‘inhabited’ by the yet more interior Trinity—Deus trinus interior intimo meo—it is laid open to the Church and to the communion of saints at the deepest level; in fact, this communion can only be conceived as a dwelling together of all persons in the Trinity who, in turn, dwells in them all.” See Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Two Sisters in the Spirit: Therese of Lisieux & Elizabeth of the Trinity}, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 95.} The saints are de-privatized, and their personhood is understood through the prism of the \textit{communio sanctorum}. Balthasar explicates:
\end{itemize}
For they [Christians, especially the saints] do not simply enjoy a fellowship (a being-with) because of Christ’s being and acting on their behalf: if they so wish or are ready for it, they, too, through Christ, can be for one another. Not as if they could act for one another at the same level as Christ; but is something they actually possess in principle, through Christ, as a fruit of his unique action on the Cross for all. . . Everyone who participates in the pneumatic body of Christ, shared out in the Church acquires, not only becomes a member of the church community: he actually acquires an intrinsically ecclesial equality. Every theological person thus has whole spheres of community that are personal to him, and the interpenetration of these spheres constitutes the reality of the *communio sanctorum* with its mysterious laws whereby each can “be for others through prayer, initiative and suffering on their behalf.”

As in the dynamics of prayer, where the praying person does not determine their prayer, the members of the Church do not set the boundaries and goals of their lives, but respond to the invitation to be part of God’s redemptive process. This part in God’s salvation is a role marked by a “dependent participation” in various strengths, and it creates a space “where others can receive the freedom to act.” Such participation in the *communio sanctorum* fosters freedom in others. Authentic personhood, being a saint, implies “that every man, insofar as he possesses complete human nature, has access through love and understanding to all that is thought and felt, done and suffered by other subjects possessing the same nature.” Due to the saving love of God in Christ, men and women can be “for others through prayer or suffering on their behalf.”

The second aspect of the description of the ‘images’ of the Church’s saints are those “who come from the superfigure of the Cross and are readable only on the basis of the Cross.” This reminds us that any theological insight that we gain from the life of a holy person extends solely as far as that individual is transparent to Christ. For Balthasar, the saint is an illustration of

---

732 Ibid., 271-72.
733 Ibid., 272.
734 Ibid., 282.
how Christian discipleship is to be lived, enabled by the facilitation of the work of the Spirit (my emphasis). Balthasar’s emphasis on the saints emerges out of his insight into Christ’s inclusivity in the Incarnation, whereby Christ’s saving love permits the saints to act in a Christ-like manner by mystically sharing the acting space made available to them through Christ. Just as the Spirit of God creates a space in the saint for Christ, the saint, in response to the divine initiative, brings about an opening for the other person to become who he is meant to be. The saints are concrete exemplars of a theological expression of divine self-giving and “unselving” love.

The next key expression in the quotation is “unconditional obedience,” “apatheia,” or “self-abandonment,” which gives depth to the kenotic motif, and as Balthasar here emphasizes, they are the marks of assessment of a life of self-giving. Regardless of history, culture, or context, saintly persons display the kenotic disposition in their living and dying, though each person appropriates this mark differently, enabling diverse approaches to the kenotic motif in the saintly life. Moreover, the meaning of a particular holy person’s life remains at some mysterious level with the full meaning of their mission known only to God. As such, human measurements and methods, understandings of justice and happiness will never completely comprehend the meaning of a particular saint’s life and death, because God’s direction will be the decisive director of any saintly activity, including martyrdom.

Both Delp and Balthasar understand that the saintly life, which includes the life of the martyr, is neither an attempt to become a hero nor to expand one’s talents. It is definitely not a path to destroy oneself. As Delp reflected, “God does not need great pathos or great works. He

736 Nichols, Divine Fruitfulness, 240.
needs greatness of hearts,” so the way of holiness entails a surrender of self to God. Balthasar believes that:

The decisive factor in the act of faith is the taking of the risk of surrendering ourselves to the freedom and love of God. The best thing a Christian can do... is to allow himself to be led by his living faith into whatever is presented to him in the course of time. Again to be led by faith means to remain in perpetual contact with the source and to have no desire to seek one’s own adventure. The greatest adventure after all is God’s redeeming action for the world in his Son, and if we follow the Son’s course, we shall not run the risk of losing ourselves on the slippery paths of self-inverted love. 738

For both Delp and Balthasar, to follow Christ is a decision to obediently respond to His love. For Balthasar, this decision does not occur at the end of the Christian adventure, but rather at the beginning of the journey. On the one hand, one can see the Christian journey as an ascent to union with God or perfect love for God. On the other hand, one can see perfection as involving encountering God’s love and placing oneself entirely at the disposal of God’s will renouncing one’s own choice of life. Delp’s life of continual transformation and deepening love exemplifies such a life. The saintly life is, for Balthasar:

Endowed with, infused with, is not just a “faculty”, but a fullness of life, from which it only has to draw in order to water the entire garden of its finitude and temporalness, and so make eternal growths come forth. Thus [the saintly life] does not live in a state of indigence advancing toward fullness, but in a state of fullness radiating out into the poverty and darkness of this world ... All that was said about the essential constitution of the finite has become for the moment of no importance; for the just man lives by faith, that is, by the gift of eternal life. His acts are performed not just as part of his striving toward perfection, but as proceeding from perfection. 739

739 Balthasar, Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh, 166.
In this understanding of Christian discipleship, the focus is not on the individual attempting to obtain God’s love, but rather on the kenotic love of God. “In this love, not that we loved God but that he has loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Thus, at the outset of Delp’s meditations on the Figures of Christmas, there is the stance to allow God to define reality and through that, to accept what God has for each individual, be it pain or pleasure, in the hope and trust that, through it all, God will bring the individual into a more genuine existence as a human being. Those who have been given the kenotic disposition by being in relationship with Christ in the Spirit surrender their understanding of human happiness and fulfillment in exchange for God’s desires for them. Here, the soteriology as encountered in Delp’s devotion to the Heart of Jesus can assist us. The theology of the devotion understands that Christ gives Himself up for us out of love and exchanges places with us – He takes up our sins and offers his life as a sin offering. Such atoning love heals and transforms our hearts and our understanding of suffering. As a result of the Divine initiative, we can say “yes” to the brokenness of fellow human persons and take it as our participation in all-embracing solidarity and grateful love of God who guides us. Each saint and martyr, whom Delp meditated upon in the Christmas meditation, reveals each person’s distinct response of obedience to God. The act of self-surrender which Delp makes to God is personal in two ways: first, because it entails the innermost core of the human person in response to the self-giving and atoning love of the Heart of Jesus; and secondly, because every person is unique, and each person’s surrender to God will therefore be stamped by his unique personality. For Delp, it was a lifelong task to learn how to love Jesus and to enter into the redeeming love of Jesus. He came to realize that he should never presume that he had already met the mark, because the ever-greater God was constantly drawing
him into a deeper loving relationship with Christ, and that relationship was calling forth a total
gift of his self.

So, do we find such a pattern of self-surrender in the Christian journey of Alfred Delp? Such a pattern is arguably first encountered in Delp’s life during the month-long *Spiritual Exercises* during his Tertiarieship in 1938. In this retreat, we saw Delp acknowledging his egoistic ways during the healing and transformative encounter with Jesus Christ. Delp expressed the desire to give his life to Christ and to serve others, and we saw Delp risk his life to be part of an underground network that assisted the escape of persecuted peoples. We then witnessed Delp participating in planning for a postwar Germany based on Catholic social teaching with members of the Kreisau Circle. Such service does not speak of a heroism or gallantry in a struggle to bring forth the Kingdom of God, but rather a radical availability to do God’s will. Delp’s imprisonment was the schooling or deepening of that self-surrender to God. In prison, Delp makes no claim of saintliness, but speaks of the transformative love of God and his friendship in Christ with members of the Kreisau Circle. Delp does not attempt to ignore his creaturely identity, but exposes his finitude to the merciful love of God.

Assenting to this invitation and opening oneself to be shaped to the likeness of Christ by
the Spirit does not occur without considerable effort. As we saw in Delp’s life and writings, it
involves a deep healing and a turning away from a pattern of life that puts one first and an
embracing a new pattern of life. Hence, the journey involves painful aspects, because it proceeds
from a surrendering of one’s understanding of the world, others, self, and God. We noticed how
Delp underwent painful moments during his imprisonment. Delp understood these were school-
ing him in inner freedom and deepening his trust in God. Such schooling came to a more pro-
found level in the last few weeks of his imprisonment, as he was the final member of the Kreisau
Circle to be executed. As Balthasar asserts, the spiritual journey begins with the divine initiative, but instead of a passive “letting be,” the kenotic disposition of discipleship is something “which is to be actively grasped and carried out [and] must also be actively pursued.” The active choice to follow after Christ in the Spirit is a key to understanding Delp’s witness.

Such a surrender to Christ facilitated by the work of the Spirit is highlighted in his meditations on the holy figures of Advent and Christmas. These are men and women, who did not make a self-surrender to God at the end of their lives in an attempt to achieve a type of union with God. Delp’s writings on the saints highlight God’s presence in the lives of saints, including the martyrs. The self-surrender of these saintly figures, such as Joseph and Mary, represent their loving response to God’s will for them. In addition, Delp’s insights invite his readers to be obedient and available to God’s will under the guidance of the Spirit.

Another reason for emphasizing a kenotic disposition at the beginning of the spiritual journey is associated with the Christian resistance to human attempts at creating a system of self-salvation. We have seen that Delp decried the contemporary reliance on systems, because he saw these systems as totalizing and alienating, making no room for the human person. His meditations on the love of Christ in devotion to the Heart of Jesus were occasions for him to be healed and to rediscover his finite dignity again. In his prison meditations Delp allows God to transform his self, define his reality and through it all, he trusts that God will bring him into a more genuine existence as a human being. When viewed through the lens of Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus and the Spirit, we see that the heart of the Christian journey is to be open to the will of God

renouncing one’s own choice of a way of life. Like Balthasar, Delp sees the Christian journey not solely as an ascent to Christ’s love, because Christ’s love is already given at the beginning of the journey in the redemptive love from the Cross. Delp’s witness is not part of his striving toward Christ’s love, but proceedings from a love that heals and rescues him in the Spirit.

It is essential to return to Balthasar’s theme of mission to appreciate how Delp’s self-surrender to God and consequent self-gift to the world express the fullest formation of the finite person not his destruction. Balthasar argues that “a human individual becomes a person, theologically, by being given a unique vocation and mission.” Indeed, the most profound and integral aspect of humanity is mission:

All aspects of man’s creaturehood meet in the concept of mission: his mission to love and to serve, because love fulfills itself in service just as service fulfills itself in love; his distance from God and his nearness to God, because his condition as not-God finds its foundation and fulfillment in his condition of being at a remove from love, as the Son also experienced it is in his relationship with the Father, whereas his nearness to God reveals itself as a nearness of love and hence also of reverence and of service; his call to autonomous action and self-giving contemplation, because his action can be more autonomous as his contemplation is more self-giving and receptive, whereas his contemplation finds its purest expression when it is translated into action.

Here, Balthasar indicates that all aspects of human life coincide with mission. The questions raised in this study of Alfred Delp – his self-surrender, human fulfillment, freedom, suffering, and joy – are all deeply present within this fundamental category of mission. Moreover, the concept of mission conveys a transition from being an individual into being a theological person.

An individual comes to personhood through embracing and enacting his God-given vocation.

---

Mission comes from God to the individual in the encounter with Christ’s saving love facilitated by the Spirit. The intimation here is that mission is not something that emerges out of one’s own initiative, but rather is the work of the Spirit, who directs the individual to the Son. Mission is the work of the Spirit and the Son, applied uniquely to everyone, with the goal of turning that individual into a fulfilled person in the deepest way possible. It is a specific calling particular to every human person, and the activity of self-surrender and the degree of self-surrender will vary in everyone as he responds to and appropriates the story of self that his mission entails. Thus mission that leads to self-fulfillment can include the possibility of losing one’s own life.

As evinced by Delp, the gift of one’s own life given for the world is not a destruction of self in exchange for union with God, since Delp’s witness offers a deeper and broader vision of human fulfillment. His obedience to God is suffused with drama, and he experienced the gamut of life’s joys and sufferings. In his prayer, Delp learns to respond to God in the midst of tribulations, either to embrace joy or pain. In Delp’s witness, martyrdom is discerned to be a proper response, if undertaken in love and prompted by the Spirit.

4.4 Conclusion: The Spirit as Bond of Love

In the second chapter, we examined some of Delp’s anti-Nazi homilies and theological essays from his time at Ignatiuskolleg in Valkenburg, The Netherlands. In “The Divine Foundation of Human Beings,” Delp speaks out against the self-idolatry of National Socialism, and at the

744 Timothy Yoder in “Hans Urs von Balthasar and Kenosis” argues that Balthasar’s theology of mission does not emerge from the talents of the human person. The starting point is Christology not anthropology. I agree and would like to emphasize the facilitation of the Holy Spirit in leading the human person to his/her fulfillment in Christ.
end of the essay, he urges Germans to recognize that they are not divine. People who are convinced of their absolute holiness or lack of faults are destructive in the community.\textsuperscript{745} Delp challenges such people to recognize their creatureliness by evoking the creation story because we are made in the image of God. The relationship between God and the human person is primarily the relationship between the Creator and His creature.\textsuperscript{746}

Nevertheless, the Creator-creature relationship does not offer a complete picture of the relationship between God and humanity, since “The final word which the revealing God spoke to us is Christ.”\textsuperscript{747} In other words, the Incarnation reshapes our relationship with God and though our limitations remain, God communicated to human beings the possibility of becoming sons and daughters of God through grace.\textsuperscript{748} This grace will come and reside in human beings.\textsuperscript{749} Such indwelling of holy merciful grace brings us to our fulfillment as friends of God, which Delp simply quotes John 15:15: Non jam dico vos servos, sed amicos.

Friendship with Christ brings human persons to their true fulfillment. Clearly as we have seen, this is no ordinary friendship. Rather friendship is that which lays down life for another. Jesus’ commandment to love, as He has loved, tells us that the love that enabled Jesus to lay down his life for his friends can be imitated and embodied repeatedly by His followers. To keep Jesus’ commandment is to embrace and enact self-sacrificial love in our lives. The human capac-

\textsuperscript{745} Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Gesitliche Schriften, 1:154.
\textsuperscript{746} Delp writes: Because that is what is said at the start of human history: fecit hominem secundam imaginem suam. The first relationship which arises between God and the individual is the relationship which arises between God and the human being is the relationship between Creator and creature. See Delp, Gesammelte Schriften: Gesitliche Schriften, 156.
\textsuperscript{747} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{748} Ibid., 157.
\textsuperscript{749} Außer dieser Nähe durch sein Sein hat Christus den Menschen die Göttndahe der heiligmachenden Gnade vermittelt. Gott selbst in seiner ganzen unbegreiflichen Fülle will kommen und Wohnung nehmen im Menschen (Ibid., 156).
ity for this radical friendship with Christ is ultimately based not on our initiative, but involves a sanctifying grace, which is the work of the Spirit. It is the task of the Spirit to prepare us for friendship with Christ by dwelling within us. As a result, the Spirit makes Christ present to us, and un-selves us so that we can follow Christ and become adopted sons and daughters of the Father.

As he prepares to die, Delp’s greatest concern is not about authentic individuation, self-actualization, or self-fulfillment, but rather his relationship with God and with others. The obsession with fulfilling the self leads only to ruination, as Delp saw in National Socialism. Whenever the individual is emphasized at the expense of others or the goal of life is self-fulfillment, one falls into falsehood:

We should give thought to the fact that wherever self is stressed, as in strength that glorifies in its own might, power that idolizes itself, life that aims at “fulfilling itself” in its own way and by its own resources, in all these, not the truth, but the negation of the truth may be suspected. And there is only one thing a person can really do about it—fall down on his knees and pray. Only after ten long years... do I fully realize this.750

At this point, in his life, Delp embodies the Suscipe that he had been praying throughout his imprisonment. He is wholly available to God and permeated by God’s love, and God is the subject and object of his life. Delp has acknowledged the gift of God’s friendship.

Delp extends the theme of being in a relationship or loving friendship to his friends and family. His final prison letters express a defiance of the depersonalization of National Socialism, and his last letters are an affirmation of relationship that is simultaneous with Delp’s understand-

ing of himself. To the Kreusers, a family from his parish (St. Georg’s) he writes on 21 January 1945:

If God, in fact, calls me home, one of my first requests to him will be for the friends who have passed the test of fidelity to God and have proved their love, to preserve that love from all danger. . . I know from experience, friends, that today existence takes more than strength, and we’ve been affected and we are exhausted, and yet remains the mandatory call of love. So let’s fail in anything except the thing that makes us human beings: adoration and love. Adoration and love: that is what it takes to be human. . . There’s an inner space where there’s no evening and no farewell.751

On 23 January, 1945 Delp’s fellow collaborator and companion Helmuth James Graf von Moltke was executed; prior to his execution, Moltke wrote a letter to Delp. It was also the day of the birth of the first child of a dear parishioner, Ernst Kessler from St. Georg’s Parish, which led him to write to the family’s newborn a heartfelt letter. These two letters, one concerning Moltke’s reflection on divine providence before his execution and the other, Delp’s letter to the newborn, testify to the relational dimension of existence. The themes of friendship with God and one another and prayer guiding them in their last days pervade Moltke’s letter:

Dear Friend,
In order to clarify a point, I want to say the following: the Lord has led us here marvelously. He also showed us in the last couple of months in human relationships the places that he could prepare and make favourable twists and turns. He showed with various signs that he is with us. . . And he can make good for us at the gallows in Plötzensee, as in the freedom [we experienced] in Kreisau or elsewhere. . . One thing, however, is most certain, we must without ceasing dare to pray… Who can know, to which all this is necessary in the plan of the Lord. For us only one thing is valid: to commit ourselves joyfully in his guidance, even if we must go into the dark and are not able to see the path before us.752

752 My free translation of: Um unseren Streitpunkt zu klaren, will ich folgendes sagen: Der Herr hat uns wunderbar bis hierher geführt; er hat in den letzten zwei Monaten auch im menschlichen Kausalzusammenhang Stellen gezeigt, die uns günstige Wendungen vorbereiten und ermöglichen können; er hat uns durch vielerlei Zeichen gezeigt, daß er bei uns ist… Aber das kann er am Galgen in Plötzensee genau so gut tun, wie in der Freiheit in Kreisau oder sonstwo… Eines aber ist ganz gewiß, daß wir ohne Unterlaß beten dürfen und müssen… Wer kann wissen, wozu dies alles
There is a sense in which Delp experienced the death of Moltke, to whom he was bound in love, as radically as he did his own impending death. Delp addresses Alfred Sebastian Kessler, the newborn “with great happiness and excitement”:

Right away, with my bound hands, I sent you a big blessing ... And I’d like you to understand what I have wanted, just in case we don’t become suitably acquainted with each other in this life; that is, the purpose to which I have placed my life—or better, to which it has been placed: to increase the praise and adoration of God; to help prove that people can live according to God’s order and in the freedom of God, and this is how to be human. I wanted to help and want to help, find a way out of the misery, which we humans have gotten into and in which we have lost the right to be human. Only in adoration, in love, in living according to God’s order, is a person free and capable of life.\(^{753}\)

In light of the radical experience of the death of Delp’s friend, an authentic human response must speak both of “my” death and “our” death; though these two are different, they need to be held together. Friendship with God and friendship with one another are the themes of Delp’s resistance in the face of Nazi aggression even to his death, because human personhood involves the self in relation to an “other.” Delp shows that Christian martyrdom is not only a concern about one’s relationship to oneself. Furthermore, it is not just a relationship with the divine but also affects his friendship with fellow human persons. Delp and his companions demonstrate the universal claim of Christ. As it belongs to the concept of the martyr to be brought for reckoning before the organs of the state and to be subjected to a judicial proceeding and the penalties of public law, so too the public confession of Christ belongs to the theological understanding of the martyr. As such, Delp and companions did not confess guilt but made a confession of faith as

\(^{753}\) Coady, 200-02.
friends. The love that was shared among the members of the Kreisau Circle, particularly those who were executed, is a testimony to God’s love in Christ for humanity. In the case of Delp, the Spirit brought him into an intimate encounter with Christ and enabled Delp to say a full “yes” to God. This “yes” took Delp into extreme situations, where he bore witness to Christ in the face of evils and shared the love of Christ with his friends from the Kreisau Circle in Tegel Prison.
Conclusion

Theological Significance

This thesis emerged from a concern that martyrdom in the twenty-first century has been indelibly connected with horrendous, violent acts such as suicide bombings. Christian martyrdom is not immune to negative perceptions, and the Christian martyr is described in some spheres as someone with a persecution complex and lack of freedom. Even in the contemporary secular context of toleration and pluralism, the martyr’s willingness to suffer and die baffles many people, religious believers, as well as nonbelievers.\footnote{Brad Stephan Gregory, \textit{Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe}, Harvard Historical Studies 134 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 348.} This thesis has examined the martyrdom of Alfred Delp through the lens of his prayer and his encounter with the saving love of God in Jesus Christ, placing his writing in dialogue with the theology of Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar. In his prison meditations, Delp articulates his experience of an encounter and a relationship with Christ that heals and transforms him. The Holy Spirit prepares Delp to receive Christ’s friendship by drawing him out of his interior self-absorption and opens up a space within him to receive Christ. Through the Spirit Delp is placed in a relationship with Christ and is drawn into Christ’s redemptive work.

As someone who had been “converted” by the love of God, Delp participated in the saving love of Christ by confronting and testifying against evil. As Nazi Germany was implementing its discriminatory practices and readying itself for the Second World War, Delp recorded in his tertian diary his surrender of himself to the Heart of Christ. In the early years of the war, Delp gave
a sermon on the Heart of Jesus in which he appealed to his parishioners to surrender themselves to Christ and take on the burdens carried by their fellow human beings. Delp’s own process of following Christ entailed participating in an underground network that helped Jewish people escape Germany. His further self-abandonment entailed participation in an anti-Nazi resistance group—the Kreisau Circle—and the creation of plans for a post-Nazi German society based on Catholic Social Teaching. When the members of the Kreisau Circle had been arrested and imprisoned and were awaiting trial, Delp began to pray more profoundly to participate in God’s merciful love. His first two prison meditations were on devotion to the Heart of Jesus, and they appealed to and articulated an encounter with the saving love of God in Jesus Christ. Delp’s time in prison occasioned his greatest self-abandonment to Christ, the fruits of which deepened his friendship with Moltke and gave him the strength to make his Final Vow and to testify against the Nazis in a public trial. Thus, this thesis has argued that Christian martyrdom, as exemplified by Alfred Delp, is the fruit of an encounter with the saving love of the Triune God in Jesus Christ facilitated by the Holy Spirit. As a result of this saving love, Delp abandoned himself to follow Jesus for the sake of others, and his martyrdom was thus a response to the Divine call to a deeper discipleship.

For Delp, devotion to the Heart of Jesus involved a dialogue with God and demanded the response of his whole person. The devotion, which symbolizes Christ’s unconditional offer of loving friendship to a sinful humanity, invited Delp to open his heart to both Christ and to his neighbours. The devotion also involved Delp’s cooperation with the Spirit of God within him. If the object of Delp’s prayer was a more profound relationship with Christ, then this relationship was assisted by the Holy Spirit. Delp did not pray to change himself in order to earn God’s love, but rather the Spirit prayed within him to transform him. The Spirit facilitated the healing and
restoration of the relational bond between God and the human person. Delp’s witness makes clear that the missions of the Son and the Spirit interpenetrate and complement each other. The work of the Son and the Spirit direct Delp to the same end—participation in the redemptive work of Christ and Trinitarian life. Relationship with Christ commits Delp to the world in the deepest manner possible.

Methodology

My approach to the study of Christian martyrdom comprised three essential elements. Firstly, this thesis has focused on the concrete historical witness of a Christian martyr—Alfred Delp. A theological study of the Christian martyr should begin not with an idea but with a concrete person. Secondly, prayer expresses the truth of the human person, who on one hand, experiences finitude, and, on the other hand, has the capacity to receive the gift of intimacy with the Divine. Thirdly, prayer enables the Christian person to encounter the saving love of God in Jesus Christ.

I have deployed the writings of Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar to explore Delp’s meditations and to shed light on the transformative encounter with God. According to Lonergan, the authentic human person searches continually for truth and goodness. This integral dynamism enables him to undergo intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. The Christian martyr, as exemplified by Delp, possesses a sincere concern for truth, a deep-rooted solidarity with society, and an unrestricted love for God; together, these capacities manifest themselves as a total gift of self for others. According to Balthasar, to be truly themselves, Christians must pray, and prayer always entails encountering the saving love of God in Jesus Christ. The dynamic of encountering God’s saving love in prayer, as revealed by Delp, involves a disposition
of being open to transformation by God and a consequential response to God throughout one’s life.

Relationship with Christ

This thesis has explored Delp’s relationship with Christ by examining his devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The devotion is always directed to the Person of Jesus, and the word Heart refers to His interior disposition. Delp’s meditations on the Heart of Jesus brings to mind that the foundation of the devotion is that the Father sends His Son in the Spirit for the sake of redeeming people in a world marred by sin. The Heart of Jesus is the Divine Word addressed to sinners, so that sinners can be rescued and re-created as sons and daughters of God. Delp’s spiritual writings on the Heart of Jesus offer a profound symbolism—this Heart evokes the Cross; it is the locus where a believer can encounter the saving love of the Cross. In Delp’s rich soteriology, the Heart of Jesus manifests the work of redemption, the “bearing” of sin by the Son. For Delp, in the midst of the wretchedness and evils of war, devotion to the Heart of Jesus can no longer be anything else but a radical commitment to the Pierced Heart of Jesus.

The devotion allows Delp to experience Jesus’ disposition of self-giving love and to encounter His loving relationship with the Father. The Son’s relationship to the Father is marked by self-surrender and obedience. The Trinitarian setting of this devotion is essential to understand the meaning of salvation. The Heart of Jesus devotion makes possible a participation in the redemptive work of the Son, the purpose of which is to give glory to the Father with Christ and to love our brothers and sisters with Christ as well. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus
represents for Delp the “doorway to the Trinity” and a “way of atonement and sacrifice,” inviting him into a more profound relationship with Jesus and, consequently, to become a person who lives the way of self-sacrifice. The goal of the self-giving of Divine love is nothing less than to bring men and women back into relationship with God, from whom they have gone astray. Thus, the atonement of Jesus Christ and acts of reparation of believers in Christ are offered to the Father. Our participation in Christ’s redemptive work and personal acts of reparation is offered with Christ and through Christ, because He is the head of the Body of Christ. For Delp, the person, whom Christ has transformed, is one who “learns with Jesus Christ on the way of the Cross.” In the Heart of Jesus is revealed the self-giving love of the Triune God—a love whose goal is the salvation of humanity.

In Tegel Prison, Delp interprets his imprisonment as a testing ground for his relationship with God and his capacity to love and give himself away. The two meditations on the Heart of Jesus, make evident an encounter between the loving friendship of God in Christ and a humanity threatened by paralyzing ideologies and violence and, in the face of this, the healing and renewing of the human being in the image of Christ. The “image of Christ” theme is significant in Delp’s writings. Christ reveals to people who God is and who they are meant to be, and the image of Christ represents a unique dignity and a relational dimension belonging to humankind and rooted in Christ. God creates humanity in the image of the Trinity. Because of sin, the image, though not lost, is sullied. The Incarnation of Christ draws people into a loving relationship with God by revealing to them their true identity and the goal of their existence. Being renewed in the

756 Ibid., 1:249.
image of Christ means that human persons are called forth from the lies and violence of their society to serve and heal in Christ’s name. For Delp, the form of Christ is most poignantly communicated in the Heart of Jesus, which invites persons into an intimate relationship with God and moves them to a life of self-giving and to offer reparation for the sake of others. Sharing in the redemptive work of Christ includes sharing in His fate. Reparation for the sins of the world, both one’s own sins and others’, consists in a freely accepted participation in the fate that Christ suffered. This means that in loving devotion to Christ one encounters Jesus’ disposition towards the Cross as the law for our disposition towards the cross in our own lives.

Interaction between Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Martyr

This thesis has interpreted Delp’s experience of being rescued and re-created in the image of Christ as an interaction between Christ and the Holy Spirit. Delp writes that the Spirit works within human beings to prepare them to receive Christ’s friendship. The Spirit conforms persons to Christ by working within their interiority to heal their spiritual paralysis and move them to surrender themselves to God. The Spirit reverses people’s sinful tendency to harden their hearts and remove themselves from God and the world. Delp speaks of sin as a withdrawal from the world, an attitude of self-absorption and self-centredness that puts one fundamentally at odds with Christ and other persons. The Spirit’s activity consists in counteracting this constricting tendency of sin. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit overcomes human self-centredness and renders persons receptive to Christ’s invitation to friendship. In freeing people from interior paralysis, the Spirit also draws them to the selflessness of Christ. The Spirit opens human hearts and engenders in people a willingness to love the way Christ loved. The Spirit enables human persons to say “Father” and moves them to love others with and through Christ.
The Spirit’s work of indwelling and making present Christ’s attitude of loving obedience to the Father and selfless love for the world involves undoing the false way of being human. Persons are united with Christ in a way that makes them part of the Mystical Body of Christ. The reciprocal relationship between “Christ in us” and “we in Christ” expresses the way of being human in the world. The Divine plan of salvation continues in persons who belong to the Christian community, the Church. Thus, the Divine initiative to redeem people by way of the Incarnation and the Cross is continued through the intimate and dynamic work of the Spirit, extending Christ’s saving love to all the world. Christ offers a friendship that rescues and re-creates human persons, and invites them to share in His redemptive mission in a broken world. Nonetheless, the confrontation with the world’s brokenness, according to Delp, cannot occur without a confrontation with one’s own sin. Due to our sin, discipleship involves living out the law of the Cross. Because of Christ’s sacrifice and His transformation of human existence from within, persons can confront the sinful aspects of their existence. The way of Christ in the world for believers is the path of the law of the Cross, which leads disciples to the deepest and darkest parts of their existence, where sin is to be redeemed.757

The suffering that Jesus endured did not by itself bring about our rescue and re-creation. The paradox of the Cross is that it was through love in the midst of weakness and humiliation that God brought forth life, and such love culminates in new life. The self-emptying love of Christ and His Resurrection bring people together into the presence of God. As this thesis has argued, the practice of prayer brings a person into intimacy with God because the goal of prayer

is a relationship with Christ, who is the archetype of our existence, and the inspirer of prayer is the Spirit. The Spirit helps bring the believer into a relationship with Christ and the self-giving love of the Cross. In Delp’s view, the Spirit relates us to Christ and enables us to confront evil. This confrontation with evil is the fruit of a love that commits people to their brothers and sisters in the world. This love, represented by the Heart of Jesus, entails a total commitment and a willingness to pay the ultimate price for these loved ones.

Implications, Limitations, and Further Research

The implications of the thesis are threefold. Firstly, any theology of Christian martyrdom, must acknowledge the prayer of the martyr. Delp’s prayerful prison meditations show that Christian witness against social injustice, even unto death, can never be separated from a person’s relationship with Christ. The study of Christian martyrdom should include the integration of the martyr’s prayer life with his witness. The martyr’s faith in and devotion to Christ can make evident the fundamental reason for taking action against sin—bearing it and testifying against it at the cost of one’s own life. Secondly, a theology of martyrdom can be enhanced by integrating a theology of the third Person of the Trinity, whose work is to make present and visible across space and time Christ’s love for the Father and the world. Delp’s final prison meditation is on the Spirit, who conforms the person to Christ. The dialogue between the human person and Christ in prayer takes place with the facilitation of the Spirit. Delp’s life was committed to deeds that make room for God and other people. This hospitality and devotion to the other, which makes us like Christ, is the work of the Spirit. Even though the ground of the martyr’s self-sacrifice is Christ’s love, a pneumatological approach can illuminate how Christ speaks to the depths of a martyr’s being and how martyrs make choices that transform their lives.
Thirdly, the theme of kenosis looms large in Delp’s meditations. Delp’s death was the consequence of his religious faith and his resistance to an unjust political system, and the heart of Delp’s testimony was his fidelity and response to the loving call of Christ. His self-surrender to Christ did not happen only at the end of his life but was a deepening theme throughout his spiritual journey, especially from his tertianship experience onwards. It was only through Delp’s contemplation of the Heart of Jesus that he saw ways that the Divine order might be restored in the world. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus is ultimately a devotion to the Cross and the battle against evil—at both personal and social levels. A central insight of Delp’s writings is that the law of the Cross is the fruit of the saving love of God and the way in which friendship with Christ is lived in a broken world. The passion of the Christian martyr can help us understand and live the counter-cultural message of the Gospel.

The limitations of this thesis are threefold. Firstly, the thesis does not address a majority of his writings. Although the collected writings of Delp span five volumes, the thesis focuses on his early homilies and essays from Ignatiuskolleg, his tertianship diary, and his prison meditations and letters. As a result, the language of the Passion of Jesus and the Cross predominates in the thesis, whereas the language of the Resurrection is largely absent. Secondly, Delp, as a Jesuit, was devoted to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The thesis makes references to the reverberations of the Spiritual Exercises in Delp’s writings, but it does not bring the Exercises into dialogue with his writings in a systematic fashion. Insights into Delp’s understanding of God and the human person in his prison meditations could be gained from a study of the month-long retreat he made twice in his life.

In terms of further research, firstly, a study of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola in relation to the martyrdom of Delp is of immediate interest. It would address the
limitation outlined above. A theology of martyrdom could be furthered in conjunction with a theology of the *Spiritual Exercises*, because they pertain to Delp’s prison meditations. A theological dialogue between the *Exercises* and the Jesuit martyr could deepen our understanding of redemption-salvation. As discussed in the third and fourth chapters, the heart of Delp’s testimony was his fidelity and response to the loving call of Christ from the Cross while he was at his nadir in prison. The core focus of Ignatian spirituality on Divine action was formative for Delp. Structurally and dynamically, the prison meditations of Delp can be seen as reiterations of the *Exercises*. They both begin and end with God’s action and initiative in healing, dwelling within, and re-creating humanity. It was only through Delp’s contemplation of Christ in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus that he saw the ways in which Divine order could be restored in the world. As Delp’s meditations on the martyrs of Christmastide demonstrate, the devotion to Christ is ultimately a devotion to the Cross and the battle against evil. The way to engage with the created world is to perceive it in relation to Christ.

Secondly, another dimension of the fruits of Delp’s martyrdom comes to light in his death, which occurred in the context of intimate collaboration with fellow Protestants. Christ’s redemptive love breaks down barriers and transforms people who have been harmed by sin and division. Christ’s love unites persons. Because Delp’s witness unto death extended beyond the walls of the Roman Catholic Church, it could serve as the basis for an orthopraxis study on ecumenism. It was communal prayer and worship of Christ in the midst of persecution that brought fellow Catholics and Protestants closer to each other. The members of the Kreisau Circle demonstrated during their imprisonment that they were united with one another through the redeeming love of Christ, and were summoned to testify in the face of Nazi persecution, to the love they had received as members of the Body of Christ. A discussion on the bloodshed of Christians in the
contemporary world is urgent. Pope Francis and his last two predecessors, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and St. John Paul II, have spoken of the devastating outbreak of violence against Christians has brought Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants closer to one another. For example, in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II states that Christians already have a common martyrology, which shows how, at a profound level, God preserves communion among the baptized in the greatest demand of faith, manifested in the sacrifice of life. Thirdly, Delp’s martyrdom serves as a reminder of the significance of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The fact remains, however, that the devotion to the Heart of Jesus lacks its former power to attract and influence people. The Heart of Jesus is the sign of redemption-salvation for our contemporary age, in which love has become distorted and the notion of God has become abstract. Perhaps the meditations on the Heart of Jesus, written by an imprisoned man awaiting trial and eventual execution in the midst of genocide and a world war, can make an appeal for a transformation of lives. A theological study of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus can enrich contemporary scholars and believers who yearn to see an integration of spirituality and justice. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus can enable and empower persons to undergo a conversion and engage in a radical living out of the Gospel’s proclamation. Moreover, a study of the Heart of Jesus could support Christians’ understanding of Pope Francis’ call for mercy, which is seen as the cornerstone of his papacy. In an address from his first year in the papacy, Francis states, “The Heart of Jesus is the ultimate symbol of God’s mercy. . . . [This] mercy is not just a sentiment: indeed, it is a force that gives life, that raises humanity up!”

Fourthly, Delp’s reflection on the Heart of Jesus and on the Spirit as the facilitator of both the human relationship with Jesus and the human ability to think reasonably and engage the world provides a foundation for an exploration of the complementarity of faith and reason in the Christian martyr. In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II suggests that the Christian martyr may represent the highest union of faith and reason. Within Delp’s writings and witness, one can make the case that he represents such a union. In his prison meditations, he laments that the theology of his time lacks reflection on love, and consequently has very little to say to impoverished people and cannot address people’s spiritual alienation and paralysis. Delp’s meditation on the Spirit as the Trinitarian Person who prepares people to receive Christ’s saving love and assists in their following of Christ in a broken world could serve as a foundation for a study of the union of faith and reason in Christian discipleship.

Finally, this thesis has maintained that the Christian martyr, as typified by Alfred Delp, makes Christ’s love for His creation quite explicit. Christian martyrdom expresses not a rejection of the world but a human life led by the Spirit into the saving love of God in Christ for the world. Alfred Delp’s witness unto death is the fruit of the saving encounter of the love of God in Christ, which heals and re-creates Delp in the image of Christ. Profound intimacy with Christ is made possible by the Spirit, who prepares the hearts of humans to receive it. The Christian way of life represented by Alfred Delp is a testimony to the Pierced Heart of the Saviour. Friendship with Christ takes the form of the way of the Cross.

No one has greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servants

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2013/documents/papa-francescoAngelus_20130609.html
do not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends... (John 15: 13-15a, NAB)

Even in the most difficult circumstances, Delp experienced a profound union with Christ and was willing to share it with others. Delp’s theology of the Cross frames the inner freedom of a martyr with a commitment to solidarity with a broken world. To think of God is to think of a God who refuses to abandon His people. Alfred Delp’s martyrdom testifies that such a death can express the extent of Divine love. It serves as witness of the infinite capacity of the saving love of God in Christ.
Bibliography

Primary Texts


———. *Does Jesus Know Us—Do We Know Him?*. Translated by Graham Harrison. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983.


**Secondary Texts**


Babini, Ellero. “Jesus Christ, Form and Norm of Man according to Hans Urs von Balthasar.” *Communio* 16.3 (Fall 1989: 446-457).


Appendices

Appendix 1 Alfred Delp’s 1st Prison Meditation on the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus

Heart of Jesus

Heart of Jesus Theology

1. One has to and must regard the emergence, meaning and unique character of the modern Heart of Jesus adoration from various standpoints. There is a theological viewpoint, a historically pious one and a contemporary one which is often completely overlooked.

2. Above all, though, there is a salvific-historical viewpoint and assessment of this inner-church event. This is really a measure of God to save mankind and, indeed, if God’s intentions are heeded, to save mankind from its unusual, present-day distress. In the Heart of Jesus adoration one has to realistically and equitably evaluate that which God has inspired in and through the church and not that which pious ignorance has made out of God’s inspiration. But, as you know, leaving the many decisions, valuations, attitudes, realizations to the ignorant - be they pious or not - has been one of the biggest absurdities we have committed and, in doing so, we have taken away the meaning of the most fruitful spiritual inspirations as well as their historical effectiveness.

3. One only has to unfold the three above-mentioned assessments and inquire about their inner contents to see the spiritual and religious inspiration and redemption that could and should happen through the Heart of Jesus adoration.

4. The historically pious treatment will certainly put forth that the Heart of Jesus adoration is a church prayer that has always been said and, moreover, that it is a typical German way to adore the Redeemer and so on. That is all true and then it is not. The Heart of Jesus adoration that took place in the Middle Ages, for instance, can’t be denied but, then again, it is something completely different. Back then it was a manifestation of the “mystical friendship” with the Lord, a gentle association of individual souls with a great affinity for each other and deeply devoted hearts to the Lord such as in the meaning of the last appeal of the Heart of Jesus litany. But here it refers to a scream of anguish and forsaken-

ness from the people and an offer of mercy from God to save a threatened mankind. The theological and contemporary viewpoints emphasize this unique character even more.

5. The language, like the theology of this prayer, is the language of love. Many a good theologian who remained a rationalist or something similar shies away from saying the word heart at all. Those who have ever really liked someone don’t need to think twice about the heart as the symbol for the sentiments of a person and so on. They know that they can say to a person: “You have a good heart, you are a dear person” and mean everything good, genuine and loyal and devout that flows to them from the other person. Something very similar applies here: It is a matter of a reconnection with the inner intention and attitude of Christ towards mankind. The God-man Jesus Christ as the personally existing salvation of God for mankind, as the redemptive salvation of God, as the salvation of God that personally calls and searches for mankind: that is indeed the unique character of the picture of salvation of this prayer. The appeal of the personal individual is two-fold: for his salvation and healing and for the inner transformation in the form of Christ which means into the willingness and ability to become an effective and fruitful instrument of the Lord’s redemptive and probing salvation. This is where the notion of atonement, satisfaction and so on comes from. Christ stands up for us and makes things good.

6. Above I spoke about a reconnection with Christ which occurred in this prayer. The meaning is twofold: a rediscovery of the theological Christ as the God-man. In terms of doctrine, no rediscovery is needed but practically speaking and in terms of piety. Not only Christ of the historically good example and so on should appeal to the consciousness of religious people. Compare, for example, the image of Christ in Goethe’s “Dichtung und Wahrheit”760 revealed to far-reaching German circles with that which is meant here and the difference can be felt.761

But, at the same time, it is about another rediscovery, namely, that of the personal Christ. That the entire theological abundance, the entire healing intention, the entire unique human substance and quality manifest itself in an unheard of rich and manifold world of intention and attitude.

7. The theological message of this prayer is thus as follows: Salvation for mankind, personified in the person of Jesus Christ - realized in the redemption brought about by Jesus Christ – affirmed, acknowledged and implemented as the intention of Christ toward mankind.

8. Now it becomes apparent here that this double rediscovery of Christ, or better, this double recombination of the message of God and His relationship to mankind appeals to a very specific person and has a very specific contemporary intention. I stand by the state-

760 Goethes Werke X. Hamburg 1959, 45ff., 157ff.
761 I am unsure of this reference.
ment above: it may be that these devotions also come from monastic silence and solitude; its first intention is the *salvific historical*. It is God’s way to save mankind inside and outside of the church.

9. The historical emergence of this devotion as a broad movement spanned the 17\(^{th}\), 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) centuries. The 20\(^{th}\) century should actually be able to understand it and be ready for it, especially in light of the hardship and wretchedness.

At the same time, the period from the 17\(^{th}\) to the 20\(^{th}\) century saw the emergence of our present-day world. The respective “new” endeavors and movements of the Enlightenment, of Positivism, Idealism, Classicism, Sociology, Realism, Vitalism, the Natural Sciences and Technology, Capitalism, the large cities and of Socialism: All of them together paint a picture of the universe which applies today and, at the same time, it is the secret burden and concern of mankind.\(^{762}\) This ideology proclaims its own *image of God*, its own *worldview* and its own *image of humanity*.

10. The image of God throughout these three centuries can be broken down into many unique characteristics and contributions. But that doesn’t help us here. The basic tendencies remain: *Violization* from fake proximity to ideological paleness and distance; God as an idea, as a postulate, as an uninvolved spectator; indeed ultimately the *breakdown* of the image of God and God-consciousness into the *nothingness* of the atheist negation or of the naturalistic pantheist secularization.

11. The *worldview*, on the other hand, is increasingly encircling humankind with distress and demands an even closer and hopeless way. The development to purely *inner secularism*, the proclamation of the earth to be the only sense and space of being and the unfolding of mechanical collectivism: This all makes the world a hopeless space of trouble and distress and of *total* services and while at first this appears to be the case judging by today’s result, this circumstance was developing and inevitable.

12. The image of humanity during this time span reveals the ever clearer symptoms of a crippling and deadly atrophy. And here, too, not all of the eras and categories need to be listed. It suffices to list the most significant hardships:

- People are becoming lonelier: Breakdown of order, the society and real ties
- People are becoming powerless: Politically, economically, in history and morally
- People are focusing more on exterior life: Escape to sensation, entertainment and so on
- People are becoming stereotyped: Loss of one’s own face, development of the type
- People are becoming ruthless: Merciless

13. This world and its people are to be addressed by the message of the Heart of the Lord. The message brings humanity to mankind:

The image of God, the personality, the closest proximity, the loving intentions and most immediate requirements

The worldview, the changed and consecrated fate, the punctuated immanence, the transcendence as position, intention and probation

14. Mankind is addressed most intensively in his own most unique and personal atrophy. Just the images of God and the worldview in the Heart of Jesus message overcame the loneliness and the helplessness of modern mankind. The God of proximity and of salvation is simply the overcoming of powerlessness, cruelty and of helplessness.

Now let Christ, who is the bringer of salvation, atonement, completed deliverance, and of loving and sacrificial and strong intention meet this individual. Don’t his chains fall to the ground? Is his loneliness not overcome and his powerlessness from the innermost point suspended? Won’t this individual be pulled out of the masses and shown the word of the Lord God? Does not the law of mercilessness of this time in all its presumption collapse? And don’t the inner sources start to flow and stream again under the blessing of fac cor meum secundum cor tuum?

15. It will be like it was in the beginning. *Fecit hominem secundum imaginem suam* (Gen. 1: 27). This person understands the urgent and beckoning model of the Lord or he stops being a person and dies.
Appendix 2 Alfred Delp’s 2nd Prison Meditation on the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus

Heart of Jesus Litany

1. On can feel in the litany that under the caring charge of the church it has developed not as much from free lyrical abundance of praying hearts to the extent other litanies have. Indeed, particularly when it comes to the Heart of Jesus adoration in spite of all the freedom of the heart, it really does depend on theological exactness. Unfortunately, the guardians and advocates of exactness have often blocked the way to the radiant message of the Heart of Jesus with their own propositions and formulations.

2. The individual appeals of the litany can almost all be found or proven somewhere in texts, in the tradition, in classical witnesses to prayer and so on. The litany necessitates two ways of adopting and internalizing if one intends to pray correctly and from the heart: the real factual knowledge of the theological statement which takes place in the appeal and the implementation of this theological statement in personal religiosity.

3. In this way, the litany is a good and successful training of religiousness and prayer, particularly for modern individuals: As you know, modern religiousness still continues to suffer from two basic evils. Either it is caught up in thought, in reflection, philosophy or even theology; the completion that leads to personal fulfillment does not happen. This religiousness lacks a decision and a heart. As a result of it, Christianity in Europe has dropped out of the circle of decisive spiritual powers. Or, that other basic evil which is one of thoughtless piouness, pure show, pure habit, movement and excitement of sentiment. This religiousness is inhuman and subhuman and very often a stage of development en route to complete ungodliness. Religious ignorance, be it pious or impious, has destroyed a large number of Western individuals. That being said, the issue of who allowed these individuals to reach this level of uncertainty is, again, a question in and of itself.

4. The first invocations of the litany determine the subject or, more accurately, the object of the Heart of Jesus adoration. Generally speaking, still without further specification: In the description of the reality that we address and call upon.

5. We call upon the heart – of the Son - of the Eternal Father. Four findings are in store for us which have to be stressed and processed internally:

---

Heart: Here we call upon the love of God as we do in the entire litany. The Heart is the symbol of the interiority of God and His basic relationship to us. Those who don’t believe and understand this of God should pray no further because they are unable to handle the words they say.

Heart of the Son: One ought to be able to say here in brief that which the sacred science knows of the Son. Only this one point is noted as being important for this whole prayer: Right from the start, the Son is the place of security, the home for the world. The Word carries the picture whose shadow we are. It has always been God’s decision for the world.

Heart of the Eternal Father: Every sincere religious call has to reach the interior depths of God. Whatever stops before this will often be the result of the obstinacy of lies and falsehoods. And here especially life is so simple and at the same time highly diversified, that one always has to mean the entirety at least when it comes to the attitude and openness. In the Heart of Jesus adoration the force and the seriousness of the comforting message and hence the depth of the consolation and encouragement become ever greater the more we recognize the order of God.

6. The religious value of this first call for us is manifold. It is about worshipping God. The basic attitudes of reverence and, above all, of filial love are the first requirements for a real prayer.

It is about the devout finding of the love of God, of His salvation for us His people. Only those who know and acknowledge this will honestly say: “Have mercy on us.”

It is about a basic personal relationship between the second person of the Trinity and the person: me. The individual character of Christian religion lies precisely in the fact that the association to Christ codetermines every reality of life, tempers it inwardly, consecrates or even enables and creates it in the first place.

Therefore it is about a relationship of personal intimacy between Christ and me. By grace, secret words are said back and forth and a genuine supreme love flows from the core of the heart of mankind and finds the heart of God in order to discover there that everything, call and awakening and the ability to stay en route until home, that all this was the merciful and creative call of the Divine Heart of Jesus.

Heart of Jesus in the Womb of the Virgin Mary Formed by the Holy Spirit

1. The Heart of Jesus adoration is a unique intertwinement of an earthly-historical development and heavenly endowment and guidance. One is able to know the people by name, in whose life, and with the date and hour often the historical moment, when this prayer was kindled as the light of God. And, yet, its unfolding and sudden blossoming are not an unrelated event unbeknownst to history as part of history.

I have already said all of this. But I do like to repeat this thought and I will in the individual invocations often come back to it because it is precisely here that the message and its
history mutually corroborate each other: that between heaven and earth there is no magnum chaos and no great silence or a sort of generous neutrality but, rather, that lively relationships go back and forth: Prayer, adoration and religion live from this truth. And I have been living from it utterly and completely over these last weeks. And it should stay that way.

2. And I have also said before that the first invocations describe the “theological location” of the prayer. Especially this prayer, which recalls the greatness and heights to which the human heart is capable of ascending, one also has to think of the kitschy degeneration to which the human heart can fall if it is left to itself.

As you know, it is a fateful question for the value and goal of life as well as of a spiritual reality whether they really set the hearts of mankind in motion, whether this driving force is inherent to them, which calls hearts. Whether they subject one to impetuous enthusiasm, whether they raise, enable and force the hearts of mankind to great and holy passion where the spirit glows and breaks down the closed boundaries and limits. Whether they finally elicit a movement which despite all voraciousness remains a radiant spirit and spiritual radiant, in other words, radiant form, radiant measure, radiant clarity and radiant order – initially and above all a burning and flaming passion.

3. This is the point here. Time will tell that the inner motives of the Heart of Jesus adoration propel people beyond themselves in an unheard of way. But that the motives repeatedly make people face the reality of things and orders and facts and force them to make honest and objective decisions. The heart should swing and sing but it should be a real melody and in a real rhythm. The holy self-indulgence is the worst.

4. The invocation itself continues the theological revelation of the “object” or the “subject” of the Heart of Jesus adoration. The “you” to whom the praying “I” in this prayer is supposed to enter into a unique relationship is identified more closely. It is not just about the “you” whose leading personality is the divine. At the same time, it is about the “you” in which heaven and earth, divine grandeur and human limits all meet into one life.

5. This pushes the praying individual initially into a peaceful meeting with the most intimate and trusted secrets of our faith: In the womb of the mother, of the Virgin Mother formed by the Holy Spirit.

Those knowledgeable about religion don’t need to unfold the facts meant by this. He himself will be surrounded by the warm atmosphere of heartfelt intimacy which right from the start defines the Christian relationship between God and the world. And that is the way it has stayed. At the same time, he will marvel over and over to discover God’s gentleness in the face of mankind’s freedom. And this other often forgotten law: Wherever the Lord God touches a creature, he leads it to its own perfection and fulfillment and, at the same time, beyond itself. He doesn’t destroy the addressed “you” but, instead, makes it a more intense and more complete “I” than it ever could have become on its own. While the other person who intends to assert himself and realize his potential goes
inward and shuts himself off and sits small, tight and cramped within himself and has no idea of the vastness and wonders.

6. This is the only invocation in the litany where Mary is mentioned meaning that she is actually named. The other invocations can often not be prayed honestly without including her and actually greeting the heart of the Son from her heart. The Heart of Jesus adoration automatically brings forth a deepening of the personal intimacy between this mother and this Son. In this way, she frees the devotion of Mary of many clichés and templates and brings it back to the sphere of religious vitality and humanity. One only has to try to pray the rosary and to put individual invocations of the litany in place of the usual secrets. The rosary is found anew and afterwards also better understood “venerable”. And: the vaulted arches of the inner relationship between the heart of the mother and the heart of the Son will open gates for us to the sanctuaries and wonders of divine inwardness.

In this invocation it becomes really apparent how Mary is drawn into an abundance of divine secrets and wonders. There is nothing more human and natural and nothing more entrenched in the order of the earth or even devoted than the law of the womb, of fertility and of motherhood. And yet all of this is said in one breath with the major facts: Heart of Jesus – Virgin Womb – Holy Spirit. Again the realities and orders have remained true to themselves and yet they have gone beyond themselves because they have not failed God. The yes to God is always in an unintended sense, and into an unheard of extent, a yes to oneself.

7. Even in this invocation there is a real and rich message to us people of today. Initially there is the discovery that the innermost and most fertile atmosphere for life and its thriving is the atmosphere of the serene and waiting warmth. The law of merciless hardness to which we have delivered ourselves and which ultimately is revealed to be a destructive and scathing law of death is not God’s law. Wherever the world is as God has decreed and wherever mankind lives as God’s order wills that is where God always calls upon the free people previously chosen for his task. God’s will for the world is salvation, real and serious up to comforting the orphans. Especially in the hours full of need individuals experience how many hundreds of signs of mercy and secret paths of comfort God repeatedly brings about and builds.

We have set up a dictatorship for naturalness and have constructed right-of-way streets for everything pressing and threatening in our existence. Sometimes it looks as though the higher intellect means a higher level or even a personal accomplishment. Things have to remain in their order, and there is a nature and a naturalness which is considered order and as such it has to remain inviolable if one doesn’t want to make life sick. But part of a healthy nature is the law of openness to something beyond oneself even if this means deciding or adopting an attitude contrary to one’s own. One only has to see the natural orders spoken of in the invocation, one of virginity and motherhood in their necessary commitment to each other and in their openness towards each other in order to understand it. Woe to a life and people where one of these two orders and attitudes wanted to be without a minimum of the other: one would become bristling and deadly ice and the other would become destructive lava. But the Holy Spirit has unified them both in Mary,
elevated them together and blessed them. Only when actions stem from the spirit, from proper discernment, only then do they protect and build. And only if the Holy Spirit is the innermost leader of life can life be equipped for the great adventure. This is particularly important because otherwise the instinct, the feeling for what is possible and impossible are lost due to sheer self obsession.

8. In all of it there is tremendous comfort and mercy. God has not delivered us, and us here, to blind chance and developments. Leadership, guidance, free calling and mercy surround us.

**Heart of Jesus Intrinsically Unified with the Word of God**

1. This invocation continues with more precise details the “subject” of the Heart of Jesus adoration and concludes it.

   Its theological content is that of the teaching of the two natures of Christ, the fact that within Christ there is a divine and a human nature brought together in one divine person.

   A second theological content of this invocation stems from the combination of the Divine nature with the Word of God.

   Both of these statements are a continuation of the earlier invocation and, at the same time, a continuation as well of the preaching of the inner transparency which our own life gains in meeting with the message of the Heart of God.

2. As you know, almost everything in life depends on unwavering and unbroken tensions. Tension, this lively flowing arc between genuine sources and beam points of power, as you know, is approximately the secret of living. The one-sidedness which, as you know, mainly arises from tearing out one of the source points from the relationship arc, is for this very reason so perilous and destructive. For the religion itself no less than for the health of the people, almost everything depends on the inherent tension: immanence-transcendence; this-wordliness-otherworldliness and naturalness-supernaturalness. The three word pairs are similar in their factual meaning, but each refers to a different aspect of the one arc of life.

   The earlier invocation adheres in itself to the seriousness and the force, which applies to the statements about God and His secrets. But they could seduce the loving heart to indolence and bring about in it the longing for a familiar place of windowless security. All of this is intrinsically excluded because, as you know, a secret of the Holy Spirit is revered, the flowing, Divine flame. But human consciousness always has to be subjected again and again to leadership by facts otherwise it starts to wish and to dream and to falsify.

3. Both theological statements of the invocation only mean one final overcoming of the temptation of indolence.

   *The first statement:* By being a place of prayer it reveals the Divine expanse. Whoever measures this Sacred Heart with earthly measures or would like to have it beat in earthly
rhythms doesn’t know what it is about. The power of the divine nature, the limitlessness of the divine being, the boundlessness of divine reality, the unreachable heights and un-speakable namelessness of the Lord God: all of this becomes love, meeting and loyalty here. But all of that! Those who don’t always know this immediately make many smaller sanctuaries out of a large cathedral or with crisscross walls make a few booths, devotional stores or typical rooms for people.

One has to have experienced this once that the whole life and everything that is meant by it comes together in one heart beat, in a frightening away of burden and torture, in a cheering of love and devotion and in a swearing of loyalty and service in order to anticipate what it means: Here, a heart beats out of and in the power of God. This statement is still not yet exhausted and concluded.

4. The second statement: By emphasizing the word of God it repeats the fact that in the reality of the divine heart the focus is on a decision made by God for the world. The word is right from the start the home of the world. It carries the pictures, it creates order, obeys the essence: the word is the fertile womb of God, whose mature and rich fruit the universe which conveys really only a shadowy notion of the abundance which is snug in the word and remains hidden.

From these depths comes the inexhaustible love and the untiring Heart of salvation. It is the Divine source which make this heart and love flow from it. Divine immensity and depths – delivered to a loving heart.

Here there is immeasurable comfort for the great peril of the world to which we have all succumbed.

5. Today we are all ill from a tremendous world peril. The world surrounds us with high walls and has barred our windows if it has left us any at all and covers the view and the glimmer still visible with drapes. The world takes us for “total service” meaning that it files us and then sucks us dry. The world pressures us with questions without an answer, it drives us into an unspeakable melancholy and desolation, and it acts coldly towards us, relentlessly and somehow vindictively. The person, we people, I, you, you other friends, we feel so lost and as though we have gone astray in the place which at one point we ecstatically called our world and to which we consecrated a new hymn and to which we want to sing a new song. What has happened?

The world has been done an injustice. We have made it too small. Only just “wordly”. The idea of the pure and total inner worldliness is a thought crime. And we are groaning under those now.

Let’s recall the order of things and their entire and eternal relations. We will then learn circumspection again and the taste and value of awareness and refinement. And we will no longer force things into a form of self-defense as a result of our own assault, which we inflict upon them. We will enable the world to once again have its innermost fountains flow and sing if we return them to the old eternal order.
The eternal belongs to the contemporary, the spiritual in the sensual, the otherworldliness in the worldly just like the divine being belongs in the reality of salvation. Only in the streaming arc of tension does life succeed. The path of the short circuit, of the wiping away of the eternal, the spiritual, and the otherworldliness, these are far too easy, blatant and fraudulent solutions. But, over the long haul they are deadly.

6. And, yes, we are in the midst of world peril. We, the people, with an eternal longing in our hearts and a burning yearning for meeting, happiness and freedom in the soul. We run and rush around as the pressured, the hunted and the threatened. We sit in the shadows as the shackled and the imprisoned. We call upon the people as the lonely, the lost and the helpless.

These people are addressed by the third message of the Heart of Jesus adoration. The person needs to know that a heart is beating here which can do more than the little or the lot which a human heart is capable of. A lively heart is quite powerful. It overcomes distance. It climbs over walls. It breaks through loneliness. It redeems forlornness which nobody else has the courage to address, who first wants to think and then help. “Love can do everything,” says Paul (1 Cor. 13:7).

And yet, as you know, it is exactly the bitterness of love when it learns that it has its limits. That the substance does not suffice, that the road is too far, the prison walls are too high and the resistance is too hard and cruel and definitive.

Here the message of the Heart of Jesus meets us in our pressured existence. We won’t honestly pray the later invocations (rich for everyone, who calls God “You”), if we don’t pray into the richness which arises when God’s salvation meets us as the liveliness, the full-blooded and pressing liveliness of a human heart and that a loving human heart can be comprised of the inexhaustible abundance of divine substance. Here, the unfathoability of our peril is outdone and overcome by the alliance of the Divine and the human. Because those who have gone through peril can help best.

Let us return to the confidence from all the loneliness because we have met a heart and we have delivered ourselves to this heart which knows peril thoroughly, which has committed itself to us and to healing our peril as having God commits Himself to us.

**Heart of Jesus Holy Temple of God**

1. This and the following invocations stem free from the ritual language of the Old Covenant. It is the expression with which the temple and through it the guaranteed special relationship of God to the people of the Covenant are meant. At the same time, it is the expressions which we have taken on from there to describe the dignity of our houses of worship and the closeness to God given to us in them. Everything, which in that model and in our churches as the fulfillment and the holy legacy of that example as the presence to the divine that was genuine and effective, is expressed with apodictic simplicity from the Heart of God. Objectively speaking this invocation means the same as what is expressed later in the invocation: “Where the entire abundance of divinity dwells.” But here it is more about the emphasis of the sanctuary, of the sacred place of prayer, more about
the emphasis of the focus towards which our faith and our love is set, more about the emphasis of the divine abundance as such. Moreover, in the later invocation there is a very specific relationship to the spiritual character of the time when God offered his people His heart anew. For our life and our credibility there are two important realizations to draw from this invocation.

2. The first realization is one of the absolute connection of life to the living Christ. What used to be the temple: the only gathering place for the faithful people – the only place to meet God – the only altar of the valid sacrifice: this is now all from Christ. The exclusivity of the order brought about in Christ is something we have to say again today against much softening and which we have to stress to ourselves. And there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4, 12). Everything that lives, lives before God, lives through Him and because of Him. Even if the living person realizes only very late that he nonetheless drank from this source. This is not intended to be a hardening but rather a security, not a restriction but freedom and only those who are secure are capable of this. All of the major spiritual undertakings which the human spirit attempted in recent centuries have essentially not advanced humanity. They have mostly loosened a piece of the past and discovered that it is outdated, they have merely forced living claims from history and from people’s trends to justify or redeem themselves. For a while they were a high ideal, for a while a fashion and a catchword and an intoxication and then they disappeared into the respective circles of the learned, into the yearbooks, into the memorial halls of the societies involved (Kant Society, Goethe Society and so on) in an effort to have a last dedication in the Ph.D. theses of their grandchildren. Christ is the last word of God to the world and a truth can only be sure of itself as being such if it has stood the test of meeting with Christ. Only then is it too a blessing.

3. At the same time, this invocation announces to us the replacing of the order of stones by the order of hearts. The new center of life is not the immobile temple and its set rituals. The new center is the heart of the Son of God. The demanding and loving heart of the Lord. No new order out of stone or custom or right or human joke can come between. Even one has to first undergo this encounter with the living Heart of the Lord before one can present oneself to others. And there in this lovingly, warm atmosphere of the divine heart they are all going to be relativized. They are aids, means not purposes. Their only intention is to make way for people to meet their God – and not to block the path. This realization leads many to freedom and should lead many people to modesty and the willingness to serve.

Heart of Jesus of Infinite Majesty

1. It suffices to continue what has been said earlier. The statement of this invocation is a kind of result of previous statements. By the same token, a breathing after the first astonishing meeting and an astonishing realization of the value, of the dignity, of the abundance which one has just met.

One has to, however, take the words that are used seriously and let them be exactly as they are: *maiestas infinita*. 
Maiestas is actually a relative, comparative word and means the superiority of that from which it is predicated, above all, with which it is compared. This is how the term majesty arose as the highest dignity and power in a place. To begin with, the word means a statement about being and only afterwards about the position, reputation and the rights. When the majesties became hereditary there was nothing left other than to release the grandeur and the dignity from the often miserable person and to have it declared from the position, the office.

Here a statement of being is definitely meant. This loving heart has a limitless power of love because its reality is maiestas: elevated, superior to everything comparable, for this reason devoutly shy and commanding of great silence.

Infinita: the comparative meaning is lifted to the absolute, the consequence of the previously mentioned being relationships to God. It is the heart of my God that beats here. Therefore maiestas, therefore infinita maiestas.

2. In light of this reality, religious talk has so ruined the Heart of Jesus adoration. Just like during a mountain climb, the talk ceases, when one encounters the heights of the peak, silent prayer and devout distance are, despite all intimacy, particularly when it comes to this prayer, the necessary attitudes. We are no longer familiar with the secret life of the devout. But the devout are the only true people. Only they are capable of the immense experiences and benefits of the human heart, of prayer and of love. The kitschy nature of the typical devotion to the Heart of Jesus upsets many persons. The saccharine sentimentality blocks the call of mercy of the message of the Heart of Jesus. This lack of reverence has ruined the potential of this devotion. The burning thorn bush in whose proximity one had to remove the shoes is a model and notion of what is meant here. Only those can speak to God who have been silent in front of him in devout genuflection to the Creator.
Appendix 3 Biographical Details of the Members of the Kreisau Circle

The group was composed of leaders who represented different sectors of German society. The persons listed here are key figures who fall into the categories of Protestants, Catholics, and socialists.

Protestant members

- Peter Count Yorck von Wartenbrug (13 November 1904 – 8 August 1944) was a lawyer and an administrator in the agricultural sector of the German government.

- Hornst von Einsiedel (7 June 1905 – 25 February 1947) was a lawyer; he studied political economy under the German religious socialist Adolf Löwe.

- Carl Dietrich von Trotha (25 June 1907 – 28 June 1952) helped to facilitate the economic discussions in the Kreisau Circle. Prior to the Second World War, Trotha studied economics and worked to develop adult education for the working class.

- Adolf Reichwein (3 October 1898 – 20 October 1944) was an educational specialist. He became a professor of politics and civics at a teachers’ training college.

- Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz (11 September 1927 – 27 April 1972) was an administrator in the German government in matters of banking and the economy. When the Nazis seized power in 1933, he described it as the worst day for Germany since the Thirty Years’ War. The Nazis dismissed him from his post.

- Theodor Steltzer (17 December 1885 – 27 October 1967) studied economics prior to the First World War and was wounded in the First World War. After the war, he became interested in religious socialism and involved in the ecumenical movement.

- Adam von Trott zu Solz (9 August 1909 – 26 August 1944) was the foreign policy expert for the Kreisau Circle, and like Moltke and Yorck, an aristocrat. He studied theology at Oxford and was a Rhodes Scholar. His doctoral thesis was titled Hegel’s Philosophy of State and International Law.

- Hans-Bernd von Haeften (18 December 1905 – 15 August 1944) studied law and worked as the cultural attaché for the German government in Vienna, Copenhagen, and Bucharest prior to the Second World War. He refused to have anything to do with the Nazi Party; he belonged to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Confessing Church. When Bonhoeffer proposed that an ecumenical office be established in the Confessing Church, Haeften worked as a close collaborator.
• Harald Poelchau (5 October 1905 – 29 April 1972) was a Protestant minister and a prison chaplain. During the Second World War he was involved in hiding and smuggling Jews to safety.

• Eugen Gerstenmaier (25 August 1906 – 13 March 1986) was a Protestant minister and theologian; after the Second World War, Gerstenmaier became involved in politics and was president of the West German Bundestag from 1954 to 1969.

Catholic members

• Hans Peters (5 September 1896 – 16 January 1966) was a jurist, political scientist, and university professor. After the Nazis seized power, Peters was elected to the board of the Göran Society, a Catholic institution that rejected the National Socialist regime’s claim to authority over belief and ideology. He was one of the founding members of the Christian Democratic Party of Germany.

• Paulus van Husen (26 September 1891 – 1 September 1971) was a German jurist. When the Nazis seized power, Paulus worked in the Ministry of Interior in Silesia and attempted to prevent the Nazis from trampling on the rights of Jews and other minorities. He was dismissed from his post in 1934.

• Augustin Rösch, SJ (11 May 1893 – 7 November 1961) was Provincial of the Upper German Province of the Society of Jesus.

• Lothar König, SJ (3 January 1906 – 5 May 1946) was professor of cosmology at the Jesuit Berchmanskolleg; he acted as König’s secretary in the Kreisau Circle. They include Socialists members: Carlo Mierendorff (24 March 1897 – 4 December 1943) was the key socialist figure and one of the most important political figures in the Kreisau Circle. He studied philosophy and political economy and earned a doctorate on the economic policy of the German Communist Party. Mierendorff was an active member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and worked to uphold the ideals of the Weimar Republic. Even before 1933, Mierendorff was considered one of the bitterest opponents of National Socialism.

• Theodor Haubach (15 September 1896 – 23 January 1945) was a philosopher who completed his doctorate under Karl Jaspers and wrote on the problem of aesthetics. He was an ardent defender of the ideals of the Weimar Republic and an active member of the SPD. He served in the Ministry of the Interior and was removed from his position when the Nazis came to power. He wrote up a vigorous attack against National Socialism after the Nazis came to power. Haubach’s party (the SPD) turned this down, because they feared it would exacerbate a delicate situation.

• Julius Leber (16 November 1891 – 5 January 1945) was a member of the SPD. He earned a doctorate in economics from the University of Freiburg. On the night of Hitler’s ap-
pointment as chancellor, Leber was brutally assaulted by Nazi members, arrested, and held in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for political prisoners from 1933 to 1937.

For a fuller account of the lives of the key persons in the Kreisau Circle, please see:

Appendix 4 The Kreisau Circle’s “Declaration of Principles”

My translation of Delp’s draft is as follows:

1) **Restoring the appreciation of the absolute rule of law**
   a) Liquidating total judicial positivism and judicial utilitarianism
   b) Reawakening the awareness of humanity’s God-given rights, which have been stripped of every meaning and bent by the creature; and a threat to them means the innermost shock to all the social fabric.
   c) Restoring the awareness of natural human rights, which are independent of any state and political order and whose curtailment or violation destroys people and robs common life and justification.

2) **Restoring specific legal certainty**
   a) The relationship of the individual to the community, the individual to authority, to his state duties and so on, has to be placed on a clear legal basis.
   b) Every person has to be capable of judicially enforcing his or her rights.
   c) This means: an independent court and independent judges; clear legal guidelines and not a vague public feeling; removal of so-called administrative and entitlement right as a result of which power lords over people, their freedom and goods in an unbridled and arbitrary manner; checking incarcerations, confiscations, deportation for their formal and material legality.

3) **Restoring the genuine state**
   a) Restoring genuine authority, which can and should lead based on permanent validity and proper law.
   b) Restoring a responsible authority, which is subject to the control of the public. Otherwise it is just opposing power.
   c) Restoring a genuine civil service, an independent administration, which serves the *bonum commune* and not the implementation of party doctrines.
   d) Restoring ungoverned space, the genuine private sphere, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion. From the viewpoint of the state as *norma negativa* to caring for *bonum commune*, loyalty, positive value of efforts.

4) **Restoring the family**
   a) [Family restoration], not just from a purely biological perspective
b) Legal preference for the genuine family as a permanent connection over other associations that are similar to marriage.

c) Making divorce more difficult. Upbringing focuses on spiritual respect for the family through factors that influence public opinion (newspaper, magazine, books, radio, and film).

d) Restoring the notion that families are responsible for raising children.

e) More privileged economic position for families (tax privilege, family wage)

5) Creating a genuine social order
   a) In addition to global security and spiritual security the economic security of people.
   b) Genuine privacy—ownership, security, not permanent risk as a result of the state.
   c) *Justitia socialis*
   d) Crisis-proof economic security for families.
   e) Corporate statism as planning entity, *norma* negative and compensatory legal instance.