Typically we associate God's relation to sin as one of punishment—witness the cry of the Psalmist, asking why the wicked are not punished. But if God is revealed in the glory of the cross, the revelation is that all sin is felt by God as well as by the world: it is God who feels every sin, every suffering, every evil. We are not alone in these harshest realities of our lives. The glory is that precisely by feeling the effects of evil, God is also the power of transformation. God experiences the world in order to enable us to move beyond evil into modes of redemptive life. God's answer to sin is not punishment, but transformation, resurrection.

The sign of this glory given in John 9:1-5 is twofold. First, the story opens by rejecting suffering as punishment for sin. Suffering is part and parcel of what it is to be human; it stems from our physical and moral fragility. Second, the power to see or not to see, and to distinguish light from darkness, leads to one of the great "I am" statements that John attributes to Jesus: "I am the light of the world." The details of the story in verses 6 through 34 are both humorous and instructive, suggesting that sometimes our theologies get in the way of understanding what we can see and what we cannot. The sign opened in John 9:1-5 is a form of resurrection, because the formerly blind man is once again encountering Jesus. And once again the sign is given in the conundrum: the blind see; but those who think they see are blind to the spiritual truths so plainly given them in the Sign who is Jesus. 

http://processandfaith.org/resources/lectionary-commentary/yeara/2014-03-30/fourth-sunday-lent

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But is that the intent of this story? Paul Ricoeur occasionally applied his complex, fruitful ideas about human knowledge and language to the specific task of interpreting biblical texts. He argued for achieving again the "profound" or "existential" experience which inspired or initiated the text. It was not a narrow polemical, moral or even theological experience, but a universal human experience that we should look for. Taking Ricoeur's approach to this passage from John, we might ask: what is the concrete universal human experience which I can recognize in my own experience to which this story is testifying? One response to this question-- in the spirit of Ricoeur's approach-- might be to ask: What understanding/customs of religion are so familiar, so comfortable for me that they might make me "blind" to the unexpected ways God is at work today? Would I recognize who is doing God's work because she or he or they might be functioning outside conventional religious expectations? What unlikely person or persons has God anointed? How can such persons be known? Is it-- like Jesus-- by the simple, irrefutable result of some form of healing once thought to be impossible?

http://sacraconversazione.blogspot.com/2008/02/fourth-sunday-in-lent.html
is not made of ?harmonised energies,? as he would call them, but of human faces: Christ, St. Francis, St. Joseph and Mary.

The pope welcomes me with that smile that has already travelled all around the world, that same smile that opens hearts. We begin speaking about many things, but above all about his trip to Brazil. The pope considers it a true grace. I ask him if he has had time to rest. He tells me that yes, he is doing well, but above all that World Youth Day was for him a ”mystery.” He says that he is not used to talking to so many people: ”I manage to look at individual persons, one at a time, to enter into personal contact with whomever I have in front of me. I’m not used to the masses.” I tell him that it is true, that people notice it, and that it makes a big impression on everyone. You can tell that whenever he is among a crowd of people his eyes actually rest on individual persons. Then the television cameras project the images and everyone can see them. This way he can feel free to remain in direct contact, at least with his eyes, with the individuals he has in front of him.

To me, he seems happy about this: that he can be who he is, that he does not have to alter his ordinary way of communicating with others, even when he is in front of millions of people, as happened on the beach at Copacabana.

Before I switch on the voice-recorder we also talk about other things. Commenting on one of my own publications he tells me that the two contemporary French thinkers that he holds dear are Henri De Lubac, S.J., and Michel de Certeau, S.J. I also speak to him about more personal matters. He too speaks to me on a personal level, in particular about his election to the pontificate. He tells me that when he began to realize that he might be elected, on Wednesday, March 13, during lunch, he felt a deep and inexplicable peace and interior consolation come over him, along with a great darkness, a deep obscurity about everything else. And those feelings accompanied him until his election later that day.

Actually I would have liked to continue speaking with him in this very personal manner for much longer, but I take up my papers, filled with questions that I had written down before, and I turn on the voice-recorder. First of all I thank him on behalf of all the editors of the various Jesuit magazines that will publish this interview.

Just a bit before the audience that the pope granted on June 14 to the Jesuits of La Civil? Cattolica, the pope had spoken to me about his great difficulty in giving interviews. He had told me that he prefers to think carefully rather than give quick responses to on-the-spot interviews. He feels that the right answers come to him after having already given his initial response. ”I did not recognise myself when I responded to the journalists asking me questions on the return flight from Rio de Janeiro,” he tells me. But it’s true: many times in this interview the pope interrupted what he was saying in response to a question several times, in order to add something to an earlier response. Talking with Pope Francis is a kind of volcanic flow of ideas that are bound up with each other. Even taking notes gives me an uncomfortable feeling, as if I were trying to suppress a surging spring of dialogue. It is clear that Pope Francis is more used to having conversations than giving lectures.

[Lees verder aanlyn]

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**Brood vir die pad**

**Gedagtes oor waar idees van God kom**

*Wilhelm Jordaan*

Waar kom idees oor God vandaan? Tradisie sê dit kom van God – soos Hy homself geopenbaar het in heilige geskrifte soos die Bybel of die Koran.

Baie ander glo egter God is ’n naam wat mense bedink het om hul verlangte na die bestaan van ’n amalgtigte wese te verwoord. Geloofstaal oor God is dus nie ’n bewys vir sy bestaan nie, maar ’n uitdrukking van heimwee; ’n brandende wens dat dit waar is.

Volgens moderne breinnavorsing lyk dit of spirituele belewenisse, byvoorbeeld ’n bewustheid van Goddelike teenwoordigheid evolusieën ontwikkel het en na vore kom in breinaktiviteit wat die “God-kol” genoem word.

Marie Heese se paleontologiese roman Vuurklip ontgin verbiedingryk die idee van evolusie – deur haar oortydskarakters se belewenisse van Grootgees, Songees, Seegees, Aardgees en Windgees in te klee met ’n ontwikkelende spirituele bewusswyn wat hedendaagse gelooftaal vooruitloop. So asof die oortyd reeds bevat wat eue later tot ander inhoud sou kom.

Bevindings oor breingebeure bring minstens drie keuses: Tradisionele gelowiges kan dit verwerp en aanspraak maak op God as Gees wat in jou woon en jou lei. Dit het niks met jou brein of evolusie te doen nie.

Tweedens, kan jy sê dit bevestig die mens is evolusieër (geneties) bedraad om die idee van ’n God te bedink omdat dit jou veilig en goed laat voel. ”God” is dus niks meer nie as ’n breinfunksie.

Derdens, kan jy redeneer die belewenis van Goddelike teenwoordigheid is ’n bevestiging van mense se genetiese kapasiteit om in ’n God te glo.

Wat en hoe jy glo, het egter met die wisselwerking tussen gene, ander breinfunksies en omgewingsinvloede wat ook insluip jou opvoeding, kultuur en die soort idees waaraan jy jou blootstel.

Só aanvaar jy dan die evolusie van die “God-kol” as ’n koshare geskenk wat jou lewe rig om harmoniesoekend en liefdevol te leef vanuit diep oortuigings – soos die “Morele Wet” van Godsverlange à la die filosoof C.S. Lewis.

Die Bybel, byvoorbeeld, is poëties ryk aan heimwee en Godsverlange. Soos in die Psalmboek: ”Soos ’n hert in dorre streke smag na water, só smag my siel na U, o God.” Kort voor sy dood het die teoloog Gerrit Brand op Facebook sy gelooofsidentiteit met ’n enkele woord beskryf: ”Godverlanger”.

’n Mens bekom sulke gelooofsbelewenisse en -taal omdat jy jou oopstel vir prikkelte wat dit voortbring.

Dié prikkelte kan enige fokuspunt van jou keuse behels, byvoorbeeld Jehova van die Bybel, Allah van die Koran of enige ander Godsidee wat jy aangryp.

Só ”herskryf” jy as ’t ware die brein se genetiese belewenis van God – soos die Bybel of die Koran. Baie ander glo egter God is ’n naam wat mense bedink het in heilige geskrifte soos die Bybel of die Koran.

”Godverlanger”.

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