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How God speaks to us today through the Church and through the Scriptures

The Bible's Rendering of God is Complex and Deep.

Living in Holland in the 1970's I belonged for a while to a liturgy group in a local parish. One of our tasks was to choose the readings for each Sunday. Sometimes we followed the lectionary, sometimes not. The reasoning was that often the readings are obscure and don't really speak to our present situation at all. (Which of us has not sat through the first reading at Mass totally baffled?) So we chose readings that were 'relevant'. It was the age of the theme Mass. You chose a theme and then chose readings to fit in with that theme. Sometimes you decided what you wanted to say and chose readings which said exactly that, and if a passage didn't fit exactly, then you edited it. It seemed to make far more sense to address issues that actually concerned people here and now in our parish rather than rely on choices made by committees a thousand miles away in Rome. What happened in practice that a small selection of twenty or thirty scripture passages were continually used and re-cycled. That was partly because none of us even knew the contents of the Bible all that well, but was mainly that we chose the things we liked, that we agreed with and that we could understand. So never mind the OT, huge parts of the gospel were never read, never any exorcisms, never anything about judgement and never anything about the end. Only the bits of St. Paul which we could easily understand (for many Catholics precious little) ever saw the light of day. In short, the God who was presented and worshipped in our liturgy was a God made in the image (roughly) or to the specifications of our group.

The point of a systematic reading of Scripture as our liturgy does it today, is that in course of three years of Sundays you read just about all the NT and a great deal of

the OT. We all have our favourite passages which we love to hear, and there are things that baffle us, maybe things that shock and disgust us. Although some of the most disturbing passages don't find their way into the lectionary.

There is much more to God than any of us could ever imagine. And if the Bible presents us with far more images and ideas about God than we can cope with or assimilate, then it's doing its job. It's reminding us that God is the Creator of all that is, infinitely greater wiser than we. If we are looking for a book that will sum him up for us in a few nice phrases, then we are looking for an idol. If the Bible is a window into the mind of God it must be complex in the extreme – complex but not complicated. In other words, there is much much more to God than any of us can ever imagine – that's the complex bit, but nevertheless access to him is remarkably simple – that's the uncomplicated bit. If God could create something as complex as the human body, as complex say as DNA then we can't expect the book that tells us about him and enables us to meet him to be any simpler than that. Often people approach the Bible looking for something like the friendship book – a heart-warming collection of sayings and stories which will inspire and enlighten and comfort. That's largely what the Gnostic gospels are – collections of nice even challenging sayings by Jesus, but little more, and no scandal of the cross and that's why the Early Church rejected them.

Many of us use the scriptures in the same way as we use our computers. We get the thing going, we get it to do the few tasks we require, and then ignore all its other functions. Those in the know say that most people use only a small fraction of their computers' capabilities. Our computers have many functions we don't even try to explore. We must not assume that our little knowledge is the whole programme. We can't learn or use everything but having fixed scriptures means that we pass on to the next generation all that we have used and loved, but also those things that we haven't even begun to explore. To Christians of a certain age mention of the prophets conjures up the idea of the men who were there to prophesy the coming of Christ and virtually the only parts of the prophetic books they ever heard were those prophecies that we call 'messianic'. To Christians today involved in the justice and peace movement the prophets are much more about trenchant social criticism, the defence of the poor and the condemnation of idolatry which leads to injustice. There is always more to the Scriptures than we think.

The Marian Principle.

Twice in the infancy accounts in Luke we read the same thing about Mary. After the visit of the shepherds:

and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Lk 2:18-19 RSV)

After the finding of Jesus in the Temple we read:

And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. (Lk 2:50-51 RSV)

Even the one closest to Jesus doesn't understand everything straight away. But she treasures them in her heart. Perhaps our modern western pragmatism wants to have all the loose ends tied up and all questions answered. I've often heard people say something like: "I totally disagree with Paul on this point." A few years ago I preached an energetic sermon on the parable of the vineyard labourers, and (I thought) dealt with all the objections. After Mass at the back of church, a man said to me: "I liked your sermon, but I still think Jesus is wrong on that score." Mary teaches us not to do that. She teaches us to be ready to sit with things we don't understand or don't like. This principle is taught of all places in Maccabees. As the victorious fighters reclaim the Temple we read:

and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them. (1Macc. 4:43-46)

It's interesting that in our politically correct world few people in our culture would dare to assume superiority to another culture – often quite the contrary, but even relatively unlettered people will happily assume intellectual superiority to the human authors of Sacred Scripture. If we want the Scripture to speak to us we must recognise that we stand under its authority. If you have ever attended the consecration of a bishop, when the actual prayer of consecration is said, the thing that makes him a bishop, two deacons hold and open book of the gospels over his head. That symbolises that although he exercises power and authority in the

Church he himself is under the authority of the scriptures. None of us here is a bishop, but we too are under the same authority.

Wrestling with Scripture.

If the Marian principle of quietly pondering seems too passive, wrestle if you don't want to ponder. In Gen. 32: 26 Jacob is wrestling with an unknown opponent (it's God, but he doesn't know that) he says to his opponent:

I will not let you go, unless you bless me.

That is basically the stance of all those who honestly engage with Scripture. We don't give up until we derive some blessing, some insight, some light from it.

I had a conversation about the Bible some time ago with a couple of friends. They were totally committed Catholics, catechists, members of the Legion of Mary, daily Mass goes when possible. Talking about the story of the fall in Gen. 3 one of them said to me: "Surely you don't expect intelligent people like us to believe all that nonsense about a talking snake and the whole human race being condemned because two people ate a fruit they weren't supposed to, do you? The Bible's wonderful but we have to face the fact that much of it isn't true."

There are three or four issues at stake, but the one that concerns us here is this question of how do we deal with things in the Bible which are contradictory to our knowledge - like the creation in six days or to our moral sense - like some of the awfully severe penalties mandated in the OT? It's interesting that in our politically correct world few people in our culture would dare to assume superiority to another culture - often quite the contrary, but even relatively unlettered Christians will happily assume superiority to the human authors of sacred Scripture. We blithely imagine that with our science and democracy we see problems and inconsistencies in the scriptures to which both the authors and the patristic commentators were blind. Nothing could be further from the truth.

People like Origin, Aquinas, the rabbis who composed commentaries and many others were well aware of the problems. Origin found much of the book of Joshua very disturbing. He was aware of textual problems and seeming contradictions all over the Bible - not the least the tension between St. Paul's *a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ*, (Gal. 2:16) and St. James' *You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith* (Jas 2:24). The ancient

authors neither wrote off the difficulties nor did they simply take one of the sides in a seeming contradiction. They wrestled with the Scripture. What is true of Jesus is true of all Scripture. He may sometimes seem inconsistent to us, but that's because he doesn't have to be consistent with our morality or standards. So the one who shows such kindness to so many women is very brusque, even rude with the Syrophoenician woman. We mustn't try to iron out these seeming contradictions but to live them and let them inform us. Any real person will have aspects of their character which are puzzling and seemingly contradictory but in fact that is an indication of depth. What's the quote about consistency being the refuge of shallow people? There is very often an assumption of moral superiority to Scripture on the part of scholars and readers.

Our difficulties with the Bible often come about because we try to fit it into our standards and our ideas, to make it live in our world. Yet for nearly two thousand years Christians and Jews have tried to inhabit the world the Bible produces. You may object "we can't live with the mentality of people 2000 years ago." One of the fundamental truths about the Bible is that it is a consistent alternative and challenge to the mentality culture and norms of people 2000 years ago. It was a sustained argument against the spirit of the times then, (What John calls 'the world') just as much of what the Church believes and holds sacred is an argument against modern people's mentality. Paul tells us in Philippians to *Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus*. (Phil 2:5). Yes to have the same mind as a Galilean who lived 2000 years ago. John says the same thing in a different way: *Abide in me, and I in you*. (Jn. 15:4) The way to have that mind is to have the texts that influenced him – the OT. When Marcion rejected the OT the Church had to come up with a response and she realized that if Jesus had prayed and preached from the OT, if he had understood himself in terms of some parts of it, then it was not an optional extra for a Christian.

Many Christians live –abide – in the world in the sense that John uses the word, and meet scripture on the world's terms, rather than living in Scripture – abiding in Jesus – and meeting the world on those terms. It's like someone who has been widowed and married again continually taking his first wife as the norm and criticizing his second wife for not being like her. The second wife would soon rightly demand that he make up his mind whom he is married to. As L. T. Johnson puts it:

Scholars need to be “less preoccupied with the world that produced the Scripture and lean again to live in the world that Scripture produces.”¹

The Bible teaches us to accept Jesus on his own terms.

At the transfiguration in Mark the voice of the Father says from the cloud: *This is my beloved son, listen to him.* (Mk. 9:7) This is important particularly in Mark since the disciples have huge struggles to accept Jesus on his terms rather than their own. The subtext of what the Father says is: listen to him – and not your own expectations ideas and hopes.

It's a little surprising that although in the last forty years the practice of Christianity has declined in the west, in same period more books have been written about Jesus than in previous nineteen hundred years. Some of it is 'airport fiction' like Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code". Some of it is more serious scholarly work and all manner of popular books now purport to tell us the 'real truth' about Jesus, the truth that's been hidden in undiscovered documents, or the truth that the Catholic Church has been covering up for centuries. The intriguing thing is none of these books seem to attack Jesus himself. The assumption always seems to be that he was a basically decent bloke. That says something about the effect he has had on our world. Even the Monty Python team when they were making "The Life of Brian" felt there was nothing in Jesus himself they could make fun of. At some level there is a recognition of Jesus being central to world history. All the efforts are to show that his followers and interpreters have got him wrong, misinterpreted or deliberately misrepresented him. There's somehow a sense of his importance, and if people can only disprove the inflated crazy claims that have been made about him, then they can sleep secure. Because Jesus is Jesus and if he really is the son of God, if he really is who the Gospel and the Church say he is then that makes huge demands of everyone. So it becomes all the more important to try to prove that he isn't.

So there's still no shortage of opinions about Jesus. The question "*Who do the crowds say I am?*" is every bit as real today as when Jesus first asked it. The apostles offered him three alternatives, we could probably offer him three dozen:

¹ L. T. JOHNSON, & S. J. KURZ, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*. (Grand Rapids – Cambridge 2002) 119.

Peter does well, and answers: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* (Mat 16:16) and I presume we could all give Jesus the same or a similar answer and mean it. Most of us don't have a problem there, it's the next bit that gives Peter the trouble. The bit about suffering.

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (Mat 16:21)

we know Peter's reaction to that.

And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." (Mat 16:22 RSV) we might translate this as: *Peter began to tell him off.*

In old fashioned maths a problem might have 10 marks – 2 for the correct answer and 8 for the correct working out. Peter gets the two marks – his answer is correct and accurate. That is exactly who Jesus is. But he doesn't get any marks for correct working out. He knows Jesus is the Messiah, he's in complete denial about just how he is going to accomplish that. He can't get his head around the other things Jesus has to say about suffering and death. And for just a moment Peter thinks he knows better than Jesus and he must talk him out of all this nonsense about suffering and death. After all they are on their way to Jerusalem, it's going to be glorious and the apostles will be centre-stage.

And that's why Jesus calls him Satan. He's not listening to Jesus, but to his own hopes and expectations. "You are the messiah, and you don't need to suffer – quite the contrary. We'll protect you." It sounds reasonable, but if it is going against the will of God, no matter how much it seems like common sense, like the voice of reason, it's demonic, it's of Satan not God – hence the stinging rebuke.

But the great thing about Peter, big, bold, generous Peter, the Pope with his foot in his mouth, is that he is prepared to learn, he's prepared to let Jesus teach him and lead him. He's ready to say to Jesus always: "OK, I don't fully understand what you are doing, but you are the son of God and therefore you must know best." And we see him do that time and again in the gospels. This is a great example of what faith is. Having faith in Jesus means that whatever my state in life being a follower of Christ will lead me further than I would naturally chose to go.

I mentioned a moment ago the Man who told me that he thought Jesus was wrong. Having faith and letting the scriptures speak to us today means that we must accept Jesus and his teaching on his own terms, not ours. Part of believing must mean that I am prepared to drop my own ideas and trust that Jesus knows better. If I cannot do that I will never understand this parable – or any of the other for that matter.

The Bible is the opposite of mythology.

All Israel's neighbours had colourful myths about the origins of the world, usually involving battles among the gods, a great deal of violence. The first creation account in Genesis 1 is a deliberate argument against such myths. The bible is a deliberate walking away from mythology and we've done terrible damage in catechesis by calling this a myth. It looks much more like an ordered account. Vv. 14-19 Nothing makes this anti-mythological bias clearer than what Genesis says about the heavenly bodies in 1:14-19. Throughout the ancient world the Sun and Moon were major deities and the stars were the guiding force in people's lives. A huge amount of cultic activity was dedicated to their worship and a huge amount of economic activity generated by astrologers searching for their meaning. All this was obvious and self-explanatory in the way that simple arithmetic is to modern people. To suggest that the Sun and Moon were not gods or that the stars did not guide our destiny was plain stupid, it was so obvious to everybody. But that's what Genesis does. It studiously avoids the ordinary Hebrew words *shamesh* and *yareah* because they sound very like the names of the Sun god and Moon goddess. It seems fussy to refer to them as 'the greater light' and the 'lesser light'. But in doing so that author makes the point that that is all these things are, lights. As an afterthought he adds: and the stars, in Hebrew one word, *wehakkabim*. The temptation to add something about them guiding our lives must be enormous and millions of people even today would concur with that. But the Bible is ruthlessly sober and cold-blooded about that which is not God. (perhaps a modern parallel would be to imagine an academic theologian being confronted with a wide-eyed charismatic claiming that God had done all sorts of weird and wonderful things. Or imagine his reaction when confronted with some of the more bizarre phenomena of Marian piety – bleeding Madonnas, moving statues etc. We would regard his scepticism as a sign of strong, balanced faith, the devotees would regard it as a sign of his lack of faith. That strange dilemma begins here on the first page of the Bible. This debunking of false claims of divinity, divine action or divine

sanction we call demythologisation. In a world where people do so much evil in the name of God and claim so much that their tribes or countries are uniquely blessed or sanctioned by God, this Biblical scepticism about divine claim is an invaluable tool. A big part of the Bible's message is that much of what we think is God is not God at all, but human projection. That is the basis of the prophets' historical struggle against idolatry. They make it clear that where idolatry flourishes, so does injustice. If people can show that any human arrangement, albeit an unjust one, is the product of the divine will, then that arrangement can be sanctioned and defended, and those who go against it oppose the gods. I once heard an American evangelist preach that free market capitalism was the will of God, and to try to put any curb or check on that was to oppose God.

As we said, the first chapter of Genesis is a powerful argument against the creation myths of Israel's neighbours. Those myths basically explained the origins of the world as the result of a huge cosmic battle between the Gods. They were told by societies often involved in endless wars and violence, societies who thought the most natural thing in the world was to conquer people who were weaker than themselves. In other words, the myths, which to modern western ears seem like quaint if somewhat bizarre stories, in fact hid or justified very real violence and oppression. We can say that myths tell usually violent stories but always from the point of view of the people who benefitted from that violence. So it's never bad, and it's never called violence, it's called glorious victory or necessary justice. Remember that the Greek word from which we obtain our word myth – *muthos* – has at its root the verb to silence. Our English word "mute" comes from the same root, as does the Italian word "*muto*" which means "dumb" or speech impaired. A myth always hushes something up, although rarely consciously.

This creation account is also a challenge to the modern mythology that the universe just..... happened. There was no creator; there is no plan or intelligence behind it. Everything you see, all nature, all life is just totally random clumps of atoms molecules and cells that came together by pure chance. Genesis tells us on the contrary that the cosmos is ordered, it was willed and there is a supreme intelligence behind it. Now I don't mean that when someone tells us that the world is all pure randomness that we can counter by saying: "no, the Bible tells us that God made it, so there!" It's much more the case that if we look at the universe closely the only conclusion we could possibly come to is that it is very carefully

designed. It's not so much: "the Bible tells me the universe is ordered," but "the universe tells me that the universe is ordered and the Bible just confirms what anyone can see if they will drop their prejudices and assumptions.

Myths tell stories that enable people to benefit from them and hush up a truth. The modern myth of a random universe is perfect for people who don't want to believe that there is such a thing as objective right and wrong. There's no ultimate design, so we can do whatever suits us, we all create our own meaning and our own rules. There is no such thing as in-built gender in human beings; you are what you decide to be. That myth is so useful to so many people with so many agendas, particularly to modern gender ideology. This ideology is every bit as mythological as the idea that the universe was made from the broken fragments of the goddess Tiamat, neither have any basis in reality.

So whether we are living with the bellicose myths of ancient Babylon, or the modern secular myths that deny the most basic facts of humanity and try to silence anyone who disagrees with them, we read Genesis to keep us in touch with reality.

Jesus continually struggles with the mythology that people are poor or ill or marginal because that's the way God wants things to be. With the adulterous woman in John 8 he exposes the holy act of stoning which the crowd are ready to carry out in God's name as merely human violence, nothing to do with God. Perhaps nothing makes his stance clearer than this passage in Luke 13:1-5

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

The mythology which he is debunking is: "bad things happen to bad people and God makes sure of it." In some ways it's very comforting for those on whom the tower has not fallen to think that this was God punishing wicked people. But it is

attributing to God violence or suffering which had nothing to do with him, in which he wasn't involved. And this debunking lies at the very heart of the Biblical projects.

Genesis debunks false claims to Godhead. Our world has very sensitive antennae for religious balderdash. That's the result of the Bible and in societies untouched by it, people are much more likely to fall for religious bunk. Much of what Jesus does is precisely debunk false religious ideas and it gets him killed. As direct biblical influence wanes in our society, people who want to be spiritual are much more likely to fall for religious nonsense – the New Age movement for instance. Unfortunately, in our society, the balderdash antennae are always switched on so that people can't pick up religious truth even when it's broadcast loud & clear on FM!

So in our world people have antennae for religious nonsense. The work that earlier missionaries had talked about, of getting people away from false, oppressive notions of God has largely been done in the west. Unfortunately people are still susceptible to all sorts of other nonsense. Once people sever their links with the gospel they cut themselves loose from the one thing that can keep them in touch with reality. And even within the Christian fold we see an increase of people's tendency to buy into miracle Christianity or prosperity Christianity. (well, sometimes just about on the edge of the fold) So often what looks like strong faith is something else, it's misguided religious enthusiasm. Perhaps the Catholic Church the world's one hope of religious sobriety. The early Christians were accused of atheism because they refused to take part in the imperial cult; they refused to divinise anything or anyone and would absolutise only God.

But beware! The Bible is much more than a work of deconstruction. It tries to show its readers what God is not in order to reveal all the more clearly what or rather who God is. Jeremiah is deeply involved with God. But because the true God is not always present in the 'obvious' religious things.

In Jerusalem on the eve of the exile many people trusted in the Temple. Even though Babylon was behaving like Nazi Germany in the 30's and annexing state after state, the majority of Jerusalemites believed this could not happen to them, because they had the Temple. They seemed to have strong faith. And Jeremiah comes along and tells them that their faith in the Temple and God's unconditional

commitment to it was misplaced. He seems like an unbeliever, he seems like an atheist. But he was the one person in Jerusalem really in touch with the living God. It says something about the nature of Israel's faith that even though he must have been a very hard character to live with, nevertheless the compilers of the OT include his work and hold this up as an example of true faith, in contrast to the mythology espoused by the majority.

Part of what it means to have faith is that we have to live in the world since the veil of the Temple has been torn in two, and the consequences of that are still unfolding.

Often when individuals tell their conversion stories, they recount how once they come to know God, so much of what they thought was important becomes relative, or even worthless. It was through their encounter with God that the authors and characters of the Bible came to realise that so much of what was around them was of no value. They realised that so much which others considered sacred not only was not sacred, but was downright bad. The only reason the Bible shows up the false gods for what they are is to reveal the true God. In some ways then, modern secularism is a by-product of biblical revelation. It's strange that a big component of our scriptures is a critique of religion – of false religion. Our society has been in many ways shaped by the gospel, so it's not surprising that this critique is part of our society. But cast adrift from the actual gospel and real belief in Christ it takes on a cancerous, destructive life of its own.

Some years ago when I was teaching at the missionary Institute in Mill Hill we had a young man staying with us at St. Joseph's college and he asked could he attend one of my lectures, he was thinking of joining us as a lay missionary. After the lecture he came up to thank me and told that he was 'surprised but impressed' that I began with prayer. I shrugged my shoulders and told him it was the most normal thing in the world. He went on to explain that he was studying theology at a Catholic faculty in Holland, I think Utrecht, and they made a real point there of not praying at a lecture, even though some students had asked for this. They apparently insisted that a lecture is 'academics' while prayer is spirituality and it was very important not to confuse the two. I half-jokingly told him that in one sentence he had explained what was wrong with the church in Holland these last years. I accept of course that there is a difference between the academic and the

spiritual. If I student came to my exam say on the Gospel of John and told me that he couldn't remember anything I'd said in class but he had prayed with it every day he wouldn't pass. But the idea that the two things are necessarily separate is deeply inimical to Catholic thinking, but is nevertheless quite widespread. That same split sadly informs the practise and thinking of much modern Biblical study Emmaus is also the model for what happens at the Easter vigil. Especially in the 70's, some people argued that it made more sense to start the vigil with the readings, to start with all the things that prepared us for the resurrection, to wait patiently in the dark as it were, and then to go and light the fire and celebrate Christ's rising. This of course is merely human thinking. None of the seven OT readings is really about the resurrection. We begin the vigil with the announcement of the risen Christ, The Exultet. In the light of the resurrection we then proceed to read the scriptures, but with the understanding that it is only in the light of the resurrection that we can really grasp the full meaning of the OT, and by implication our own lives only make sense in this light. The resurrection is the key to the whole of Scripture. So part of what the Church is doing here is solemnly enacting her understanding of how to read scripture.

The basis for the Catholic interpretation of scripture can be summed up in one verse.

[T]hese things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (Jn 20:31 RSV)

In fact it was the conviction of the early Church, expressed clearly in the NT and in the Fathers that this was the purpose of the whole of scripture. This is the opinion certainly of Luke who reports how on the road to Emmaus Jesus shows this to the two disciples: *And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lk. 24:27)* So, according to Luke, this is the opinion of Jesus himself. He expresses it also in John 5. *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; (Joh 5:39.)* As members of the Church this is our fundamental stance towards the scriptures. Any use or interpretation which excludes these basic ground rules cannot be called Catholic or even Christian.

We don't know what passages Jesus refers at Emmaus to but we can be sure that he mentioned the suffering servant song in Isaiah 53. Written almost 600 years before the crucifixion, it talks of someone who all his life displayed the classic signs that God was against him: physically ugly a life full of misfortune. The crowd speak

and say how they were convinced God had cursed him. Probably they were the people who brought about his death. They start to realise against all odds that God does not share their opinion, that God takes the side of this innocent if unattractive victim. The crowd in this reading undergo a kind of conversion. They realise God was not working through them to condemn and persecute the servant. God was working through the servant. But God was not just giving tit for tat. He did not just turn the tables and use the servant to condemn or punish the crowd. The servant somehow is the instrument of their salvation and healing. I once heard a Rabbi talking about this passage and saying that although he had studied it and prayed with it at great length he did not see Jesus in it. Well of course not, neither did these disciples until they met the risen Lord. The risen Christ is the key to the whole of the scripture.

In a certain sense what Jesus does on the road to Emmaus is canonise the OT for the Church. He reveals the plot, the story line for the whole of the Bible and shows that what has happened over the last few days is in accordance with the scriptures. Here we begin to see the truth of Augustine's famous dictum: *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, et in Novo Vetus patet* ("The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old becomes clear in the New")²

² cf. "Quaest. in Hept.," 2, 73: Collected Works of Latin Church Writers, 28, III, 3, p. 141.