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The Redemption
By
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Abstract

This article is the sequel to the article "The Atonement." The Atonement is not an end in itself, but is the procuring cause of something else, namely, the redemption of humanity.

The present article is based on Revelation 21:6:

And he said unto me, it is
done. I am Alpha and Omega,
the beginning and the
end. I will give unto him that
is athirst of the fountain of the
water of life freely.

The discussion of this subject proceeds in terms of three questions, which are suggested by the text. (1) Who is it that speaks? (2) What is it that is done? (3) What is it that is given?

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In the previous article on the Atonement, it was pointed our that the atonement is not an end in itself. It's purpose is to meet the emergency confronting the human race, brought on by sin and sinfulness, and, in consequence of its provisory nature, to bring into existence a new, and redeemed, human race, a new and redeemed humanity.

Here some passages from Curtis' racial theory of the Atonement may be appropriate.

What was God's primary purpose—what was he trying to do in redemption? There is, I am satisfied, only one final answer possible: *To obtain a race of holy persons.* He was not trying to get, here and yonder, a separate moral person ready to enjoy the divine glory. No, God wanted an entangled race—a personal organism of holy men—that was God's aim. In other words, God's purpose was the same in redemption that it had been in creation. The first plan, the ideal plan, failed because of sin; but this failure is now, in redemption, to be made over into a

triumph. The atonement itself, as a means to a large racial result, is to be treated as only one necessary feature of the entire redemptive work of our Lord.

.....
The history of redemption, in its sweep of divine action, may be conceived in this manner: First, there is an ethical start in racial death. Second, there is an effective ethical movement in the death of Christ. Third, there is a racial start in the resurrection and ascension and session of our Lord. Fourth, there is an effective racial movement in the actual formation of the new race by the conversion of moral persons. Fifth, the holy racial goal is reached when the redeemed race, expressing the moral love of God, is completed in organism at the final resurrection of the body.¹

St. Paul, particularly, develops the nature of the Atonement in terms that approach philosophical analysis. This is the case, pre-eminently, in Rom. 3:25-26. The Gospels give an historical account of the Redeemer's atoning death. And throughout the Epistles generally the historical reality of the atonement is brought to view again and again.

But abstract conceptual thought cannot reach the eminence of the final redemption. The concepts that are drawn from our actual and ordinary experience are employed with a definite specificity and precision. They are, therefore, static and rigid, and are held to their specific meaning. But whatever is involved in the final redemption, it is something that transcends the scope of our usual and normal experience and of the language germane to that context. What is required is a language of a different order. This language must, to be sure, be drawn from our ordinary experience—our ordinary perceptual experience. But it must be transferred from its derivative context to an other-worldly, or ideal, context. That is, it must, while it is held to the sensuous given, nevertheless be transferred to the super-sensible and ideal.

Now one of the distinctive features of the sensuous given is its fluidity, i.e., the fluidity of the sense impression as it changes its character. A perceived color, for instance, is always changing into a different impression. Abstract thought may form a concept that restricts and holds the impression so as to designate what is meant by the color. For scientific thought a color is a specific spectral energy distribution read by a spectrophotometer. This both exhausts its scientific meaning and restricts its employment to that abstract context. The concept cannot, as can the actual sense impression, be transferred to another, ideal, context. In short, it cannot function as a *symbol*. Only the sense impression of lived-experience can function *symbolically*.

Now when the language of sense experience becomes symbolic, the linguistic symbol *retains* the fluidity of the sense impression from which the symbol is derived. This enables the symbol to carry a wide range of meanings. What is more significant here is that the symbol can accept *different* meanings drawn from other and different symbols. These considerations will, it is hoped, be developed more fully in the sequel.

It is the book of Revelation that employs preeminently the fluid symbols of our earthly experience to portray the splendor of the redemption.

During the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D), the Christians were required to worship the emperor and the imperial cultus. Thus

¹Olin A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905), pp. 317-27.

these early Christians were faced with a conflict of loyalties: either worship of the emperor or the adoration of Jesus as the Christ of God. They could not do both, for the two were incompatible.

This problem affected most severely the Christians of Asia Minor, which was a hot-bed of the imperial cultus. The author of *Revelation*, a certain John not to be identified with the Gospel writer, was presumably closely associated with the Christians of Asia Minor during this time, and perhaps was a resident of Ephesus. He was so disturbed over the irreconcilable antagonism between the imperial cultus and Christianity that he composed a treatise designed to instruct and encourage the Christians. He was inspired to use the dramatic form of apocalypse, with which they were familiar. Through a series of dramatic images, he recorded the doom of the evil of his day and beyond to yet unborn days and the final triumph of Christ and His saints.

Revelation progresses with thematic unity. There are three series of sevens (seals, trumpets, and bowls), which unite in presenting the judgments and woes upon the wicked of this world. There then follows the depiction, again in graphic imagery, of the final consummation in which Christ and His ideal kingdom triumph.

After the last of the plagues have been emptied from its bowl, a voice from the Throne speaks the words of redemption fulfilled, established forever:

And he said unto me, it is
done. I am Alpha and O-
mega, the beginning and the
end. I will give unto him that
is athirst of the fountain of the
water of life freely.²

There then follows what may be termed the leading text of the book:

He that overcometh shall in-
herit all things: and I will be his
God, and he shall be my son.³

Now Rev. 21:6 presents three considerations, with which we shall deal under the rubric of questions. It is these questions that become the basis of our consideration of the subject of redemption. The questions are: (1) Who is it that speaks? (2) What is it that is done? (3) What is it that is given?

(1) Who is it that speaks?

We learn from verse 5 of the chapter that the speaker is "he that sat upon the throne." But this leaves the question unanswered. For who is "he that sat upon the throne."

The speaker from the throne is certainly Deity. It is, for Revelation, an extraordinary occurrence. Only once before, in Rev. 1:8, had the Deity spoken directly. There He identified Himself in substantially the same terms as He has done in Rev. 21:6, "adding, however, "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Some scholars identify the Personage as God the Son, Jesus Christ. As

²Rev. 21:6.

³Rev. 21:7.

the text now stands, the previous mention of the throne is found in chapter 20, verse 11. This vision of the Seer concerns the vanishing of the former heaven and earth, the judgment of the dead, and the casting of death and hell into the lake of fire. Since this judgment is the prerogative and activity of Jesus Christ, it is thought, therefore, that "He that sat upon the throne" is Jesus Christ.

Here, however, a problem arises. R. H. Charles observes that the author of *Revelation* develops his treatise in an orderly and consistent manner from the beginning to chapter 20, verse 3. From this place on, Charles states, the traditional order and unity of the text ceases. "In 20⁴-22, on the other hand, the traditional order of the text exhibits a hopeless mental confusion and a tissue of irreconcilable contradictions."⁴ Rev. 20:7-15 portrays the absolute and final destruction of evil in all of its forms, including the destruction of death itself. Rev. 21:1-4 portrays the inception of the heaven and the new earth, the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven, and the abode of God Himself with humanity. Yet Rev. 22:15 asserts that outside the city there "are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." This condition, however, is impossible as regards what is required by the new order, namely, that all evil has been forever destroyed. Accordingly, Charles suggests that this statement has to do with the Millennial Kingdom that is established before the final judgment and the abolition of evil.⁵

Charles suggests that John died before he had completed his treatise. He had material ready to be incorporated in his text, but which he could not compose in the body of his work. An editor attempted to complete the work, but because of incompetence failed to carry out his endeavor successfully, thus creating confusion and contradiction in the body of the treatise.⁶

If this view advocated by Charles is accepted, then it is incorrect to designate the throne of Rev. 21:6 as the Throne of Jesus Christ. This throne and the activity proceeding therefrom is not *immediately* preceded by Rev. 20:11. It is not necessary, therefore, to identify the throne of 21:6 as the judgment throne of Christ.

The Occupant of the Throne is God the Father. The *Address* (Rev. 1:4-8) first identifies the throne as "his throne," and this throne is the throne of "him which is, and which was, and which is to come." From this One, the Father and the Father's throne, Jesus Christ is distinguished as the agent of redemption: he "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," he "who cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Then the occupant of the throne, the Father, speaks for the first of two times in the book:

I am Alpha and Omega,
the beginning and the ending,
saith the Lord, which is, and
which was, and which is to come,
the almighty.

⁴R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, 1. In *The International Critical Commentary*.

⁵R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, II, 144 f.

⁶R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, I, 1-lv. See II, 153-54 for the reconstructed text.

The speaker, then, is God the Father, and He speaks from His throne. The throne is His.

But the divine throne is not the Father's alone. For He shares His throne with His Son, now the "Lamb as it had been slain."⁷ Early in *Revelation*, the Redeemer, He who appears "like unto the Son of Man" and identifies Himself as "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore," proffers to the faithful the privilege, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."⁸

With respect to the Deity, then, there appear to be two thrones: the Throne of the Father and the Throne of the Son. In Rev. 3:21 Jesus says that as a consequence of His overcoming the grave and death He is "set down with my Father in his throne." To those people who overcome Christ promises that they shall sit with Him in His throne. But the matter is quite complex.

First, the position of the conquerors: both Christ and the people are *in* the throne, not *on* the throne. The position is one of close relationship. Second, as to the two thrones: the throne promised to the saints is not the throne now occupied by Christ, but Christ's own throne. Christ is now sitting in His Father's throne, mediating for His earthly Church, and waiting till His enemies be made his footstool: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool (Ps. 110:1). We are not admitted to that throne, which is reserved for Deity. Christ does, indeed, share in the Father's throne by virtue of His deity. But when the day of ultimate victory and final redemption arrives, when the necessity of His intercession no longer exists, since the Church militant has become the Church triumphant, then will be erected Christ's own throne, which those now glorified will share with Him who in His humanity purchased them with his own blood.

Thus we may reiterate that the throne mentioned in the texts is the Father's throne. But we must hasten to add, since Christ now shares in this throne, it is also the throne of the Son. But the Son is not predominate: rather, He is the Father's *συνθρονος* (*sunthronos*), i.e., the One sharing the throne. When the grand work of redemption is complete, when God the Father is alone on His throne, when Christ occupies His own throne, then it shall be:

And when all things shall
be subjected unto him, then shall
the Son also himself be subject
unto him that put all things
under him, that God may be all
in all.⁹

The One upon the throne identifies Himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." The text reads literally, with the definite article, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" — ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (*egō to Alpha kai to Ō, to telos*).

The first clause of the text, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," is a reiteration of the same clause in Rev. 1:8. It is also restated, with the

⁷Rev. 5:6.

⁸Rev. 1:13, 18; 3:21.

⁹1 Cor. 15:28.

addition, "the first and the last," in Rev. 22:13. The reference, as we have argued in the above, is to the Eternal and Almighty Father. John was writing to a Greek readership. But in using the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, John was doubtless referring to the Jewish employment of the symbol אָלֶפֶת ('Alēph/tāw), the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The symbol was regarded as including the intermediate letters, and stood for *totality*. It expresses "not eternity only, but infinitude, the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all" ¹⁰

The second clause of the text, "the beginning and the end," interprets the first clause. The term *beginning* is, in the Greek, ἀρχή (archē). "ἀρχή always signifies 'primary,' whether in time: "beginning," *principium*, or in rank: "power," "dominion," "office.'" ¹¹

With respect to its temporal meaning, it denotes the place in a temporal sequence at which something new, also finite, commences. The Greek philosopher Anaximander taught that everything that exists derives from a first principle, which he designated as the infinite or limitless (ἄπειρον). But the infinite itself can have no beginning. It is not one among the temporal beginnings, i.e., it is not a temporal ἀρχή (archē). Aristotle commented on Anaximander in this regard: τοῦ δὲ ἀπείρου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρχή (But there cannot be a source [ἀρχή (archē)] of the infinite or limitless). ¹²

It is interesting to note, however, that Anaximander shifted the meaning of ἀρχή (archē) from the temporal to the trans-temporal. The infinite or limitless now becomes the eternal and underived ἀρχή (archē), the un-generated ground, or cause, of temporal events. "The Non-Limited is . . . the source from which existing things derive their existence . . . to which they return at their destruction" ¹³

Plato, for example, employs the term in the context of cosmic physics. He, too, regards the ἀρχή (archē) as the underived cause of events:

But the beginning [ἀρχή (archē)] is ungenerated. For everything that is generated must be generated from a beginning, but the beginning is not generated; for if the beginning were generated from anything, it would not be generated from a beginning. ¹⁴

The New Testament uses the term in its temporal sense of "beginning." This is particularly the case when ἀρχή (archē) is prefaced by prepositions. Heb. 1:10, for instance, uses the term to indicate the first point of time with respect to the creation: "And, Thou, Lord in the beginning [κατ' ἀρχάς (kat' archas)] hast laid the foundation of the earth" In John 1:1, the writer tells us that the Word, or *Logos*, is ἐν ἀρχῇ (en archē), "in the

¹⁰Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917), p. 10.

¹¹Gerard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 11 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), I, 479.

¹²Aristotle *Physics* III, 4, p. 203b, 7.

¹³Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 29.

¹⁴Plato *Phaedrus* 245d, tr. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 469-70.

beginning." The meaning is that He is "before" all time, or, more correctly, that He is of Whom no temporal statement can be made.

The New Testament also employs the term ἀρχή (archē) in the sense of *dominion* and *power*. Here the term is wholly along the lines of its philosophical use. That is, the ἀρχή (archē) is underived and eternal. The Eternal Father is the ἀρχή (archē), the First Cause, the Source and Origin of all things. He occupies forever the throne of power and majesty. His dominion is from everlasting to everlasting. All this Rev. 21:5-6 affirms.

Precisely the same force of the ἀρχή (archē) is affirmed of Christ, who is the Father's σύνθρονος (*sunthronos*). Here, too, Christ is on the throne of dominion and power. In Gal. 1:18 Christ is referred to as the ἀρχή (archē) who is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of every creature and who existed before all things. In the Gospel of John He is the first ἀρχή (archē) from which creation has received its norm and according to which it will find its fulfilment.

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
The same was in the be-
ginning with God.
All things were made by him;
and without him was not any
thing made that was made.¹⁵

But the Father and the Son are not only the *beginning*, the ἀρχή (archē). They are also the *end*, the τέλος (*telos*).

The noun τέλος (*telos*), which is translated *end*, derives from the primitive verb τέλλω (*tellō*), which means *to accomplish*. Thus the noun has originally and fundamentally a dynamic character. In the Greek world, the two senses of the term, following closely its dynamic character, are (1) *achievement* and *power*, and (2) *completion* as a state, *perfection*. Thus Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* defines the term: "an end accomplished: the completion or fulfilment of anything; . . . also in Att. to have full powers 2. a complete state, full condition"¹⁶ Aeschylus uses the term in the sense of achievement, where he says "but Zeus still crowned the end" (Ζεὺς δ' ἐπέκρανεν τέλος - *Zeus d' epekranen telos*).¹⁷ Thucydides writes, "Only let those who come with full powers" (τέλος ἔχοντες - *telos echontes*).¹⁸ Plato employs the term in the sense of completion or perfection: ". . . each body of officials . . . shall make it good, until each detail seems to have reached its proper completion" (τέλος - *telos*).¹⁹ In the

¹⁵John 1:1-3.

¹⁶A *Lexicon abridged from Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, 24th ed. (New York: Hinds, Hayden & Eldridge, Inc.), p. 697.

¹⁷Aeschylus *The Suppliant Maidens*, 624. In David Green and Richmond Lattimore, eds., *Aeschylus II* (New York: The Modern Library, c1956), p. 32.

¹⁸Thucydides IV, 118, 10, tr. Richard Crawley, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York: The Free Press, c1996), p. 287.

¹⁹Plato *Laws VI*, 772c, tr. R. G. Bury, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 459-61.

Republic he says that "the final step" of knowledge is the absolute good. In this knowledge "he arrives at *the limit of the intelligible* (τοῦ νοητοῦ τέλει - *tou noētou telei*).²⁰ Here the *limit* (τέλος - *telos*) is so because it is the completion or perfection beyond which there is nothing remaining to be achieved or fulfilled.

Classical Greek thought did not give to τέλος (*telos*) a strictly temporal value. For them, τέλος (*telos*) was not the end of a period of time. The reason for this restriction of the term was their devaluation of the temporal process. Time is always a falling away from the perfection of an absolute, static Being. Or, at best—as in Aristotle—it is a process of being lured to a fulfillment, which is never realized, by the Absolute God whose only activity is self-preoccupation. When they did refer to the end of a period of time, they used the term τελευτή (*teleutē*).

The New Testament, however, does employ the term τέλος (*telos*) in a temporal sense, to denote the end of a period of time. The question may be raised: does not this detract from the primary, dynamic meaning of the term? Does it not adversely affect the import of the term as significative of completion and perfection? The answer to this question turns on the meaning assigned to the time-process.

The biblical view of time is that it is the bearer of non-temporal meaning and value. Thus the end of a period of time is more than merely termination, the limit at which something ceases to be.

What it is that is terminated is ascertained in terms of the context of scripture. The event, then, varies according to the context. For the purpose of the present discussion, two scriptures may be noted. The first is 1 Cor. 1:8:

Who shall also confirm you
unto the end [τέλους (*telous*)], that ye may be
blameless in the day of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

The second text is 1 Cor. 15:24:

Then cometh the end [τέλος (*telos*)], when
he shall have delivered up the
kingdom of God, even the Father;
when he shall have put down
all rule and all authority and power.

In 1 Cor. 1:8 τέλους (*telous*) is prefixed by ἕως (*heōs*), which is a relative particle signifying the *terminus ad quem*, the final limiting point in time. Here it is used as an adverb of time, *until*, *unto*. The expression, ἕως τέλους (*heōs telous*), does, indeed, point to the termination of the present order. But it does more than this: it points to a *consummation*, namely, the final preservation of the saints. Thus the dynamic meaning of τέλος (*telos*) is kept intact, albeit in the context of the temporal.

2 Cor. 15:24 also expresses the temporal and dynamic aspects of τέλος (*telos*). The advent of Christ concludes the world's history. Here, too, there is more than the merely temporal. Christ's advent is attended with the resurrection of the redeemed to eternal life. Further, it is attended by

²⁰Plato *Republic* VII, 532b, tr. Paul Shorey, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 197.

Christ's delivering the *mediatorial* kingdom to His Father. The mediatorial kingdom is not the eternal kingdom of the Father, the divine kingdom that has no end. But the mediatorial does have an ending, but an ending that is more than mere termination. For this is an ending in which the redemptive act has achieved its final end. Again, albeit embedded in temporal reference, τέλος (*telos*) is more than mere termination; it is fulfilment and completion, ultimate and final perfecting.

In sum: the clause, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" (ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὠ), interpreted by the clause, "the beginning and the end" (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος), signifies the Father who is the source and origin of all things and the end and goal of historical process. There is here the certainty and unchangeableness of God's eternal promise that in His life, which embraces and yet transcends all, His saints will find the perfecting of their redemption begun in time's wayfare.

(2) What is it that is done?

The text reads in the authorized version: "And he said unto me, it is done." The One who speaks is the same One who, in 21:5 "sat upon the throne," i.e., God the Father. The clause, "it is done," is, in the Greek, but one word, Γέγοναν (*Gegonan*). The word is second perfect active of the verb γίνομαι (*ginomai*). It is a primary verb, and means "to cause to be." It is used with great latitude, as the translation in the text, "it is done," indicates. The verb Γέγοναν (*Gegonan*), in the Greek text, is third person plural, and not singular, as the English suggests. It is therefore better translated, "They are come to pass."²¹

There is some question as to the nominative intended. It may be the "words" just mentioned in verse 5, designated as "true and faithful." Or it may be the events described in vs. 1-5. Or it may be events of a wider generality. Rev, 16:17 employs the same verb found in 21:6, i.e., Γέγοναν (*Gegonan*), to announce the final destruction of the forces of evil. This suggests the last of the three possibilities of reference.

If we adopt this interpretation of the scope of that which is completed, there is every reason to include those temporal events that have to do with redemption.

On seven occasions Jesus spoke from His Cross of crucifixion. On the next to the last occasion He spoke the one word, Τετέλεσται (*Tetelestai*), which in the Authorized Version reads, "It is finished."²² That one word is a verb: the perfect passive indicative of τέλλω (*tellō*), from which the noun *end* (τέλος - *telos*), considered in detail in the above, is derived. It is also used in verse 28, where John writes of Jesus that he knew "that all things were now accomplished" (πάντα τετέλεσται - *panta tetelestai*)²³. The nominative of the verb is the neuter plural adjective *all*. The verb, in both places, is singular. In the second occurrence its nominative, however, is plural. The Greek language allows this of a neuter plural subject of the verb action. There are two things of note here. First, the plurality of events and occurrences are gathered into a unity of focus, or brought under a single

²¹Revised Version.

²²John 19:30.

²³John 19:28.

determination of significance. They all condense into the unity of a single end. And that single end is, as the verb *τέλλω* (*tellō*), which is constitutive of the terms in the verses under present consideration, is, not merely a temporal ending, but a consummation, fulfilment, and perfecting. There is a profound parallelism between those things that have come to pass (*Γέγοναν* - *Gegonan*) in Rev. 21:6 and the "all things" of the singular and telic accomplishment of John's Gospel.

The events in the life and experience of the Jesus of history, then, are certainly included in the nominative intended in Rev. 21:6. They are within the scope of "they are come to pass (*Γέγοναν* - *Gegonan*), and are so, not merely and only as temporal ending, but as eternal telic significance. Their *τέλος* (*telos*) is the purposing and perfecting of redemption.

What are, then, those things that are done? Of our Lord's teachings and actions, there are many that may be appropriately considered in the context of this discussion. It should be noted that their significance lies in the reference to His death. He himself saw them in that light. Peter's great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,"²⁴ and the Transfiguration occurred at a time of turning in the life and consciousness of the Savior. From that time forward He referred with increasing emphasis to his impending death. Here, in that death, lies ultimately the *τέλος* (*telos*), the significance, of those things that have come to pass, that have been done.

Here then, at the Cross, we find the final meaning. It was Plato who once exclaimed, when discussing the vision of the beautiful, that he was "almost able to lay hold of the final secret."²⁵ The phrase, "the final secret," is in the Greek but one word. And that word is exactly the word of Rev. 21:6, *τέλος* (*telos*), although here it appears in the genitive rather than the nominative. What, for Plato, is the final secret? It is the goal—the final and ultimate goal—of man's being. It is the perfection of meaning that illumines his existence and fulfils his destiny. Yet, Plato says, he is *almost* able to lay hold of the final secret. He is not able actually to seize it. Thus the final secret, of which he catches a fleeting glimpse, eludes him. Why is this? It is because the "divine beauty," in which the final secret is enshrouded, is, while resplendent in its absolute transcendence, insusceptible of time and temporal realization. As we have earlier observed, for Greek thought *τέλος* (*telos*) escapes, finally, any involvement in the conditions of time and existence. Only in Christianity is that defect removed. It is the Cross, and only the Cross, that realizes, in history, the dynamic value of the *τέλος* (*telos*), the essential completion and fulfilment of one's being.

For Plato, his distance from the Cross was too great to bridge. But now, for us, there is a profound change: we stand close to the Cross. And it was so for those of the early days of Christianity. What did the Cross mean for those who were actually brought near to it? They heard the Savior's cry as he hung there that day: *Τετέλεσται* (*Tetelestai*), "It is finished," It is fulfilled, It is completed.

All three of the synoptic gospels give an account of the Last Supper. The account shows that Jesus regarded his death as a covenant. Of the wine offered to His disciples, Jesus said: "This is my blood of the new testament,

²⁴Matt. 16:16

²⁵Plato *Symposium*, 211b, tr. W. R. M. Lamb, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 205.

which is shed for many."²⁶ It is clear that He did not view His death as but a natural incident or an occurrence resulting from the hostility of others. The scripture points out that, after Peter's great confession, "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up".²⁷ The necessity here is entirely his own. It is not something imposed upon him from something beyond the freedom of his own self-determination. No, His death is a matter entirely within His own control. This is borne out in John's Gospel: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."²⁸ Finally, the scene in Gethsemane shows that Jesus regarded His death a purely a matter of obedience to His Father.

Yet, notwithstanding His self-dedication to the point of death, Jesus appeared to hesitate when facing impending death: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"²⁹ How is one to explain this hesitancy, when, at the same time, Jesus regarded His death as purely of His own volition, as a self-initiated covenant act of redemption?

Professor Curtis suggests that the answer to this question may be found in Christ's fourth cry from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"³⁰

Curtis points out that there are several layers of significance regarding bodily death: personal significance, moral significance, and racial significance. The personal significance consists in the fact that for the first time the individual is absolutely alone. The moral significance consists in a further isolation: the individual is alone with conscience. The racial significance is the loss of all connection with the human race.³¹

In His death Jesus experienced a profound personal loneliness. He was not only separated from the race; he was thrust into personal isolation. As the text indicates, He was abandoned by His Father. He passed through the gates of death alone. God the Father was absent from the consciousness of His only Son.

Now it must be that the alienation of the Son affected the harmony of the Divine individuality. There could be no other consequence of the crisis of the Cross. What happened there in time reaches outward into the farthest reaches of eternity. The Father, too, and the Spirit—the bond of harmony—feel the force of the estrangement of the Son. The infinite agony of the Son is thus lifted from this world into the experience of God Himself. God now becomes forever thenceforth forward the "Fellow-Sufferer" with the Son and with His stricken people for whom the Son willingly came to save.

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,

²⁶Mark 14:24. The term *testament* is διαθήκη (diathēkē).

²⁷Matt. 16:21.

²⁸John 10:18.

²⁹Matt: 26:39.

³⁰Matt: 27:46; Mark 15:34.

³¹Curtis, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-96.

Nor how dark was the night that the Lord
passed through,
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.³²

There is more, however, to His death than the personal factor. There is also a racial factor in His death. His suffering was not merely individual suffering. His death stood for the race; it was a *representative* death. Having lost the consciousness of God the Father, His death bore for the race the awful consequence of racial sin: abandonment by Deity. Taking that abandonment upon Himself willingly, He provisionally released the fallen race from its own consequence of sin, namely, the loss of the God-relationship. He thus becomes the Redeemer. And only by means of that representative death can He indeed become the Redeemer. To refer, again, to Curtis:

But, on the other hand, his suffering was not ordinary individual suffering—it was *official, representative suffering*. He suffered, as the Race-Man, for the whole race. *He carried the race in his consciousness*. Thus, Christ's death is a racial event from the double fact that he bears the racial penalty against the old race and that he is the racial center of the new race. And whether we consider the dying Saviour a sinner or not, depends entirely upon our point of view. From the Arminian standpoint of personal sin, he surely was not a sinner. Nor was he a sinner from the standpoint of depravity. But from the racial standpoint he was a sinner, because he stood for the race, and allowed himself to be shut into its category, and actually bore the racial penalty, actually died, and was broken off from the race like any son of Adam. It matters not so much about the words you use, though, if you only catch and firmly hold the idea that our Lord's death was a racial event through and through.³³

All this—the redemptive import of Christ's death—is captured in the next-to-the-last cry from the Cross: "It is finished."³⁴ The original Greek has, again, but one word: Τετέλεσται (*tetelestai*). We have previously mentioned that the word is a verb: the perfect passive indicative of τέλλω (*tellō*), from which the noun *end* (τέλος - *telos*) is derived.³⁵ It does, indeed, connote a *temporal* ending, namely, the close of the earthly life of Jesus. But it also connotes infinitely more than temporal ending. True to its dynamic intension, the verb further signifies non-temporal consummation, fulfilment, perfecting, *i.e.*, the perfect consummation of redemption. Here then, at the Cross, redemption has been fully secured, and, for humankind, the final secret has been disclosed. In and through death, redemptive life has been ultimately and finally achieved.

Those words from the Cross also bring to light another redemptional accomplishment. They are the words spoken to the penitent malefactor: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."³⁶

The word *paradise* (παράδεισος - *paradeisos*) is not originally a Greek word. Rather, it is of Persian origin. In the Avesta the term *pairidaēza* denotes an enclosure, or a park surrounded by a wall. Its Greek equivalent

³²Elizabeth C. Clephane, "The Ninety and Nine."

³³*Ibid.*, p. 321.

³⁴John 19:30.

³⁵*Supra*, p. 13.

³⁶Luke 23:43.

first appeared in Xenophon, who used it in reference to the parks of the Persian nobility. By the third century BC it is employed generally to denote a park. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek is פַּרְדֵּס (pardēs), which means a park, or forest, orchard. It is found in the Old Testament but once: "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; campshire, with spikenard."³⁷

In the Bible there are three types of paradise. The *original* paradise is the garden of Eden. In Jewish Greek, from the LXX on, the term *paradise* is used for the garden of God in the creation account. There is here a noticeable shift of meaning from the profane to the religious. The New Testament does not use the term to designate the original paradise, although there are references to that paradise. Both the Old and New Testaments refer to the paradise of the last age. For example, Ezekiel compares the expected time of salvation with the paradise of the last age.³⁸ The writer of Hebrews speaks, with allusion to the Edenic paradise, of the eschatological paradise of the last age. Here the redeemed enjoy the gifts of the fruit of the tree of life: "To him that over-cometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."³⁹

There are two other places in the New Testament where the term *paradise* appears. Both texts speak of the third from of paradise, the paradise of the present age. It is, necessarily so, a concealed, or hidden, paradise. It is this paradise into which Paul was raptured.⁴⁰ And it is this paradise of which Jesus spoke on the Cross.

The concealed paradise is the state of the redeemed after death and before the resurrection. The words from the Cross indicate this: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." As for its location, Jesus alludes to it as a heavenly place for the assembling of the elect:

And then shall he send his
angels, and shall gather together
his elect from the four winds,
from the uttermost part of the earth
to the uttermost part of heaven.⁴¹

A most significant factor in Jesus' words to the penitent thief is the word *today*, which is so rendered in the Authorized Version. The term, σήμερον (*sēmeron*) is a compound of the definite article (*t* changed to *s*) and the noun *day* (ἡμέρα - *hēmera*). The article here has the force of the demonstrative pronoun *this*. Accordingly, Thayer translates the term, *this (very) day*.⁴² It is not to be taken with the verb *I say*, which would make the sentence read: "I say this very day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." This reading would make the promise of paradise indeterminate and imprecise as to its fulfilment.

³⁷Song of Sol. 4:13.

³⁸Ezek. 36:35.

³⁹Heb. 2:10.

⁴⁰2 Cor. 12:4.

⁴¹Mark 13:27.

⁴²Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper Brothers, c1886), p. 574.

Rather, *this very day* should be taken with what follows, *i.e., thou shalt be with me in paradise*. According to Jewish reckoning, the day is from sunrise to sunset. Luke says that the time when this promise was given was "about the sixth hour," that is, noon. And, he continues, darkness covered the earth until the ninth hour. This time span is from 12 noon until 3 p.m. And the end came, when Jesus cried, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Thus, Jesus' promise to the penitent thief, "This very day thou shalt be with me in paradise," requires that this shall occur before sunset of that very day. Paradise, for the redeemed, is not something in the indefinite, unspecified future; it is granted immediately after death.

The expression *thou shalt be with me* is significant. In the Greek it reads μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ (*met' emou esē*). The force of the preposition μετὰ (*meta*), *with*, is decisive here. The basic meaning of the preposition is *fellowship, participation, community of action*. It signifies more than merely being in company with someone, being along with someone. Were mere presence meant, a different preposition, also translated as *with*, would have been used. The text would then have read, with the dative, σὺν ἐμοί (*sun emoi*). But Jesus promised more than the penitent thief's being in the Redeemer's presence, or being along with Him in a secondary sense. He promised the newly redeemed person a sharing with him, vital participation with Him, in the blessedness of paradise. The fellowship of participation and experience is what is here meant. And this is for all who die in the Lord: the infinite blessedness of communion with Him in the state of the redeemed.

Now, mention has been made that the term *paradise* is not originally a Greek term. It is of Persian origin. As the word was progressively employed in Greek texts, it took on a rich imagery drawn from sense experience. The imagery was retained in later references to paradise.

For the ancients, the Elysian Fields were the abode of the departed virtuous. Homer writes of this:

but the immortals will convey you to the Elysian Field, and the limits of the earth, where fair-haired Rhadamantys is, and where there is made the easiest life for mortals, for there is no snow, nor much winter there, nor is there ever rain, but always the stream of the Ocean sends up breezes of the West Wind blowing briskly for the refreshment of mortals.⁴³

In *Paradise Lost* Eve sings of evening in paradise:

Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest Birds; pleasant in the Sun
When first on this delightful Land he spreads
His orient Beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r,
Glist'ring with dew; fragrant with fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet with coming on
Of grateful Ev'ning mild, then silent Night⁴⁴

The New Testament, however, does not employ that imagery, found predominately in pagan myth. St. Paul, for example, seems almost reluctant to speak of his rapture into the hidden paradise and says little about it.

⁴³Homer *Odyssey* iv. 563-68, tr. Richard Lattimore (New York: Harper & Row, c1965), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁴John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 641-48, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, c1935), p. 133.

Yet the imagery is always implicit in the employment of the term. For that imagery is an essential of the original meaning of the term. We may be permitted, then, to allude to the imagery in connection with Jesus' words from the Cross. The assurance of paradise is not, we have noted, for some far-off time in an indefinite future. It is for that very day when it was proffered. "This very day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Only a few hours remained of that day before sunset. The evening, when the day would close, was fast-approaching. Those who tilled the land, those who traded in the marketplace, those who kept the homes, were turning from the concerns of the day and preparing for the evening and nighttime of rest. The sun was low in the West, casting its golden glow over the temple towers. The soon-coming night would obscure the tragedy of that fateful day.

And it was evening in paradise. Paradise: the immediate presence of God; Paradise: the intimate fellowship with God. His ordeal of death now buried in the past, he to whom the assurance had been granted walked side by side with his Redeemer on the pathways of that "delightful land . . . sweet with coming on of evening mild," right from the cross of death through the gates of heaven into the safe enclosure of the realm of glory.

"It is done" (Γέγοναν - *Gegonan*). They are come to pass. The unlawful trial, the crown of thorns, the death-agony of the cross: all these have been accomplished. "It is finished" (Τετέλεσται - *Tetelestai*). The redemption has been completed, perfected. The "final secret" has at long-last been disclosed.

(3) What is it that is given?

The text states clearly: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." What is significant here is the expression "of the fountain of the water of life" (ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς (*ek tēs pēgēs tou hudatos tēs zōēs*).

Both Testaments employ the expression "living water." Jeremiah writes poignantly:

For my people have committed two
evils: they have forsaken me
the fountain of living waters, and
hewed them out cisterns, broken
cisterns, that can hold no water.⁴⁵

In 17:13 Jeremiah identifies "the fountain of living waters" as the Lord.

The expression כַּח'יִם מַח'יִם (*khah'yim mah'yim*) means the flowing water of a spring or fountain. It is contrasted with the stagnant water of a cistern, the type of water that, in the verse quoted, the people attempted to substitute for the living waters of salvation.

The formula "living water" is found in John's Gospel. In John 4:11 the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria has proceeded to the point where she asks Jesus: "from whence then hast thou that living water?" Her words are the traditional words connoting flowing water in contrast to stagnant water (τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν - *to hudōr to zōn*). The expression has the definite article *the*. This is the sense employed in both ancient Greek and Old Testament thought. But in the preceding verse, where Jesus promises the water that He shall give her, the expression, in the Greek, is entirely

⁴⁵Jer. 2:13.

different. It is ὑδὸρ ζῶν (*hudōr zōn*). The absence of the article before the noun gives the reading, not "the water the living," but "water of life." This water is the water that *mediates* life, the water *of* life. It now refers to a new reality, a spiritual reality of inward birth into life everlasting.

Again, Jesus modifies the formula further. He continues His discussion with the woman:

Jesus answered and said
unto her, whosoever drinketh of
this water shall thirst again:
But whosoever drinketh of
the water that I shall give him
shall never thirst; but the water
that I shall give him shall be in
him a well of water springing up
into everlasting life.⁴⁶

The Old Testament person no longer thirsts because he can come again and again to drink of the fountain. But the New Testament person no longer thirsts because *he has the well of life within him*. It is the gift of Jesus. His gift, the *living water*, becomes a well of water in himself. This gift is His Word: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."⁴⁷ It is His Spirit: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified."⁴⁸ And it is He Himself: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."⁴⁹ The true water brings to the person a total renewal from within. In this new mode of expression, there is a fulfilment that surpasses all Old Testament prophecy.

The final and complete expression of the formula is found in Revelation. Here the intimation in John's Gospel that *the living water* is indeed *the water of life* is made explicit. Gone is the allusion to the older form, that the water is but *flowing water*. Our text makes this unequivocally clear: the water is "the fountain of the water of life." It is the water of life and it issues freely from the inexhaustible fountain of Grace.

All this is bound up with the various expressions of the new living water. There is our present text, with its naming of the water as "the fountain of the water of life." There are other texts that carry the same meaning. Revelation also speaks of "the living fountains of water,"⁵⁰ and of "a pure river of water of life."⁵¹ These passages draw from the great promises of Isaiah. God Himself, the prophet writes, will give water and bread, i.e., that which is strictly necessary for life:

Ho, every one that thirsteth,
come ye to the waters, and he
that hath no money; come ye, buy,

⁴⁶John 4:13-14,

⁴⁷John 15:7.

⁴⁸John 7:39.

⁴⁹John 14:20.

⁵⁰Rev. 7:17.

⁵¹Rev. 22:1.

and eat; yea, come, buy wine
and milk without money and without
price.⁵²

Elsewhere the prophet echoes substantially the same theme:

They shall not hunger nor
thirst; neither shall the heat nor
sun smite them: for he that hath
mercy on them shall lead them,
even by the springs of water shall
he guide them.⁵³

We might ask the question: "Why is it that only in Revelation does the complete meaning and import of the symbol *water* appear?" The answer is not far from us. It is only in Revelation that the full measure of the Redemption obtains. Not even in the days of His flesh, when He spoke of *living water*, with its implication of *water of life*, is the final significance of the water disclosed. For those days are not the final days, when the final import of redemption is achieved. Only in Revelation, with its remarkable symbolism, are the final days now at hand.

It is true, of course, that in His earthly life Jesus was, and was referred to as, "the lamb of God." It was John who, at the Savior's baptism, pronounced the words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁵⁴ But just as Jesus' reference to the water of life was anticipatory, so was John's reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Jesus was, certainly, in intent and purpose, the Lamb of God. But He was not yet, with respect to what is finally and fully involved in the designation, the Lamb of God. That reality could occur only after His sacrifice on the Cross. For sacrifice is the essence of the meaning and import of the concept of *the Lamb*. Only when the last measure of that import has been achieved is He truly the Lamb of God. But even here, at the juncture of this history, He is not yet, in the fullest respect, the Lamb of God. For what was there registered in the annals of history had to be entered in the absolute register of eternity.

We have earlier mentioned that in the ordeal of the Cross the Father forsook His beloved Son and allowed Him to pass through death all alone. Jesus died, of course, as a human being. But there is infinitely more involved in that death. For it was the death of the Son of God. And the Son of God died forsaken by God the Father. Thus, as Curtis points out, this death ". . . must be lifted totally out of the world of humanitarian mitigation. It must be made a boundless agony in the experience of God himself."⁵⁵ We do not know—cannot know—just what this agony in the divine experience meant or involved. It would seem, however, that the Father's abandonment of the Son induced a severe strain in the relationship enjoyed by the Persons of the Godhead. It would seem that the harmony of the divine life itself was in some way and to some extent broken. That is, the very integrity of Deity was threatened by that event in time when our Lord, without the fellowship of the Father, was brought into contact with the meaning and penalty of sin.

⁵²Isa. 55:1.

⁵³Isa. 49:10.

⁵⁴John 1:29.

⁵⁵Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

If this, or something like it, is true, then the Resurrection takes on a further dimension. The Resurrection not only brings renewed life to the dying Christ and through that life redemption to humankind, it also assuages the agony in the experience of God and serves the harmony of the divine life. So we may say that only as the Son is brought, in the Resurrection, to the newness of life, only as the divine integrity is reinstated and assured as eternal fact, can the drama of the redemptive act be brought to its everlasting completion. This the book of Revelation announces in and through its wondrous symbolism.

In Revelation the Lamb is the Exalted One. There is now closure to the redemptive event. The Lamb, who has previously shared the Father's throne, now occupies His own throne in company with His redeemed people. But, even in His glory, the Lamb bears the marks of His suffering. The transactions of earth are not and cannot be lost. They are forever established in the absolute of Heaven. The Lamb is forever the "lamb as it had been slain." It is this that constitutes His worthiness to reign on His throne of glory and to administer final redemption for His people.

Worthy is the Lamb that was
slain to receive power, and riches,
and wisdom, and strength, and
honour, and glory, and blessing.

During His days on earth, Jesus identifies Himself as the One who gives living water, the water that shall be in one as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is, indeed, a gift that one may receive in this present life. But it is a gift that obtains midst the probabilities of our present life on earth. Now we dwell in the shadow-land. We know, however, that in "a land that is fairer than day" there is the City of Light, "a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God."⁵⁶ When the morning of that day arrives, then we shall receive the full measure of the gift of everlasting life. The Lamb who is now the Exalted One, will shepherd those redeemed from earth to "the fountain of the water of life." At that fountain we shall gather with our Shepherd, to drink fully and finally of the life everlasting.

Ezekiel had envisioned the eschatological river and a time when "everything that liveth, which moveth, withersoever the rivers shall come, shall live."⁵⁷ Coming from the eschatological river of Ezekiel, Revelation speaks of "a pure river of water of life:"

And he shewed me a pure
river of water of life, clear
as crystal, proceeding out of the
throne of God and of the Lamb.⁵⁸

The river of the water of life is mentioned in the New Testament in only two places. Other than its occurrence in Revelation, it occurs in John 7:38, where Jesus speaks of "rivers of living water." There are no exact parallels in religious history. The concept is unique to the New Testament.

In Ezekiel's vision the life-giving river flowed from the restored temple southward into the Dead Sea, and along its banks grew the trees whose

⁵⁶Heb. 11:10.

⁵⁷Ezek. 47:9.

⁵⁸Rev. 22:1.

leaves yielded life-giving properties. In John's vision the river is the river of Eden. But unlike the river of Eden, the eschatological river of Revelation is a single stream flowing down the middle of the city street.

The singularity of the river of Revelation is significant. It conveys the idea of *fulness*. For now the river of redemption does not part into four streams, as did the river of Eden. Rather, it flows in its undivided fullness, yielding from its depth and breadth the full measure of everlasting life.

There are two sources of the river of the water of life: "the throne of God and of the Lamb." This concept of the two-fold source of the river is very significant.

First, the river of Revelation flows from the throne of God. The throne is the throne of the Father, Whom John designates as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος - *egō to Alpha kai to Ō, to telos*). Here the definitory terms *the beginning* and *the end* are employed, not in their temporal sense, but in their dynamic sense, *i.e.*, in the sense of *dominion* and *power*. The throne is the place of the Eternal Father, the First Cause, the Source and Origin of all that is good, beautiful, and true. The throne is the place of the Eternal Father, Who is the Perfection that brings completion and fulfilment to His people. The throne is the place of the Eternal Father, Who is the source of all things and the end and goal of history. The throne is the place of the Eternal Father, Who is "the Alpha and the Omega," the boundless life that embraces all while it transcends all. These are the qualities of the throne from which issues the temple-river of the *eschaton* and its life-giving virtue.

Second, the river of revelation flows from the throne of the Lamb. The fullness of that river does, indeed, depend on the dynamic of the Father's throne. But there is yet another requirement, if the river is to bear the water of life. And that is, it must also proceed from the throne of the Lamb.

That the river takes its rise from the throne of the Lamb conveys the idea that *sacrifice*, as well as *dominion* and *power*, is necessary to constitute the river of the water of life. This is anticipated in those sayings of Jesus when while on earth he spoke of His Person and Work as fount of everlasting life. Now, in Heaven, He leads his people, for whom He died on Calvary, from earth to the life-giving river of the *eschaton* and the golden morning of eternity in which redemption is forever secured. The river of redemption is now, indeed, full and fully effective in quenching the thirst for endless and abundant life.

Parenthetically, it may be here remarked that the concept of the *river* appears often in classical literature. It is found, for example, in the closing pages of Plato's *Republic*.⁵⁹ Plato believed that the essential soul is immortal. Therefore, the character of the present life has profound implications for the soul in its continuance beyond bodily death. To dramatize this doctrine, Plato provides what is called "the myth of Er."

Er was a great warrior who was killed in battle. He was at the place where he was to be judged, but he was sent back to life to inform those now living about the future world.

There is a rather detailed description of the journey of those who have died, the "pilgrim souls." On a certain day, now at eventide, they camp by

⁵⁹Plato *Republic* X:614-621.

"the River of Forgetfulness." They drink of a measure of the water, fall asleep, and then at midnight are born into their new life of reincarnation.

What is, in this context, the significance of "the River of Forgetfulness?" It signifies the soul's purification as a process of forgetting—the evils and sins of the former life are left behind. The pilgrim souls now are free to hue out their new destiny, unencumbered by the negativity of the past. Of this tale, Plato writes: "And it will save us if we believe it, and we shall safely cross the River of Lethe, and keep our soul unspotted from the world."⁶⁰

Virgil expresses this thought:

All these, when they have rolled time's wheel through a thousand years,
the God summons in vast throng to the river of Lethe, in sooth that,
reft of memory, they may revisit the vault above and conceive desire to
return again to the body.⁶¹

And Milton writes:

Lethe the River of Oblivion
Her wat'ry Labyrinth, whereof who drinks,
Forthwith his former state and being forgets.⁶²

Now, myth cannot save. For our consideration, its significance lies in the fact that it discloses how even pagan thought saw the need for redemption. Certainly, by no means can forgetting, on the part of the individual, bring salvation. If there be a process of forgetting involved in human redemption, that forgetting must be on the part of another. If there be an effectual, redemptive "River of Forgetfulness," that River is not, as in Plato's account, in "the Plain of Oblivion, through a terrible and stifling heat, for it was bare of trees and all plants"⁶³

The Psalmist sings of a river:

There is a river, the streams
whereof shall make glad the
city of God, the holy place of the
tabernacles of the most High.⁶⁴

This river is the "pure river of water of life." It is the river "proceeding out of the throne of God and the lamb." On its borders is no "plain of oblivion . . . bare of trees and all plants." Rather, this river is lined by the fresh, green-clad, trees of life, whose fruits are the healing of the nations. And those who drink of these waters drink of the virtue that confers life everlasting.

⁶⁰Plato *Republic* X:621c, tr. Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library, No. 276 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,) II:519.

⁶¹Virgil *Aeneid* 6:750f., tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library No. 63 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 1:559.

⁶²John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2:283-85, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., c1935), p. 60.

⁶³*Ibid.* 621a.

⁶⁴Ps. 46:4.

There is a profound respect in which this river is the authentic "River of Forgetfulness." But he who forgets is not the one who is redeemed; it is *the Redeemer*. He who forgets is God. Indeed, the divine forgetfulness is a recurring biblical theme. It was Isaiah who wrote of the Lord:

I, even I, am he that blotteth
out thy transgressions for mine
own sake, and will not remember
thy sins.⁶⁵

And the writer of the Hebrews registers the same thought of the divine forgetfulness:

For I will be merciful to their
unrighteousness, and their sins
and their iniquities will I
remember no more.

This, the life-giving water of the river, the divine forgetfulness procured by these waters, is the gift promised in Revelation. Yet there are more gifts promised. For the Lamb Who leads His people to the waters of life is also the Bride:

And the Spirit and the bride
say, Come. And let him that
heareth say, Come. And let him
that is athirst come. And who-
soever will, let him take the
water of life freely.⁶⁶

The Lamb is at once the Exalted One, the Sacrifice, the Shepherd, and the Bride. The idea of the bride carries the thought of fellowship. He who furnishes the living waters of that river is also He who is with His people in everlasting fellowship. Here, in Revelation, we find those symbols whose admixture, beyond the pale of logic, registers the full meaning and truth of redemption.

Now, finally, the closing verses of Revelation open the window of eternity. The scene is no longer that of time. Earth's history, including the temporal enactment of the Lamb's redeeming death, is now past. The drama is now enacted in the eternal City of Light. There the saints are safely gathered by the life-giving river. All is complete, perfected. "Then cometh the end."⁶⁷ The term here is the one of Revelation: τέλος (*telos*). Redemption is complete. Now the Son delivers "up the kingdom to God, even the Father." "that God may be all in all."⁶⁸ The morning of God's everlasting kingdom has at last dawned.

Unfold! Unfold! Unfold, ye portals everlasting!
With welcome to receive him ascending on high.
Behold the King of Glory!
He mounts up through the sky,
Back to the heav'nly mansions hasting.

⁶⁵Isa. 43:25.

⁶⁶Rev. 22:17.

⁶⁷1 Cor. 15:24.

⁶⁸1 Cor. 15:28.

Unfold—Unfold, for lo, the King comes nigh.

But who is He, the King of Glory?
He who death overcame, the Lord in battle mighty.
But who is the King of Glory?
Of hosts He is the Lord; of angels and of powers:
The King of Glory is the King of the saints.

Unfold! Unfold! Unfold, ye portals everlasting!
With welcome to receive him ascending on high.
Behold the King of Glory!
He mounts up through the sky,
Back to the heav'nly mansions hasting.
Unfold—Unfold, for lo, the King comes nigh.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Charles François Gounod, *The Redemption*.