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Round Table: Healing and Reconciliation
REPARATION: A WINDOW ON HUMANISATION

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Introduction

Humanisation is a theme that cries out for attention, given the reality of so many people and peoples who live in inhuman and degrading conditions, who are dehumanised by hostility, alienation and abandonment. Jesus assumed our humanity so that we might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). He showed tremendous compassion in the face of human suffering, all too often the fruit of sin. Loving us to the end (cf. Jn 13:1), he bore the sin of the world in his own body to the point that “he was so inhumanly disfigured that he no longer looked like a man” (Is 52:14), and death ensued. He accepted being crucified in love for us, creating a short circuit for our violence in his own body. His death was thus transformed into a source of new life, resurrected life.

Dying on the cross, Jesus reached the fullness of authentic human living. [...] Given a world characterised by sin, the only way to the fullness of authentic human living is through death to all that makes us unfree and less than whole, to all that makes us less than the image and likeness of God.

God rescued Jesus from death and brought him into a closeness to God that heals all that in this life needs healing, that liberates from all that in this life works against our freedom, that fulfils a humanity called to be the image of God¹.

Recognising our deficiencies, we speak of humanising structures and relationships² so that there is respect for human dignity and people can live authentically their inner freedom, realising their potential to know and to love, feeling themselves to be fully alive and fully human. We speak also of humanising our world, treating the environment and all of creation in a “humane” way. This presentation aims to illuminate humanisation from the perspective of the theological category of reparation.

Reparation is more specifically a soteriological category, that is to say one among several theological categories that express the means by which God saves us in Christ and in the Spirit³. Soteriological categories can be descending when they come to us from God, or ascending when they go in the opposite direction. The choice of the category of reparation is motivated by the fact that it treats of salvation in a broad sense, beyond being exclusively a response to sin, and by the rich possibilities it offers with both ascending and descending dimensions.

The following pages will outline St Irenaeus’ view of God’s plan of salvation, which begins with the creation of the world and aims to lead us to live and express the fullness of our

¹ W. LOEWE, *The College student’s Introduction to Christology*. Collegeville (Minnesota): The Liturgical Press, 1996, 171, 170.

² For example, the Latin American Conference of Religious (CLAR) has elaborated a global plan for 2012-2015, which includes a proposal for the humanisation of religious life so that it may be both human and humanising, promoting relationships inspired in the Word and concretised in the actions of listening, accompanying and welcoming. Cf. PLAN GLOBAL DE LA CLAR, 2012-2015.

³ Other soteriological categories include: revelation, redemption, liberation, divinization, justice, sacrifice, expiation, satisfaction, reconciliation. Cf. the titles of chapters 5-14 in B. SESBOÛÉ, *Jesucristo el único mediador: ensayo sobre la redención y la salvación*. Tomo I: Problemática y relectura doctrinal. Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1990.

humanity, a fullness which converges with the invitation to enter into and share the divine life. God's salvation will be considered in the light of the specificity of reparation, illustrated in its complementary aspects by two Gospel narratives. The conclusion will be in the manner of a brief synthesis of how the figure of reparation gives us a window on humanisation.

God's plan of salvation

A central tenet of Christian faith is that God is self-revealing and self-communicating. God freely chooses to create the world and to invite us to the fullness of happiness. This means that the creation of the world is an integral part of our salvation history and not some kind of a logical prefix to it⁴. God's universal salvific will is manifested in the world that God calls into existence and entrusts to human responsibility, as this creative action already affirms the value of life over any form of death⁵. Our Trinitarian God creates freely out of love, out of goodness, with the desire that human beings will eventually participate in the fullness of the divine life, be immersed in the communion of the everlasting love among Father, Son and Spirit⁶. The high point of God's self-communication in creation is the Incarnation, when God assumes our human nature, inviting us into communion with the Trinity through our incorporation into the body of Christ⁷.

If the eschatological completion of God's plan consists in the goal that we "share the divine nature" (2 P 1:4), the road towards this fullness consists in our progressive humanisation. St Irenaeus emphasises the full humanity of Christ and sees our mission in terms of growing into our own full humanity, modelled on that of Christ, which in turn draws us into ever closer communion with God. We grow more and more into our possession of the Spirit, our adoption as sons and daughters of God, our full configuration in the image and likeness of God⁸.

St Irenaeus' soteriology does not begin from sin, but rather seems to contemplate created reality from God's own perspective, and sin was never a part of God's plan⁹. However God could foresee the risk of sin emerging as a consequence of conferring humans with freedom. In contrast to the medieval world view which sees the universe created by God in the beginning as perfect, and that salvation consists in restoring the perfection that was undone by sin, St Irenaeus sees the world created in the beginning as a seed with a future orientation, with a vocation to grow towards fullness. In the light of sin, God renews his original plan of salvation through his Son, who becomes the Second Adam. We recover in Christ what we lost in the First Adam, that is to say the image and likeness of God¹⁰. Christ incarnate begins human life over again, in order to bring it to perfection and thus fulfil God's plan. He cures our disobedience with his obedience¹¹. Human history, and indeed all of creation, is recapitulated by Christ's incarnation, which St Irenaeus sees as a dynamic process that

⁴ Cf. M. KEHL, *Contempló Dios toda su obra y estaba muy bien: una teología de la creación*. Barcelona: Herder, 2009, 29-30.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 92-93.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 51-52.

⁷ Cf. E. MARLÉS ROMEU, *Trinidad creadora cosmología: el diálogo teología-ciencias y el misterio de la Creación en escritos de Ian G. Barbour y Denis Edwards*. Barcelona: Ediciones de la Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya, 2010, 259, 275.

⁸ Cf. J.I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *La humanidad nueva: ensayo de cristología*. Santander: Sal Terrae, 1984, 373-376.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 380.

¹⁰ Cf. IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against the heresies*, III,18,1. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>. Consultation: 24-06-2013.

¹¹ Cf. IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against the heresies*, V,16,3. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html>. Consultation: 24-06-2013.

extends from his conception to his resurrection. Christ's humanisation permits our divinisation¹².

Semantics of "reparation"

Before treating of the relationship between reparation and humanisation, we will briefly consider the diverse meanings of the term "reparation" in the history of spirituality and the theological tradition. It is a term that does not appear in Scripture, however the ideas that it expresses can be found throughout the Biblical narratives of salvation history.

Endowed with freedom, we can freely respond to God's loving initiative or choose not to do so. To recognise ourselves as created by God and to respond in loving gratitude constitutes the *redamatio* or return of love. "Love consists in this: it is not we who have loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son [...] Let us love, then, because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:10,19). St Augustine explains that our loving is always a "re-loving" (*re-d-amatio*), because our love comes in second place, after having received a great love. It is only experiencing love that we can love¹³. This idea of re-loving, of loving in return or making a return of love, is at the root of how we can understand the word "reparation", a key idea in certain Fathers of the Church¹⁴. In an ascending movement we live reparation "re-loving" the Trinity, our brothers and sisters and all of created reality, by our concrete attitudes and actions.

The root of "reparation" in the homonymic Latin *reparatio* opens up a semantic field of related terms such as restoration, recreation, reconstruction and reconciliation. In simple language we could speak of gathering up the bits, putting together something that has been broken, building up. However it is not simply a case of gluing something together. What emerges is not just a patched-up version of an original; it is more akin to a healed fracture, whereby the new bone uniting the parts that had been separated is stronger than the original bone. "So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see" (2 Cor 5:17). The reunion of dispersed pieces finds another echo in the Biblical category of recapitulation (cf. Eph 1:10), where the Father brings everything together in Christ, under his headship. In this understanding of reparation the initiative and action is God's, the saving movement is descending.

Édouard Glotin, a dedicated scholar of reparation, sees the more prevalent use of the term "reparation" in spirituality since the Modern Era as deriving not from *reparatio* but rather from *satisfactio*. "Satisfaction" is a term derived from Roman law, where it meant to "do enough" towards paying off a debt, to make what would be considered by the creditor as a reasonable effort, although falling short of paying the full amount. St Anselm of Canterbury was to modify the meaning of satisfaction, understanding it to demand not merely the full reimbursement of a debt, but also a supererogatory payment¹⁵. In time *satisfactio* evolved into the French *amende*, and later into *reparement*. In legal and theological discourse, for example concerning the sacrament of penance, the term "satisfaction" prevailed, while in more popular circles "reparation" held sway, although understood in the sense of "satisfaction". It was later on that "satisfaction" came to designate the idea of personal

¹² Cf. J.I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *op. cit.*, 377-378.

¹³ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, Sermon 34. In: *Liturgia das horas: ofício de leituras*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1978, p. 372 [Tuesday of the third week of Easter].

¹⁴ For example, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexander, Pseudo-Clement, St. Augustine. Cf. E. GLOTIN, Réparation. In: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*. Tome XIII, col. 377.

¹⁵ ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, Por qué Dios se hizo hombre. In: *Obras completas de San Anselmo*. Madrid: BAC, 1952, 775-777 (I, 11).

contentment¹⁶. This accounts for the meaning of reparation in terms of compensation, making amends, “making up”, in an ascending movement, for example in the traditional devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

A Biblical echo of this understanding of reparation is found in Is 53:10, which speaks of the Servant giving his life as a “sin offering” (*‘âshâm*). The term *‘âshâm* is otherwise translated as “sacrifice of reparation” (cf. Lv 5:14-25), whereby apart from the sacrificial animal, stolen goods are returned with an increment of one-fifth of their value. Here we can sense that beyond what is legislated, there is a desire to make good by being generous. Reparation expresses an impulse to freely offer something *more* than would be demanded by strict justice. It enters into the logic of the heart, of gratuity, beyond the realm of what can be measured or calculated.

The figure of the Servant who gives his life for the people as a “sin offering” prefigures Jesus giving his life on the cross with the intention of overcoming sin in its roots and in its consequences. He “repairs” the damage done by sin, and he offers a counterweight of goodness that outdoes the weight of evil. His offering is “sacrificial” in the sense of giving himself out of love, but not in the sense of ritual killing or punishment.

There are other shades of meaning to “reparation” from its Latin roots, which are lost on translation into English. One such meaning is *re-parare*, to stand up; another is to look carefully and observe. All of these meanings have something to offer the theme of humanisation.

In Jewish society at the time of Jesus, women were considered to be inferior to men, and were to be avoided because they were blamed as sources of temptation. In the two narratives that follow the protagonists are women who were further marginalised by particular circumstances: because of illness in the case of the first, and the perception of being a sinner in the case of the second. We will examine these incidents in order to tease out what they reveal of reparation.

Reparation as overcoming limitations inherent in our finitude: the healing of the crippled woman on the Sabbath (cf. Lk 13:10-17)

In Luke’s narrative Jesus is teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. As usual, his teaching activity does not distract him from being very attentive to what goes on around him. He notices the crippled woman. This noticing is one of the expressions of reparation. God watches and sees all that happens to creation (cf. Ps 33:13-15), not passively, but intervening in a saving manner (cf. Ex 3:7-10; Is 51:2). Beyond simply registering the woman’s presence, Jesus lets his heart be deeply moved by her situation, and his will resolves to do something about it. It is for this that he has been sent by the Father, “to bring the good news to the afflicted [...] to proclaim liberty to captives” (Lk 4:18).

The woman has been crippled for eighteen years, “bent double and quite unable to stand upright” (Lk 13:11). She wasn’t born captive within her own body, but rather it is a circumstance that emerged later on in her life. The text alludes to the cause of this situation as “a spirit” (Lk 13:11), later named more explicitly as “Satan” (Lk 13:16), perhaps in the manner in which Satan is permitted to put Job to the test (cf. Jb 1:6-19). Here there is no debate as to whether the woman’s sins are to blame, as occurred in the case of the cure of the man born blind (cf. Jn 9:2-3). In today’s language we might conjecture that the woman suffered an illness, and illnesses many times are expressions of limitations inherent in our

¹⁶ Cf. E. GLOTIN, *Réparation*, col. 369-370; _____, *Le coeur de Jésus: approches anciennes et nouvelles*. Bruxelles: Lessius, 2001, 176-177.

finitude, without explicit moral connotations. However her physical limitation could be a cipher for spiritual bondage, with culpable causes.

Jesus accords the woman the dignity of “a daughter of Abraham” (Lk 13:16), which contrasts with the indignity of her situation. He sees that in order to express God’s Kingdom or Reign, the only correct thing to do is to “untie” her bonds, and that it is particularly appropriate to do so on the Sabbath Day. God desires our liberation from whatever enslaves us or ties us down, and wants us to enjoy life in its fullness. God wants us to be fully human.

The words of Jesus, the Incarnate Son, in conjunction with his laying his hands on her, bring about her instant cure. The woman’s immediate reaction on straightening up is to glorify God. This scene shows us God’s reparative action that releases the woman from what held her bound. She in turn stands up (*re-parare*) and praises her Creator and Saviour in an act of *redamatio*. The people present are filled with joy.

The president of the synagogue has not understood God’s “year of favour” (Lk 4:19) His perception is confined to the overriding importance of maintaining the letter of the law, presumably for the security that it offered, but heedless of its restrictiveness in human terms. This blinds him to the woman in her need and makes him a hypocrite, as he is capable of being sensitive to the needs of his own animals on the Sabbath. He would deny the woman precisely what he offers his own beast: to be untied. To be released from the power of Satan is according to God’s plan and cannot be denied on the Sabbath¹⁷. He and others who think like him are “covered with confusion” at Jesus’ words and actions and at the woman’s response. It is they who are morally crippled and in need of release, if they could only open themselves to God’s offer.

The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast that follow show that this cure of the woman is a small beginning of something that will assume greater proportions, that the whole people of Israel will stand upright, victorious over the powers that limit life and revealing the glory of the Kingdom of God¹⁸.

Reparation as overcoming sin and its consequences: Jesus’ encounter with the woman who was a sinner (cf. Lk 7:36-50)

An extraordinary tale of God’s overflowing compassion unfolds in this text. It concerns a woman “who had a bad name in the town” (Lk 7:37a), understood as a prostitute who had neither a family nor a home to go to¹⁹. She sought out Jesus when the opportunity presented itself. She had surely heard of him, or perhaps had had some previous contact with him. She was conscious of her need to be freed from the great disorder in her life, to be healed from within and be able to build a new life. The prevailing system would have considered her to be very distant from God, with little chance of redeeming herself by fulfilling the requirements of the Law.

To invite someone to a meal is a sign of wanting to honour the person. However the host Simon the Pharisee did not accord Jesus the usual details of hospitality for an honourable guest: to welcome him at the entrance, to put his hand on his shoulder and greet him with a kiss, to ask a servant to wash his feet, to offer him water to refresh his face and hands, to offer him a few drops of perfumed oil for his hair²⁰.

¹⁷ Cf. J. SCHMID, *El Evangelio según San Lucas*. Barcelona: Herder, 1981, 340.

¹⁸ Cf. S. OYIN ABOGUNRIN, Lucas. In: W. FARMER (dir.), *Comentario Bíblico Internacional: comentario católico y ecuménico para el siglo XXI*. Estella (Navarra): Verbo Divino, 1999, 1284.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 1266.

²⁰ Cf. *id.*

The woman “brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment” (Lk 7:37b), a costly luxury, knowing how she intended to use it. Overcome with emotion, “[s]he waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment” (Lk 7:38). Such tenderness and care express her overflowing gratitude and love, *redamatio*, presumably because she has been deeply moved by her experience of Jesus’ abundant love and forgiveness. “It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love” (Lk 7:47b), Jesus says, in an obvious reference to Simon, who by contrast had been so miserly in his welcome. Self-sufficiency blinded him to his need for forgiveness, but the woman was well aware of her need and thus was open to receive the tremendous gift.

Jesus welcomes her by simply receiving her affectionate gestures and appreciating them, even though it is very scandalous for those present that he allows himself to be touched by an “impure” woman. Well aware of the rumours about her, he neither judges nor condemns her. His acceptance of her is very healing and restores her sense of humanity. He goes even further by affirming that her faith, her trust in what God can do, is what has saved her (cf. Lk 7:50). God’s salvation is not something magical conjured out of thin air, but rather the miracle of transformation within the person, borne of the experience of compassionate love.

Paradoxically, Jesus also states that “her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown great love” (Lk 7:47a), suggesting that it is her love that provokes pardon. We can infer that her great love enables her to draw even more deeply from the fountains of forgiveness, in a reciprocal movement.

When we are conscious of having offended someone, true reconciliation is not possible without a concrete gesture of “making up”. We need to express our desire to “do” something to compensate our fault, to atone for our sin. It is not a case of trying to placate an angry deity motivated by fear, as only the motive of love can really “repair” us. St Irenaeus affirms that God does not “need” or demand our sacrifices, but rather our conscience prompts us to offer them so as to feel better with ourselves, and God is moved to accept them as if from a friend²¹. They overflow spontaneously from the experience of being forgiven. The woman does not flagellate herself but offers simple, tender gestures of profound gratitude. In them she offers her very self, her whole life. Her return of love, *redamatio*, acquires the dimension of “making up”, bringing her healing and peace, “repairing” her from within and giving her the possibility of “building up” her new identity as a much-loved daughter of God. In her contact with Jesus the “bits” of her life are gathered up into a new creation.

Humanisation through reparation

Reparation is a multifaceted soteriological category that gives us a window on the burning theme of humanisation as lived by Jesus in his encounters with diverse persons, ever sensitive to situations of suffering that dehumanise, and offering concrete responses of healing and liberation. Reparation is renewal and recreation, putting us on our feet so that we may take the reins of our lives and move towards ever more abundant life. From our own experiences of reparation, we in turn can offer more humanising responses to others who live various scenarios of rupture and inhumanity. To respond to love with love, *redamatio*, brings out the best in us and makes us flourish in our humanity.

Our lives are a vocation towards ever greater humanisation, overcoming limitations along the way that may or may not be consequences of sin. To grow in humanity is not an individual enterprise, but implies the capacity to value otherness and relationship, and to promote justice

²¹ Cf. ST IRENAEUS, *Against the Heresies* IV, 18, 1.3. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book4.html>. Consultation: 24-06-2013.

and peace for all God's people. In God's mysterious plan, in the measure in which we grow in humanity, we grow in our incorporation into divine life²². The category of reparation can help broaden the horizons of our comprehension of humanisation, and deepen our commitment to allow the Spirit to mould us in the image of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29), who is the Image of God (cf. Col 1:15).

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²² "Deification is the true and supreme 'humanisation' of the human person". COMISIÓN INTERNACIONAL, cited in B. SESBOÛÉ, *op. cit.*, 238. The translation is ours.