

TEXT

NOTES

Prayer *Jesus,*
for the *help us not to hide in our churchy words;*
Study *when we worship, let us know and feel that*
 there is always something new, something fresh to see of you.
 Do not let us forget that you will always have more to give us,
 more than we could ever guess.
 Amen.

MATTHEW 26:⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸ But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’” ⁶² The high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” ⁶³ But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your verdict?” They answered, “He deserves death.” ⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, ⁶⁸ saying, “Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?” ⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰ But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹ When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” ⁷³ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” ⁷⁴ Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept

bitterly.

MATTHEW 27:¹ When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. ² They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. ³ When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴ He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵ Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. ⁶ But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." ⁷ After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. ⁸ For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, ¹⁰ and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

¹¹ **Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so."**

¹² **But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.** ¹³ **Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?"** ¹⁴ **But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.**

¹⁵ Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷ So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." ²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹ The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³ Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the

crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."
25 Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

New Revised Standard Version

Wisdom in Exile

2-A

Matthew is concerned to show that the Spirit of God is fully active in Jesus in the ways the prophets promised (see also 13:28, on the Spirit at work in the casting out of demons). There is something there to be recognized, something that makes sense *because of what is already known*. Page 25

2-B

Matthew, as scholars like to remind us, is a theologian of God's Wisdom – wisdom in the sense defined by those passages in the Old Testament and the Apocrypha, in Proverbs and Job, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon that celebrate creation as a reflection of and a sharing in the joyful order and coherence of the mind of God. Page 29

2-C

Due to the full presence of divine Sophia (*Wisdom*) in Jesus, 'membership within a patriarchal family is dramatically replaced by membership within the family of disciples gathered around Wisdom ... and the metaphors used for this discipleship are inclusive – brother and sister and mother (12:46-50)'. Refusal of Wisdom is a refusal of this inclusive vision; refusal of Wisdom is going to be, ultimately, *an act of violence against what seems incongruous and discontinuous* – even though it is in truth the hidden logic, the hidden unity, of the world. Page 29

2-D

Much more could be said of Matthew's strategy as a whole in the Gospel, but these are the salient points. It is a narrative of hidden harmonies displayed, of disparities overcome by pointing to some extraordinary and unexpected analogy between the words and events of sacred history and the events of Jesus' life. *It is therefore an appeal to the reader to learn how to look, how to 'scan' the ambiguous world so as to read what it is truly saying*. It is centred upon the belief that *the identity of Jesus is what finally gives coherence to the history of God's dealings with his people* – i.e. that he is Wisdom. It also prepares us gradually for a rejection of that Wisdom, which will show itself as a climactic moment of exclusion, an exclusion which will also be a self-destruction. Page 30

2-E

This trial turns out to involve putting to the proof an entire system of religious language, at least as it is spoken by these people in this situation. What do words like 'God' and 'anointed' mean in the mouth of the High Priest, presiding at such a tribunal? If he knew what he was saying, would he not either fall silent at once or realize the answer to his question? Jesus' question is this: *'Do you know yourself, your history? Do you really inhabit the words and the forms you use so fluently?'* The High Priest speaks for a history in which Wisdom is inscribed, the human story that is Wisdom's story. Turn back to the Wisdom of Solomon in Jewish Scripture, and you can see how the biblical record is reworked as the record of what Wisdom

2-F

As we read this [*admission of guilt*] against the background of the trial scene ... we may see [it] felt not as an assault against certain guilty 'others' but *as a question to religious power and religious fluency, a question to all who are insiders*, all who are familiar with speaking about God and God's Wisdom. If Matthew meant the cry of the crowd as a simple acceptance of guilt by the whole Jewish nation, then his own trial story might suggest that *he* has not seen what Jesus' verdict really is. In terms of the reading of the answer to Caiaphas proposed above, the only possible sense that can be given to the words, 'His blood be on us', is that it is an implicit admission by the managers of religious power that their exclusion of Jesus is a refusal of their own life and wholeness. In the liturgical reading of the passion as it is now practised in churches, the crowd's part is normally taken by the whole congregation together – certainly an acknowledgement of what the Holy Week liturgy often reinforces, i.e. that the only example that matters in the worship of an unfaithful and rebellious people is us, the present worshipping body. *It might not be a bad idea, however, for this to be spoken by the clergy, in acknowledgement of the particular role Matthew gives to those who act as guardians of the history and integrity of the people.*

Page 33

2-G

Those who are under condemnation in Matthew's narrative are ultimately those who have the story of God's Wisdom written in their common life, but who cannot read this story *because they do not know themselves*. By a roundabout route, Matthew returns us to Mark: *what we think we are sure of, the language we speak so familiarly, is at odds with the truth*. If we were to encounter directly what we talk about so freely, we should be terrified, angry and murderous.

Page 33f.

2-H

What if I became incapable of telling truth from falsehood? What if the maintenance of my religious identity became a weapon against God? Page 35

2-I

Matthew's narrative does not allow the believer – in particular the articulate and educated believer, the teacher, the expert – any fixed answer to the question of how I might know that I am still with Jesus rather than with Caiaphas. As soon as there seems to be an answer to such a question, it becomes part of just that system of religious words and religious fluency that *helps to make possible the exclusion of Jesus*. In the presence of Jesus at his trial, faith unavoidably takes on something of a catch-22 dimension. What matters is to *hold still* before the question.

Page 36

2-J

There is no escape, however, from the summons to be in the presence of Christ on trial. It is as if he said to each believer, 'Stand where I can see

you' and my faithfulness to him is going to be bound up with the whole diverse process of keeping myself 'in question'. This is not a matter of obsessional self-scrutiny, the search for an impossible transparency to my 'real' motives or desires. *It is only a sober and consistent recognition that I have no final and satisfying account to give of myself, and must wait in Christ's presence to learn who I am.* I must wait without the expectation of a tidy personality profile ever being provided, but *in the hope that Christ's knowing of me will give me whatever wholeness I am capable of receiving.*

Page 36

2-K

Dietrich Bonhoeffer ... wrote for his godson from prison in May 1944...

Reconciliation and redemption, regeneration and the Holy Spirit, love of our enemies, cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship all these things are so difficult and so remote that we hardly venture any more to speak of them. In the traditional words and acts we suspect that there may be something quite new and revolutionary, though we cannot as yet grasp or express it. That is our own fault. Our church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world.

It is not that the words are mistaken, or that they are – in the glib modern sense – irrelevant, so that we need clearer and simpler ideas. Far from it. The problem lies in the speakers. There is not enough *depth* in us for the words to emerge as credible; they have become external to us, tokens we use while forgetting what profound and frightening differences in the human world they actually refer to. *If the point of traditional doctrinal forms is to hold us still, it is also, we could say, to create a depth in us, a space for radical change in how we think of ourselves and how we act.*

Page 37

2-L

Wisdom speaks through the weakness of a human life: only by accepting my own weakness, and surrendering various comforting falsehoods that might let me think myself strong and safe, can I attune my life to that of God. The goal is not to create the spurious weakness of deliberate self-denigration, nor is it a policy of avoiding conflict by pretending to a sense of one's own worthlessness. *Augustine is not talking about worth here, but about the inescapable contradictions and vulnerability of actual human life.* What deceives us about these things is what keeps us from truth, the living truth that is in Christ's human birth and life and death.

Page 45

2-M

Standing with the victim means adopting a questioning stance towards such claims. In addition, as we try to move to where Jesus stands at his trial, we are challenged to listen to what we ourselves are saying. We use the language of God's unconditional love, of God's action submitting itself to be worked out in the history of weak and sinful people, of God's Wisdom

made flesh in the pain and failure of Jesus' death. 'The words are your
own,' says Jesus. If you mean them, where do you stand? | Page 46

Supplementary Material

The Life of Pi, by Yann Martel, from Chapter 17

“*Father, I would like to become a Christian...*”

TEXT

First wonder goes deepest; wonder after that fits in the impression made by the first. I owe to Hinduism the original landscape of my religious imagination, those towns and rivers, battlefields and forests, holy mountains and deep seas where gods, saints, villains and ordinary people rub shoulders, and, in doing so, define who and why we are. I first heard of the tremendous, cosmic might of loving kindness in this Hindu land. It was Lord Krishna speaking. I heard him, and I followed him. And in his wisdom and perfect love, Lord Krishna led me to meet one man.

I was fourteen years old – and a well-content Hindu on a holiday when I met Jesus Christ.

It was not often that Father took time off from the zoo, but one of the times he did we went to Munnar, just over in Kerala. Munnar is a small hill station surrounded by some of the highest tea estates in the world. It was early May and the monsoon hadn't come yet. The plains of Tamil Nadu were beastly hot. We made it to Munnar after a winding, five-hour car ride from Madurai. The coolness was as pleasing as having mint in your mouth. We did the tourist thing. We visited a Tata tea factory. We enjoyed a boat ride on a lake. We toured a cattle-breeding centre. We fed salt to some Nilgiri tahrs – a species of wild goat – in a national park. (“We have some in our zoo. You should come to Pondicherry,” said Father to some Swiss tourists.) Ravi and I went for walks in the tea estates near town. It was all an excuse to keep our lethargy a little busy. By late afternoon Father and Mother were as settled in the tea room of our comfortable hotel as two cats sunning themselves at a window. Mother read while Father chatted with fellow guests.

There are three hills within Munnar. They don't bear comparison with the tall hills – mountains, you might call them – that surround the town, but I noticed the first morning, as we were having breakfast, that they did stand out in one way: on each stood a Godhouse. The hill on the right, across the river from the hotel, had a Hindu temple high on its side; the hill in the middle, further away, held up a mosque; while the hill on the left was crowned with a Christian church.

On our fourth day in Munnar, as the afternoon was coming to an end, I stood on the hill on the left. Despite attending a nominally Christian school, I had not yet been inside a church – and I wasn't about to dare the deed now. I knew very little about the religion. It had a reputation for few gods and great violence. But good schools. I walked around the church. It was a building unremittingly unrevealing of what it held inside, with thick, featureless walls pale blue in colour and high, narrow windows impossible to look in through. A fortress.

I came upon the rectory. The door was open. I hid around a corner to look upon the scene. To the left of the door was a small board with the words *Parish Priest* and *Assistant Priest* on it. Next to each was a small sliding block. Both the priest and his assistant were IN, the board informed

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me in gold letters, which I could plainly see. One priest was working in his office, his back turned to the bay windows, while the other was seated on a bench at a round table in the large vestibule that evidently functioned as a room for receiving visitors. He sat facing the door and the windows, a book in his hands, a Bible I presumed. He read a little, looked up, read a little more, looked up again. It was done in a way that was leisurely, yet alert and composed. After some minutes, he closed the book and put it aside. He folded his hands together on the table and sat there, his expression serene, showing neither expectation nor resignation.

The vestibule had clean, white walls; the table and benches were of dark wood; and the priest was dressed in a white cassock-it was all neat, plain, simple. I was filled with a sense of peace. But more than the setting, what arrested me was my intuitive understanding that he was there – open, patient – in case someone, anyone, should want to talk to him; a problem of the soul, a heaviness of the heart, a darkness of the conscience, he would listen with love. He was a man whose profession it was to love, and he would offer comfort and guidance to the best of his ability.

I was moved. What I had before my eyes stole into my heart and thrilled me.

He got up. I thought he might slide his block over, but he didn't. He retreated further into the rectory, that's all, leaving the door between the vestibule and the next room as open as the outside door. I noted this, how both doors were wide open. Clearly, he and his colleague were still available.

I walked away and I dared. I entered the church. My stomach was in knots. I was terrified I would meet a Christian who would shout at me, "What are you doing here? How dare you enter this sacred place, you defiler? Get out, right now!"

There was no one. And little to be understood. I advanced and observed the inner sanctum. There was a painting. Was this the murti? Something about a human sacrifice. An angry god who had to be appeased with blood. Dazed women staring up in the air and fat babies with tiny wings flying about. A charismatic bird. Which one was the god? To the side of the sanctum was a painted wooden sculpture. The victim again, bruised and bleeding in bold colours. I stared at his knees. They were badly scraped. The pink skin was peeled back and looked like the petals of a flower, revealing kneecaps that were fire-engine red. It was hard to connect this torture scene with the priest in the rectory.

The next day, at around the same time, I let myself IN.

Catholics have a reputation for severity, for judgment that comes down heavily. My experience with Father Martin was not at all like that. He was very kind. He served me tea and biscuits in a tea set that tinkled and rattled at every touch; he treated me like a grown-up; and he told me a story. Or rather, since Christians are so fond of capital letters, a Story.

And what a story. The first thing that drew me in was disbelief. What? Humanity sins but it's God's Son who pays the price? I tried to imagine Father saying to me, "Piscine, a lion slipped into the llama pen today and killed two llamas. Yesterday another one killed a black buck. Last week two of them ate the camel. The week before it was painted storks and grey

herons. And who's to say for sure who snacked on our golden agouti? The situation has become intolerable. Something must be done. I have decided that the only way the lions can atone for their sins is if I feed you to them."

"Yes, Father, that would be the right and logical thing to do. Give me a moment to wash up."

"Hallelujah, my son."

"Hallelujah, Father."

What a downright weird story. What peculiar psychology.

I asked for another story, one that I might find more satisfying. Surely this religion had more than one story in its bag – religions abound with stories. But Father Martin made me understand that the stories that came before it – and there were many – were simply prologue to the Christians. Their religion had one Story, and to it they came back again and again, over and over. It was story enough for them.

I was quiet that evening at the hotel.

That a god should put up with adversity, I could understand. The gods of Hinduism face their fair share of thieves, bullies, kidnappers and usurpers. What is the Ramayana but the account of one long, bad day for Rama? Adversity, yes. Reversals of fortune, yes. Treachery, yes. But *humiliation? Death?* I couldn't imagine Lord Krishna consenting to be stripped naked, whipped, mocked, dragged through the streets and, to top it off, crucified – and at the hands of mere humans, to boot. I'd never heard of a Hindu god dying. Brahman Revealed did not go for death. Devils and monsters did, as did mortals, by the thousands and millions – that's what they were there for. Matter, too, fell away. But divinity should not be blighted by death. It's wrong. The world soul cannot die, even in one contained part of it. It was wrong of this Christian God to let His avatar die. That is tantamount to letting a part of Himself die. For if the Son is to die, it cannot be fake. If God on the Cross is God shamming a human tragedy, it turns the Passion of Christ into the Farce of Christ. The death of the Son must be real. Father Martin assured me that it was. But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth. The Trinity must be tainted by it; there must be a certain stench at the right hand of God the Father. The horror must be real. Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals? Why make dirty what is; beautiful, spoil what is perfect?

Love. That was Father Martin's answer.

And what about this Son's deportment? There is the story of baby Krishna, wrongly accused by his friends of eating a bit of dirt. His foster mother, Yashoda, comes up to him with a wagging finger. "You shouldn't eat dirt, you naughty boy," she scolds him. "But I haven't," says the unchallenged lord of all and everything, in sport disguised as a frightened human child. "Tut! Tut! Open your mouth," orders Yashoda. Krishna does as he is told. He opens his mouth. Yashoda gasps. She sees in Krishna's mouth the whole complete entire timeless universe, all the stars and planets of space and the distance between them, all the lands and seas of the earth and the life in them; she sees all the days of yesterday and all the days of tomorrow; she sees all ideas and all emotions, all pity and all hope, and the three strands of matter; not a pebble, candle, creature, village or galaxy is

missing, including herself and every bit of dirt in its truthful place. “My Lord, you can close your mouth,” she says reverently.

There is the story of Vishnu incarnated as Vamana the dwarf. He asks of demon king Bali only as much land as he can cover in three strides. Bali laughs at this runt of a suitor and his puny request. He consents. Immediately Vishnu takes on his full cosmic size. With one stride he covers the earth, with the second the heavens, and with the third he boots Bali into the netherworld.

Even Rama, that most human of avatars, who had to be reminded of his divinity when he grew long-faced over the struggle to get Sita, his wife, back from Ravana, evil king of Lanka, was no slouch. No spindly cross would have kept him down. When push came to shove, he transcended his limited human frame with strength no man could have and weapons no man could handle.

That is God as God should be. With shine and power and might. Such as can rescue and save and put down evil.

This Son, on the other hand, who goes hungry, who suffers from thirst, who gets tired, who is sad, who is anxious, who is heckled and harassed, who has to put up with followers who don't get it and opponents who don't respect Him – what kind of a god is that? It's a god on too human a scale, that's what. There are miracles, yes, mostly of a medical nature, a few to satisfy hungry stomachs; at best a storm is tempered, water is briefly walked upon. If that is magic, it is minor magic, on the order of card tricks. Any Hindu god can do a hundred times better. This Son is a god who spent most of His time telling stories, *talking*. This Son is a god who walked, a pedestrian god – and in a hot place, at that – with a stride like any human stride, the sandal reaching just above the rocks along the way; and when He splurged on transportation, it was a regular donkey. This Son is a god who died in three hours, with moans, gasps and laments. What kind of a god is that? What is there to inspire in this Son?

Love, said Father Martin.

And this Son appears only once, long ago, far away? Among an obscure tribe in a backwater of West Asia on the confines of a longvanished empire? Is done away with before He has a single grey hair on His head? Leaves not a single descendant, only scattered, partial testimony, His complete works doodles in the dirt? Wait a minute. This is more than Brahman with a serious case of stage fright. This is Brahman selfish. This is Brahman ungenerous and unfair. This is Brahman practically unmanifest. If Brahman is to have only one son, He must be as abundant as Krishna with the milkmaids, no? What could justify such divine stinginess?

Love, repeated Father Martin.

I'll stick to my Krishna, thank you very much. I find his divinity utterly compelling. You can keep your sweaty, chatty Son to yourself.

That was how I met that troublesome rabbi of long ago: with disbelief and annoyance.

I had tea with Father Martin three days in a row. Each time, as teacup rattled against saucer, as spoon tinkled against edge of cup, I asked questions.

The answer was always the same.

He bothered me, this Son. Every day I burned with greater indignation against Him, found more flaws to Him.

He's *petulant!* It's morning in Bethany and God is hungry; God wants His breakfast. He comes to a fig tree. It's not the season for figs, so the tree has no figs. God is peeved. The Son mutters, "May you never bear fruit again," and instantly the fig tree withers. So says Matthew, backed up by Mark.

I ask you, is it the fig tree's fault that it's not the season for figs? What kind of a thing is that to do to an innocent fig tree, wither it instantly?

I couldn't get Him out of my head. Still can't. I spent three solid days thinking about Him. The more He bothered me, the less I could forget Him. And the more I learned about Him, the less I wanted to leave Him.

On our last day, a few hours before we were to leave Munnar, I hurried up the hill on the left. It strikes me now as a typically Christian scene. Christianity is a religion in a rush. Look at the world created in seven days. Even on a symbolic level, that's creation in a frenzy. To one born in a religion where the battle for a single soul can be a relay race run over many centuries, with innumerable generations passing along the baton, the quick resolution of Christianity has a dizzying effect. If Hinduism flows placidly like the Ganges, then Christianity bustles like Toronto at rush hour. It is a religion as swift as a swallow, as urgent as an ambulance. It turns on a dime, expresses itself in the instant. In a moment you are lost or saved. Christianity stretches back through the ages, but in essence it exists only at one time: right now.

I booted up that hill. Though Father Martin was not IN – alas, his block was slid over – thank God he was in.

Short of breath I said, "Father, I would like to be a Christian, please."

He smiled. "You already are, Piscine – in your heart. Whoever meets Christ in good faith is a Christian. Here in Munnar you met Christ."

He patted me on the head. It was more of a thump, actually. His hand went BOOM BOOM BOOM on my head.

I thought I would explode with joy.

"When you come back, we'll have tea again, my son."

"Yes, Father."

It was a good smile he gave me. The smile of Christ.

I entered the church, without fear this time, for it was now my house too. I offered prayers to Christ, who is alive. Then I raced down the hill on the left and raced up the hill on the right – to **offer thanks to Lord Krishna for having put Jesus of Nazareth, whose humanity I found so compelling, in my way.**

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Supplementary Material – A

Dialog between Pi and Father Martin...

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Pi “But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth. The Trinity must be tainted by it; there must be a certain stench at the right hand of God the Father. The horror must be real.

“Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals? Why make dirty what is; beautiful, spoil what is perfect?”

Fr Martin “**Love.**”

And what about this Son's deportment? There is the story of baby Krishna, wrongly accused by his friends of eating a bit of dirt. His foster mother, Yashoda, comes up to him with a wagging finger. “You shouldn't eat dirt, you naughty boy,” she scolds him. But I haven't,” says the unchallenged lord of all and everything, in sport disguised as a frightened human child. “Tut! Tut! Open your mouth,” orders Yashoda. Krishna does as he is told. He opens his mouth. Yashoda gasps. She sees in Krishna's mouth the whole complete entire timeless universe, all the stars and planets of space and the distance between them, all the lands and seas of the earth and the life in them; she sees all the days of yesterday and all the days of tomorrow; she sees all ideas and all emotions, all pity and all hope, and the three strands of matter; not a pebble, candle, creature, village or galaxy is missing, including herself and every bit of dirt in its truthful place. “My Lord, you can close your mouth,” she says reverently. There is the story of Vishnu incarnated as Vamana the dwarf. He asks of demon king Bali only as much land as he can cover in three strides. Bali laughs at this runt of a suitor and his puny request. He consents. Immediately Vishnu takes on his full cosmic size. With one stride he covers the earth, with the second the heavens, and with the third he boots Bali into the netherworld.

Even Rama, that most human of avatars, who had to be reminded of his divinity when he grew long-faced over the struggle to get Sita, his wife, back from Ravana, evil king of Lanka, was no slouch. No spindly cross would have kept him down. When push came to shove, he transcended his limited human frame with strength no man could have and weapons no man could handle.

That is God as God should be. With shine and power and might. Such as can rescue and save and put down evil.

This Son, on the other hand, who goes hungry, who suffers from thirst, who gets tired, who is sad, who is anxious, who is heckled and harassed, who has to put up with followers who don't get it and opponents who don't respect Him – what kind of a god is that? It's a god on too human a scale, that's what. There are miracles, yes, mostly of a medical nature, a few to satisfy hungry stomachs; at best a storm is tempered, water is briefly walked upon. If that is magic, it is minor magic, on the order of card tricks. Any Hindu god can do a hundred times better. This Son is a god who spent most of His time telling stories, talking. This Son is a god who walked, a pedestrian god – and in a hot place, at that – with a stride like any human stride, the sandal reaching just above the rocks along the way; and when He splurged on transportation, it was a regular donkey.

Pi “This Son is a god who died in three hours, with moans, gasps and laments. What kind of a god is that? What is there to inspire in this Son?”

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Pi “And this Son appears only once, long ago, far away? Among an obscure tribe in a backwater of West Asia on the confines of a long-vanished empire? Is done away with before He has a single grey hair on His head? Leaves not a single descendant, only scattered, partial testimony, His complete works doodles in the dirt?”

Wait a minute. This is more than Brahman with a serious case of stage fright. This is Brahman selfish. This is Brahman ungenerous and unfair. This is Brahman practically unmanifest. If Brahman is to have only one son, He must be as abundant as Krishna with the milkmaids, no?

Pi “What could justify such divine stinginess?”

Fr Martin **Love.**

Supplementary Material – B

TEXT

NOTES

WHO COMES FROM GOD, AS WORD AND BREATH?

Who comes from God, as Word and Breath?
Holy Wisdom.
Who holds the keys of life and death?
Mighty Wisdom.
Crafter and Creator too,
eldest, she makes all things new;
she ordains what God will do,
wisest one, radiant one,
welcome, Ho-ly Wis-dom / great *Sophia!*

Who lifts her voice for all to hear?
Joyful Wisdom.
Who shapes a thought and makes it clear?
Truthful Wisdom:
Teacher, drawing out our best,
magnifies what we invest,
names our truth, directs our quest.
Wisest one, radiant one,
welcome, Ho-ly Wisdom / great *Sophia!*

Whom should we seek with all our heart?
Loving Wisdom.
Who, once revealed, will not depart?
Faithful Wisdom.
Partner, Counselor, Comforter,
love has found none lovelier,
life is gladness lived with her.
Wisest one, radiant one,
welcome, Ho-ly Wisdom / great *Sophia!*

Text: Patrick Michaels
Common Praise – 393 • Tune: SALVE REGINA COELITUM

CHRISTOLOGICAL METAPHORS –

JOHN: **LOGOS** – THE **WORD** OF GOD – JOHN 1:1

PAUL: **SOPHIA** – THE **WISDOM** OF GOD – 1 CORINTHIANS 1:24 |