

educit eas" (Jn 10:1-4)—to become the yet-unknown person who their Creator calls them to be.

We should not kid ourselves, however, about the cost of such "educating." To lead them out of serfdom, the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. The young know that such self-gift, glorious and crucifying, is what they witnessed at Denver. It was palpable in the astonishing strength of the pope's frail body, clutching his great cross, exposed for the Denver multitude to grueling schedules and to weather conditions that daunted the young themselves.

That generosity of his is, ultimately, what overwhelmed them. One of our students, asked to write an article on World Youth Day, entitled his piece: "The Beatles never cried over me." He was alluding to the first image of the pope transmitted over the big screens on the night of the Vigil. John Paul II had just landed. He was moved to the core by his first sight of the giant crowd—500,000 where barely 100,000 were expected—and by its expectant restlessness and need, which no human being could fulfill. He stood, big tears rolling down his cheeks, in silent offering of his person and of ours to the One who can so fulfill, while the ecstatic crowd chanted "JPII, we love you."

People have spoken of teen idolatry when describing the crowd's response to the pope in Denver. It is a misreading. For all the power of his personality and the clarity of his faith, the pope's presence is astonishingly un-self-focused; it is not "winning," but simply catalytic. Papolatry is definitely not the prevalent mood at World Youth Days. Encountering that educator John Paul himself refers to as "the pope" simply means hearing Christ call through another person. It means being cracked open by this presence to love and to the dangerous, devouring gift of divine life: in other words, it means wishing to become fully a person oneself. Blessed the educator who can once in a while be for a few such a catalyst. □

Jesus as child and his praise of the child

Hans Urs von Balthasar

It takes the Incarnation to show us that being born has not just an anthropological, but also a theological, eternal significance.

In antiquity, childhood was something akin to inferiority. For this reason, the Greek noun "*pais*" (a child between seven and fourteen years old) can also express the idea of slave or servant; both have a subordinate position in society. The gospel, which characterizes Jesus as remaining the Father's child in adulthood, brings with it a fundamental change of attitude. As the first great Father of the Church, Irenaeus, marvelously explains it, Jesus' being the Father's child, indeed, his everlasting birth from the Father, becomes not just an example, but a state which is necessary for all: "All men whom Jesus came to save through himself are newly born in God: infants, children, youths, young and old men. This is why he went through all the ages of life: as an infant among infants he sanctified them; as a child among children he sanctified this age and at the same time became a model of devotion and of just submission for children; as a youth among youths he became a model for them as well and sanctified them for the Lord. In the same way he also became an older man among other men, in order to be in every respect a fully accomplished teacher; not merely through preaching the truth, but also according to each age, in that he hallowed it and at the same time became a model for it."¹

¹*Adv. Haer.* II, 22, 4; cf. III, 18, 7. On the ages of Christ's life, see my *Das Ganze im Fragment* (Einsiedeln, 1963), 268-321.

Yet in the end Jesus is this example for all in the sense that he recapitulates in unity the essence of the various ages. Paul already alludes to this when he exhorts: "Brethren, do not be children in your judgment; be children in evil, but in judgment be mature" (1 Cor 14:20). Augustine was strongly affected by this paradox: "Let your old age be like that of a boy and your boyhood be like that of an old man," which he follows up with a more precise explanation: "Do not let your wisdom be tied to arrogance or your humility be without wisdom."² Man must progress in age, but this must not allow our youthfulness to become superannuated: "Let us not progress in such wise that we cease to be new and become old; rather, let this newness itself grow."³ But with these words we have already worked out the formula which unlocks for us the meaning of Jesus' perpetual childhood and of his commandment to the disciples and to us to become like children. If he is the true "trainer of the foolish, the instructor of minors" (Rom 2:20), he nonetheless trains the foolish in what he praises as the true, childlike minority.

I. Jesus as child

The human childhood of Jesus is draped with closely woven veils; the attempt to lift them—through psychology, for example—will always miss the mark. Weighty tomes have been written to show that the child Jesus was the perfect adorer of the Father already in his mother's womb (Bérulle), on the grounds that all along he possessed, even as man, the perfect vision of God and therefore the fullness of knowledge; but such pious speculations have no foundation in the gospel. The development of a special devotion to the child Jesus—especially since the Middle Ages, and in particular since the seventeenth century—is legitimate.⁴ Nevertheless, this devotion must keep within the limits of what can be known and should heed R. Guardini when he says that there is no "psychology of Jesus."

For a Jew, who imagines the education of the child Jesus in a believing Jewish household and in a synagogue where he becomes acquainted with the Psalms, the Shema, and the meaning of the Passover and of the other feasts as re-actualiza-

²In Ps. 112, 2.

³In Ps. 131, 1.

⁴See the entry entitled "Enfance de Jésus (dévotion à l'É)" in *Dict. de Spiritualité* (1960), 652-82 (Lit.).

tions of the historical events, it is relatively easy to describe "the unknown years of Jesus."⁵ For a Christian, who can interpret Jesus' self-consciousness not in historical and sociological but only in theological terms, the conjectures about Jesus' childhood, indeed, about his entire hidden life until his public appearance at the age of thirty, are much more difficult. What means does he have to approximate this mysterious unknown reality, when all he has available, outside the episode of the twelve year-old Jesus, is the colorless verse: "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was with him" (Lk 2:40)?

The Christian has only two data, which he must harmonize to the best of his ability. First, the Bible states two times that the child "grew," "grew in strength," and "increased" (Lk 2:40, 52). This is what, in terms of the knowledge of Jesus, is called "*scientia acquisita*" by the theologians. Second, there is the theological insight that Jesus, who was born of the Holy Spirit through the overshadowing of the Virgin, must have had from the very beginning a definite awareness of his uniqueness, though not necessarily of the whole scope and content of his mission. To hit upon the point where these two data converge, let alone to give a concrete picture of it, requires the greatest caution and reserve, especially since its location can have shifted as the infant grew to manhood. We shall have to approach this task in four steps.

(1) If we take seriously the Incarnation of "the Word of God," it follows that Jesus, like every human child, gradually learned in stages. This applies not merely to human language and human comportment, but also to the religion of his people. We can be sure that he is initiated into the history of Yahweh with his people by the example and teaching of Mary and Joseph, and that he learns, first at home and later in the synagogal instruction, to pray to the God of Israel. He becomes familiar with the most spiritual and purest core of these prayers:

⁵Robert Aron's work, *Les années obscures de Jésus* (Paris, 1960), stands out among the numerous recent publications which see Jesus wholly within the context of Jewish traditions. His hypothesis is that Christianity was born out of the conflict already existing in Judaism at the time of Jesus between the pious religion of Israel and the secularized Roman culture which had permeated Palestine. The Church, as the result of the process which Jesus had initiated, is "a mystical communion instead of a physical one . . . The Christian feasts are mysteries, the Jewish feasts (were) so many reconstitutions" within an encompassing symbolic vision of the world (265-66). Cf. by the same author, *Ainsi priait Jésus enfant* (Paris, 1968).

the praise of God for his own sake and Israel's readiness as God's perfect creation to follow his directive in everything. And it is theologically necessary to assume that Mary, who, as the *Panagia*, had already passed through the thick clouds surrounding the Old Covenant, knew how to present its purest, prophetic core with unerring clarity, even though she undoubtedly did not foresee her child's career, let alone the genesis of his Church.

What went on in the consciousness of the child, as he listened attentively and absorbed what he heard? We can probably say no more than that he took in this story of God and his chosen people, these prayers of utter devotion, with a ready understanding of how intimately it all concerned him. Perhaps one could go so far as to say that it hit home as something meant for him, as if he felt that he were in the very heart of Israel itself. It probably took the years of maturation for this feeling that the history and actual reality of the covenant were addressed to him to bring the child, as he looked to God, into an isolation which only he could perceive. It is as if a mysterious light from the background of his consciousness illuminated everything he experienced in such a way that he could perceive it only in himself, but in no wise communicate it. Perhaps the first fruit of this experience is that of Israel's answerability before God, which was laid upon the boy as a burden to bear even before he could interpret it as a personal mission.

(2) A second point, which is more difficult to demonstrate, must be added. One thing which we believe we must exclude for theological reasons is a discontinuity within Jesus' development regarding the mystery of his origin. It is impossible that he had to be "enlightened" as to the fact that Joseph was not his physical father. That Joseph was "reputed to be" (Lk 4:22) his father, that Mary, who was married to Joseph, called Joseph his father (Lk 4:22) was unavoidable and also lay in God's will itself; after all, Joseph was unavoidsable and also lay in God's Mary into his home as his wife (Mt 1:24). Yet there is also no need to suppose that the child's mother had to enlighten him about how he had been conceived; according to what we said above, the awareness that he was specially related to the God of Israel as his Father grew to maturity in him. What words Mary used to reinforce his consciousness of this relationship—of which she had a certain knowledge based on her overshadowing by the Holy Spirit, without therefore already possessing a theoretical understanding of the mystery of the Trinity—is best left to the secret of her discretion. Her own insight into the mystery of God,

and therefore also of the God-man, is delimited by two texts of Scripture. The first is the angel's promise that she will bear the "Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:32; besides there are also Simeon's words regarding the "salvation of Israel" and the "sign for the downfall and the rising of many in Israel" [Lk 2:30, 34]). The second is her and Joseph's incomprehension when the twelve year-old Jesus speaks of Yahweh as his Father (Lk 2:49f.).

(3) Jesus' first thirty years are undoubtedly a time of successive initiations into his identity and, in consequence, into his mission. It is not possible to trace individual stages in this period, but the sudden light which the episode of the twelve year-old Jesus casts on these initiations makes it obvious that decisive developments must have already taken place quite early on. These initiations follow simultaneously *a priori* from his growing interior light and *a posteriori* from his growing insight into the fact that the entire Old Covenant, its episodes and its prayers, its obedience and its ever repeated failure, was oriented to a future which was still waiting for him. The growing insight into his identity and mission contained two elements throughout. On the one hand, he had an intimate solidarity with Israel, to the point of recognizing that it already possessed a certain divine sonship which was to be fulfilled in his own (In 10:33-36). Indeed, he was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, in order to restore the dispersed and disfigured people of the twelve tribes (Mt 15:24). On the other hand, however, there was also the fulfillment of the promise once vouchsafed to Israel that (precisely in the Servant of God and Messiah) it would become "the light of the nations to the ends of the earth" (Is 49:6—something that the aged Simeon definitely recalls in Lk 2:32). Consequently, the Old Testament itself shows that the exegetes have got it all wrong when they try to attribute to Jesus at most a mission to save Israel, not the world as a whole. But both the more narrowly messianic and the universal-redemptive dimensions of his mission grow in common out of Jesus' ever deeper experiences of his child's relationship to the Father, which increases as he becomes a responsible adult and whose incomparable uniqueness will be revealed in his public life. This is a filiation for which human childhood is only a likeness, albeit an eloquent one. He, the adult, both lives its reality as an example for Israel and for his disciples, and opens it as a grace to those willing to follow him, while also making it a duty (Mk 10:15 par).

(4) Of course, the understanding of his mission—and in all likelihood the knowledge of its price: the destiny of

the servant of God (Is 53)—does not automatically put into Jesus' hands the decision to enter upon it. The Father reserves for himself the hour when it is to be revealed to the world. The Son waits upon the Father's sign that the hour has come. He recognizes this sign in the activity of the Baptist. It is to him that he directs his steps after leaving his paternal home and his mother. The first thing he does is have himself baptized as a sign of his solidarity with sinful and repentant Israel. On this occasion, the Spirit of his mission comes down upon him, analogously to the way in which he will come down upon the Church at Pentecost. In this Spirit, whom the Father sends down on him, he is able to accomplish in three years (or less) everything for which he had waited and prepared himself for thirty. This Spirit is given interiorly and remains there, bringing to him the Father's will in each situation. At the same time, however, the Spirit "hovers over him" (Mt 3:13 par; Jn 1:32). This is the economic form of the Trinity (for the duration of Jesus' life and death), which is not identical with the form of the immanent Trinity.

II. Jesus and children

When examining the passages in the Gospels which depict Jesus' special relationship to the "little ones," "the children," the "immature," we must never, in line with what has just been said, separate them from the demand for an adult determination to follow him. For in Jesus the two things are one: eternal procession from the Father, his being a child in relation to the Father (*processio*), and the whole resolute seriousness of his resultant mission (*missio*). From our human point of view, what the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius call "*electio*," that is, the choice of a definite way of life, state or profession, is what separates childhood and adulthood; here the unlimited openness of childhood to all possibilities passes over into the necessary, wise limitation to a single task which must be realized. In the case of Jesus, this moment is ultimately out-played by the unity of *processio* and *missio*, by the permanence of childlikeness within a perfect resoluteness about doing this and no other will of the Father. It is in light of this unity, which can emerge into view and acquire significance for every believer only against the trinitarian background of the gospel, that we are to interpret Jesus' statements about childhood.

Yet we must introduce into the discussion a further differentiation connected with the stages of human develop-

ment. There is a twofold "immaturity" first in the level of education. Whereas the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law despise the untutored (cf. Jn 9:34), Jesus takes them under his protection because they are more easily led astray, and he threatens their seducers with the severest punishments (Mk 9:42). Indeed, he sees in the circumstance of being untutored the infinite advantage (relative to "the clever and the wise") of a simple openness to the whole revelation of God, which surpasses the natural understanding of man (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21). There can, furthermore, be another, inculpable lack of instruction, such as Paul sees, for example, in the case of the "weak brother," whose weakness even in matters of faith the "strong" Christian (which Paul reckons himself to be [Rom 15:1]) absolutely must take into consideration: "See that your freedom does not become an occasion of scandal for the weak" (1 Cor 8:9; cf. Rom 14:1-4, 15:1-6).⁶

There is, however, a third immaturity: that of a more or less culpable retardation in the required developmental phases, which lead from a childhood needing milk to an adulthood requiring solid food (in matters of faith). The newly baptized may and should "like newborn babes crave the pure spiritual milk"; but in such a way "that by it you may grow up to salvation" (1 Pet 2:2). In a slightly reproachful tone Paul tells the Corinthians, "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it" (1 Cor 3:2). But the next sentence immediately intensifies the reproach: "and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh?" (1 Cor 3:2-3). This retardation is judged altogether negatively in the Letter to the Hebrews: "For everyone who [like a child] lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature" (Heb 5:13f.). Jesus does not employ this terminology, but his patience with his uncomprehending disciples is inexhaustible. Indeed, even though he exclaims with astonishment, "have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip?" (Jn 14:9), he knows that they cannot bear now the many things he still has to

⁶The inferior social refinement or position of the Corinthians could also be counted here (1 Cor 1:26ff.). The Apostle does not understand this inferiority as a personal advantage of believers, but rather as an occasion for God to reveal the superiority of his wisdom through the election of the "base and contemptible."

say to them (Jn 16:12), but must wait until the Spirit whom he will send leads them—made mature—into all truth.

Yet the distinctions made here, which contribute the aspect of mature resolution to the New Testament's praise of "smallness," "childlikeness," and "littleness," do not keep Jesus' words about childhood or his behavior toward children from retaining a significance which cannot be relativized. This applies not only to a certain spirit of childlikeness which does not depend on man's age, but even to childhood with its peculiarities as such. In this age, loving confidence (in those who take thought for the child's neediness) and unquestioning obedience are intertwined as in no later age of life. Therein lies an affinity to the eternal child of the Father, or, to say it in different terms, a proximity to heaven, which Jesus brings to expression in the following mysterious words: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 18:10). This explains the not merely moral, but theological, recommendation to the community to concern itself with the helpless child: whoever receives a child receives Jesus and, in him, the Father who sent him (Mk 9:37). And the lowliness of the child is, as such, an image which constantly reminds us of the descent from the adult age which constantly reminds us of the descent from the adult sovereignty of the grown-up into humble service: "He who is the greatest among you shall be your servant" (Mt 23:11). "Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:4). When Jesus blesses the children, when he embraces them, he corroborates the affinity—which he himself experiences and to which he expressly attests—between natural childhood and his eternal childhood in relation to the Father. The spontaneous attitude of both is to let another give them all that they are, and to have him to thank for their very existence. Jesus must lead the grown-ups and the mature back to this naive spontaneity, without exempting them of their burdensome responsibility. Yet what they carry has to be the right burden. It cannot be "anxious [worry] about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on" (Mt 6:25); here we may be children: "for the Gentiles seek these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (Mt 6:28ff.). The right responsibility lies elsewhere—"seek first the kingdom of God" (Mt 6:31); such is the lesson of the ordering of the Our Father, the children's prayer. Our age, which is thick with adulthood and maturity, no longer understands this; futurology is the first and most necessary of

the sciences, or else there is political theology, which identifies the kingdom of God with worry about what the poor are going to eat, drink and clothe themselves with. In the end, such a theology has lost the sense of childlikeness, however many plausible reasons it may claim for its scale of values.

III. *The Logos as child*

We find it difficult to read Jesus' scale of values in theological, that is to say, trinitarian, terms. "In the beginning was the logos," the meaning, the expression, the divine word, the wisdom which is poured out over all the realities of this world and imparted to them (Wis 7-8). What is childlike about this primordial idea of the universe? No one can guess it by himself, which explains why in all cultures outside Christianity the child too has only a temporary significance as a preliminary step towards the mature man. It takes the Incarnation to show us that being born has not just an anthropological, but also a theological, eternal significance, and that to be *from* the generative, birth-giving womb of another is the ultimate, unsurpassable beatitude. The "meaning-logos" that is "with God" is the product of a love which is prior to anything else we can think and which is always wanting to give itself away; it is the fullness which owes its origin to an infinite emptying of the paternal womb. And because such is the nature of this fullness, it will not find it hard, being docile to the Father's work, to empty itself in turn into the world, in order thereby to show forth the fullness of the love of God and to fill all in all with this fullness (Eph 1:23).

Consequently, the whole event of the gospel retains something childlike even to the last cry uttered on the Cross by the Father's abandoned child: "why?" A child's question—and here God's wisdom is a questioning child who at the moment cannot receive an answer. The childlike element of Christianity lies in the fact that God's child wants to reveal not himself as God, but only the goodness, the greatness and the majesty of the Father, just as children customarily boast of their fathers. "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." He then boldly risks an invitation: "if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God, or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (Jn 7:16-17). The child boasts of his Father: "The Father is greater than I" (Jn 14:28). Indeed, the child has received from the Father the power to introduce others into his own birth from the Father (Jn 1:13; 3:5-8), and to help them leave

behind false adulthood join him in becoming childlike again. It is no empty metaphor, but the inmost reality of Christianity, that we have received the Spirit of filiation who enables us to cry: "Abba, Father! This Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15f.). Such a mystery places us beyond the antithesis between play and seriousness. Nothing is more serious and more demanding of responsibility for God than the creation of the world, but his wisdom, who stands at his side, takes the whole business as a game: "When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a favorite child, and I was daily his delight and played before him always, playing over the face of the earth, and my delight was in the sons of men" (Prov 8:29ff.). A game which leads to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, yet does not cease to be play and delight. And we, the other children, are invited to play along in this very game.*—Translated by Adrian Walker □

The new covenant: A theology of covenant in the New Testament

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

When it is said of man that he is the image of God, it indicates that he is the being designed for being-in-relation.

I. Testament or covenant? From analysis of the word to the formulation of the question

We call the slender book which constitutes the foundation of Christian faith the "New Testament." This book, however, refers at the same time to another, which we simply call "Scripture," or "the Scriptures," meaning the Bible, which has grown throughout the history of the Jewish people until the coming of Christ, and which Christians call the "Old Testament." The whole of Scripture, on which the Christian faith rests, thus appears as a two-tiered testament addressed by God to man, a proclamation of his will to the world. The word "testament" was not attached extrinsically to the Scriptures, but rather drawn from within them: the title given by Christians to the two books does not merely intend to describe their essential meaning in retrospect, but rather to bring to light the interior thread of Scripture itself and to identify the basic word which provides the key to the whole. With this word, which arises from its very source, we are attempting somehow to sum up conclusively the "essence of Christianity."

But is the Latin word *testamentum* correctly chosen? Does it indeed translate the underlying words of the Hebrew and Greek texts, or does it lead us on a false track? The problematic of the translation becomes clear when we contrast the

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