# Salvation: The pedagogy of affect

NGTT DEEL 55, SUPPLEMENTUM 1, 2014

**Ward, Graham**
Oxford University

## ABSTRACT

Taking the model of salvation from the Latin *salus,* this essay explores the emotional physiology of grace. Drawing upon contemporary work on emotion by affect theorists, cognitive- and neuro-scientists, the essay proceeds through a detailed analysis of the paradigmatic accounts of salvation and its effects in the Annunciation and *Magnificat* scenes from the Gospel of Luke. It concludes that salvation is a deep emotional concern and that, while there is no emotion that can be described as non-Christian, there are certain affects that are divine before they are human.

**KEYWORDS**
*Affect, annunciation, emotion, healing, magnificat, salvation.*

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Professor Graham Ward
University of Oxford
graham.ward@theology.ox.ac.uk

Let me explore how Christians are redeemed, taking a cue from the Latin word for salvation, *salus,* which is health or, more fashionably, well-being. A caveat to this exploration: the Christian tradition holds that we are saved by and through and in Christ. The redemptive work is His. It is a labour of God by God. We enter into the effects of that labour through Him, that is by grace. There is, then, a theological quest for understanding the "how" of redemption that has focussed on various doctrines of the atonement. I am not gainsaying that divine labour in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ in what follows. And the New Testament provides a number of models for that redemption – like sacrifice (which is associated with Christ as the Passover lamb), like justification (a legal metaphor in which Christ pleads for us before in the courts of heaven, justifying us by his innocence which we participate in by faith), like expiation (where our guilt is laid on Him, and he takes also the punishment that should follow from such guilt and bears it away), or propitiation (where the anger of God at our sin is changed through Christ being prepared to die for us and we are restored to fellowship and a right relation to the divine), or the purchase of a slave's freedom. In the exploration that follows I am not denying that some intratrinitarian exchange took place on and through the Cross whereby we are atoned – though the nature of that transaction is hidden from us because we just do not know what took place between God the Father and God the Son on that Thursday or Friday and in that tomb. Between the two historical events is a great silence; the silence of the Word itself, what Church Fathers like Cyril of Jerusalem calls the "great Sabbath" on Holy Saturday. Neither, in the exploration that follows, am I denying the work of the Spirit in leading us into the truth of that redemption; the work of the Spirit operating within lives submitted to Christ, a life lived now in and through that new relation forged by Christ in God. In fact, my exploration can be viewed as more of an enquiry into the material operation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.

So what am I doing then? There are two models describing salvation that I have not listed. The first is of washing and cleansing. This differs from the others insofar as the operation of salvation is inextricably linked to an actual physical use of water by other human beings. I will not be following through this model of salvation in what follows. I will be concentrating on the second model: healing. Though this model too cannot be disassociated from what physically, corporeally, takes place in the human beings concerned. On the edge of tautology, salvation concerns being saved. And so, since one of the roots of the need for our salvation is sin, guilt, and law breaking such that the relationship with God is severed, I will need to consider the nature of sin. But salvation in the Hebrew Bible is not always directly associated with law breaking. Hannah's song on her prayer being answered for a child speaks of being


2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

saved (1 Sam 2:1). She is saved from the shame of being barren; from the taunts of other people, from their boasting and arrogance which deepened her shame. And shame, as those who have explored the operation of affect (from Silvan Tomkins, 1993, to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 2003) is profoundly somatic and emotional. Even if it is characterised as a second-order emotion; that is, an emotion evaluated in a specific context and a reaction to a more primary appraisal like anger. Shame also happens to be one of the first effects of sin, as presented in that aetiology of human sinfulness in the story of the Fall.

Salvation is also associated, particularly in the New Testament, with fear because fear is viewed as bondage. There is fear of one's enemies; the fear of not being able to speak openly (because of the Jews in John's Gospel); fear of certain destabilizing circumstances (like the woman at the tomb in the shorter ending of Mark's Gospel and the "fearful sights" spoken of in Luke 21:11). In both the Gospel of Mark (4:40) and the Gospel of Matthew (8:26) Jesus pointedly asked the disciples "Why are you so fearful?" and the *Letter to the Hebrews* (2:15) speaks more existentially of deliverance for those "who, through fear of death, had all their lifetime been in servitude." There is also a string of references to fear of God and fear of the Lord and another line that goes back to what is thought to be a formulaic Hebrew response to encountering a stranger: "Fear not." Fear is usually listed as one of the primary emotions, with autonomic affect prior to evaluation. It is also the most thoroughly researched emotions neurologically, its registration and control centring on the amygdala and the limbic sphere of the brain (LeDoux 1998:138-178). Fear has strong somatic effects like freezing or running. It too finds its place in the aetiology of sin. In fact, it is the first effect of sin (prior to shame) when Adam encounters God in Eden having eaten of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Feelings have three physiological components: they impact upon behaviour, the autonomic systems of the body and hormonal balances. With respect to behaviour, both affect theorists and neuroscientists have pointed out, that emotions are fundamentally "social" – they are important responses to our environment and social practices – but both fear and shame are negative with respect to others: they affect withdrawals, disjunctions in relation, even (viewed politically) disenfranchisement. I am using the word "feeling" as an inclusive term covering both emotion and affect. Some have tried to tightly define a difference between emotion and affect in terms of degree of judgement. So affect is more inchoate and primordial and emotion more a consideration of affect, and interpretation of affect. I am using feeling to mark an ambivalence that adheres to the categorisation of "this is an affect" and "this is an emotion". To take up Sianne Ngai, in her book *Ugly Feelings,* "the difference between affect and emotion is… a modal difference of intensity or degree, rather than a

formal difference of quality or kind … [A]ffects are less formed and structured than emotions, but not lacking form or structure altogether; less "sociologically fixed," but by no means code-free or meaningless; *less* "organized in response to our interpretations of situation," but by no mean entirely devoid of organization or diagnostic power" (Ngai 2005:27). Feeling is a cover term for a continuum that pertains to affect and emotion. All are somatic, psychologically determining and determined and experienced individually and collectively. Shame and fear as experienced slough-off the hierarchical fixity of second and first order appraisal. Both, as negative affects (along with many others from anger, envy, jealousy and anxiety to sadness and disgust) shrink our involvement with the world that is as corporeal (head looking down in shame and paralysis in fear) as it is visceral and psychologically self-absorbing. We are inhibited – and this is the source of the bondage related to shame and fear. The bondage is as much social and political as individual. At this point all I wish to show is the intimate association between negative affect and sin; that sin effects us not simply morally – it effects all our relations to the world, ourselves, our bodies, our cultures, our politics and socialities. Which is maybe why Paul, in talking about a world in bondage to sin, a world groaning for its *salus,* writes of one of our fundamental human desires: "the redemption of the body" (Rom 8:23). He writes this having already used this word "body" in relation to both sin (6:6) and to death (7:24) and in association with deliverance through the body of Christ (7:4). We will say more about this in a moment.

Recently, attention has been drawn to the way feelings cannot be separated from cognition; thought is affect laden and affect-effected (Damasio's work in neuroscience and McGilchrist's work on the left and right hemisphere operations of the brain and the cultures expressed by that lateralisation, for example; see Damasio 1994 & McGilchrist 2009). Emotion is not then non-cognitive. Cognition, because it is always embodied, is emotionally charged. Emotion is also relational – in fact the basis for the formation of emotional communities (like a church). It is not subjective; our emotionally experience is context dependent and highly responsive/adaptive. In religious experience, these relations aspects include objects – symbolic objects like a crucifix or an icon, quasi-symbolic objects like a chalice or a pulpit or more material objects like pew-seat or an order of service. I have used examples from a Christian liturgical setting because the objects are not static. To be involved in the production of religious emotion they circulate within relational and ritualised practices. Emotion like shame or fear cannot occur in a vacuum. Though experienced subjectively the feelings cannot occur outside of encountering others (whether those others are human, animal, inanimate objects whose taste and texture disgusts us, or, in the case of the Scriptures, angelic or divine). In this sense, as I noted above, feelings are

 2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

"social". In being social they are therefore also political, moral and cultural. Books have been written recently that document the development and institutionalisation of cultures of shame (Andrew P Morrison 1989, for example) and cultures of fear (Frank Furedi 2002, and Barry Glassner 1999, for example).

Negative affect, as I said, impacts the totality of our human condition. There may be positive aspects of fear (as "fear of God" is viewed positively in the Bible) or anger (as "righteous anger" is recognised in the Bible), but, on the whole, negative feelings act to diminish us and diminish our capacity for positive emotions and positive affect (like wonder, happiness and tranquillity). I am relating the operation of redemption, the work of salvation as salus, with emotional regimes that transform our sensory and cognitive responses to the world. In the Book of Ezekiel (36:26-27), we are told: "A new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them." This is the great promise of God's redemption. The spirit is *ruach* – breath, life – and it animates the heart in ways that lead from feelings and thoughts to acts: walking in God's statutes, keeping God's judgements. The promise here is the acknowledgement of a divine desire understood in Psalm 51.5: "thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." But even in this acknowledgement there lies recognition that what God desires so God will perform: "thou shalt make me to know." How are we made to know? And how are we given a new heart of flesh? It is not, I contend, by divine fiat; rather it is by a divine working within, inaugurated through discipleship and that effects a transformation or even transubstantiation of the heart of stone through both divine and human action. Negative affect that is implicated in the nature and operations of sin, in other words, creates the heart of stone in its diminishment and the withdrawal it affects. Positive affect, on the other hand, works to create a heart of flesh – this is the redemption of the body Paul alludes to.

It is interesting and significant that the announcement by the angel to Mary, "Hail, o favoured one, the Lord is with you [*chaire, kecharitōmenē, o Kurios meta sou*]" (Lk 1:28) begins with the basic positive affect of joy and the proclamation that grace has come: the verbal mood of *chaire* ("be ye joyful") is present, active and continuous. It is not just an exhortation and command, but a performative utterance in the sense JL Austin described in the opening pages of *How to Do Things with Words:* "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing (a thing) … or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (Austin 1975:6). And Mary is defined as *kecharitōmenē*, a perfect passive form of the verb *charidzomai* which is "to favour" but is also the verb correlating with the noun "grace" (*charis*):

"the one who has been given grace, or given the gift (of God) freely". If we have so far concerned ourselves most with negative affect and two of the most basic forms of human emotion, shame and fear, then here is the announcement that the offer of grace comes with the highly emotional condition of joy. The neuroscientist, Paul Ekman, in his list of Big Six emotions (see Ekman 2003) terms this "enjoyment". But his account is more of "happiness" because it misses something of the exuberance, ecstasy and self-transcendence that can be found in other accounts of the basic human emotions, from Descartes and Spinozoa, to Silvan Tomkins and Antonio Damasio. The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmilhalyi identifies this with being in the "flow", and although he relates this to "happiness" his own account differs from Ekman's insofar as it is a transformative state related to freedom (Csikszentmilhalyi 1998). Enjoyment as happiness in Ekman's sense lacks the ecstasy of joy. Spinoza recognised joy (*laetitia* – elation) as a transition in the organism towards a greater state of perfection (see Spinoza 1994:311). Joy, like all affects, is both emotional and corporeal; it has physiological effects – visceral, nervous, endocrine, and muscular. We might then, after the theologian Catherine Keller (2003:81-2), speak of this joy as "carnal grace". Keller views such an understanding of grace as uniquely (among the Church Fathers) Augustine's. Jean-François Lyotard's own reading of Augustine's *Confessions* expands this notion in a manner consonant with the processes of sanctification sketched here: "grace does not demand a humiliated, mortified body; rather, it increases the faculties of the flesh beyond their limits, and without end. The ability to feel and to take pleasure unencumbered, pushed to an unknown power – this is saintly joy" (Lyotard 2000:12).

But, despite this production of the positive and transformative affect of grace, the reception is fundamental. And a hiatus is evident in the Greek, focussing upon the conjunction de ("but on the other hand"): "But at this word she was greatly troubled [*ē de epi tō logō dietarachthē*]" (Lk 1:29). Mary's immediate, gut-response is agitation and confusion, *dietarachthē*. The verb is a compound of the conjunction *dia* ("through") and *tarassō* (to be agitated and disturbed). The conjunction amplifies the emotional effect: she was totally confounded. But *tarassō* is also related to a family of words around the verb tarbeō ("to be afraid", "to be alarmed"), such as *tarbaleos* ("frightened") and *tarbos* ("fright"). The angel immediately recognises this because he begins the salutation a second time with another present, active, continuous imperative: "Fear not [mē phobon], Mary". The Greek verb is the etymological origin of our own "phobia" and it perhaps better translated "don't be terrified." The formula "Fear not" is Jewish and frequently associated with theophanies; it is used 75 times in the Hebrew bible. As has been noted by one New Testament scholar, "Luke shows a certain liking for the OT-Jewish formula "to fear God" (see Balz 1985:1276).


2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

The addition of her name is to further reassure this young woman. The surprise of the angel's visitation is registered immediately as terror. It awakens the deepest of our negative affects; an affect of terror that silences and freezes its recipient. But, in the Greek, the sounding of the external word (*logos*) in 1:28 is then internalised by Mary in terms of how she then "considered in her mind [*dielogizeto*] what sort of greeting this should be" (1:29). Once more a compound verb is employed using the conjunction *dia* – this also suggests emotional and cognitive movement – and *logizomai* ("to reason, reflect, judge"), the result is *dialogizomai* which bears the notion of "to examine together" because *dialogos* is "conversation". The sense that the "conversation" here is internal to Mary but suggestive of a dialogue between the Word and Mary's reasoning is, perhaps, pushing the Greek too far. But that's what I like to do, and it is what the suggestiveness of the language is doing in its careful employment and placing of words. Such an interpretation does fit, because what begins as a strict divide between the affects of joy and terror, grace and its reception, all focussed on the grammatical barrier of *de* ("but on the other hand"), is overcome. Grace is received, the Word is entertained by Mary, and, following the angel's prophesy of the incarnation which is to come, she is able to speak to this uncanny visitor – asking bluntly about the technicalities and finally acquiescing: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). The terrifying surprise by joy has transformed the primal stirring of human fear into a new disposition. And this is not just the lowliness of a new social standing with respect to God, "handmaiden" [*doulē* – female servant]. That "let it be to me [*genoito moi*]" evokes all the connotations of a new genesis, the creation of a new receptivity and the birthing of a new state of being. To recognise the suggestiveness of this statement we have to go back to the use of the verb *ginomai* in Genesis 1:3 when God created all things out of nothing. The Septuagint translates God's "Let there be" as *genēthētō* – this is the third person singular aorist imperative of *ginomai,* and the aorist marks a unique action that takes place at a certain time. Mary's *genoito* is the third person singular aorist optative of *ginomai.* The close association of the words is as important as the difference: only God can say "Let there be" and it is; human beings can only reiterate God's *fiat* as a wish, a hope, an act of faith (hence the optative mood). Nevertheless, it is as if, in the space of Mary's womb - the space that has been opened within her for the reception of God's gift - there is about to be another *creatio ex nihilo.*

If the annunciation scene offers an example of God's in-breaking surprise, its affective transformativity, and the cultivation of a humble disposition, then, before her cousin Elizabeth, Mary's *Magnificat* offers us an example of the surprise that comes from an inner recognition and revelation. The surprise is proclaimed magnificently in Mary's

response to the angel's declaration. At first she expresses her affective state – "My soul doth magnify the Lord [*megalunei hē psuchē ton Kurion*]; and my spirit hath rejoiced [*kai hēgalliasev to pneuma mou*] in God my Saviour" – then comes the expression of Tomkins' interruptive and "resetting" surprise – "for he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaid [tapeinōsin tēs doulēs autou]" – and finally there is a realisation of consequences that follow from this surprise, beginning with "Behold [*idou*] from henceforth …" But to whom does she address this second person singular "behold" or "see" or even "know"? The scene takes place on her visitation to Elizabeth, but there is a sense in which, in her surprise, she is addressing herself, what is going on in and through her soul and spirit; she is also addressing the Church-to-come. Mary is astonished at the words being spoken by her, through her. The whole song is an ecstatic rejoicing. The word of joy spoken to her in the Annunciation swells within her body, stretching her outwards in what Paul describes as "our hope of sharing in the glory of God" (Rom 5:2). Hope is a significant word here, and I shall return to this.

The Greek vocabulary and syntax is important because it emphasises the affective. Note the way the verb comes before the subject is named in "My soul doth magnify the Lord [*megalunei hē psuchē ton Kurion*]". It is the Lord who is being exalted or made great. A height and a distance between the soul and the Lord are announced, and yet the soul is right there in the middle of the phrasing. This suggests that in enlarging the space within which the Lord is conceived the soul itself is enlarged. This enlargement is an actual physical affect of the emotion felt; for when the soul is humiliated then the muscle tone tenses and there is an inner physiological shrivelling. The heart becomes a rock. Shame, as Tomkins points out (1995:134), is an inhibitor of interest and enjoyment. As an affect it contracts one's experience of the world. Contrary to this, positive affects expand one's experience of the world. And this expansion is concomitant with our increasing sense of freedom and liberation from constraint; and muscles tone is relaxed. The heart becomes flesh. This is exactly what we witness with Mary's *Magnificat*. There is a new freedom experienced by the soul, which exalts in receiving/perceiving the glory of the Lord. A similar rhetorical effect is observable in the second part of that ejaculation: "and my spirit hath rejoiced [*kai hēgalliasen to pneuma mou*]". The separation here of the verb from the identification of the subject, the spirit, emphasises the emotion; and the emotion is, once more, dynamic in opening up a new felt spatiality, for the verb *hēgalliasen* is the aorist of *agalliaō* which is to greatly rejoice, even shout out and it is closely related to the verb *agallō* to exalt, to lift high. The shift in the sentence from soul to spirit is also interesting and may reflect that which is deeper or deepest within the soul receiving God's grace. Luke is particular in defining the Spirit of God as Holy, but


2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

throughout the Gospel and in Acts the Spirit of God inspires people, it breathes within their breathing and takes that breathing and the utterance that arises from it to another level; a level that is disclosive and revelatory. Speech, and Mary's speech in particular, is a somatic event, resonating the affectivity of the event of reception throughout the body.

Now this rhetorical separation of the verb from the identification of its subject is far from unusual in Greek syntax. And I would not wish to claim any poetic originality in composition. Nevertheless, a common syntax is used for rhetorical effect and emphasis.

Finally, all the spatial emphasis upon opening horizons, establishing distance in height is reinforced by the sense of Mary's own personhood: her lowliness (*tapeinōsin*) and her status as servant, slave or servile (*doulos*). The noun *tapeinos* returns to where we began, with shame and its effects and the way sanctification reverses the effects and affects of shame. For the word does mean insignificant and poor and as such is just a term descriptive of class and social status. It is also a moral term: "humble" as the counter-effect to Adamic pride. It names the new disposition received in recognising and confessing the greatness of God's glory. But it can also mean "humiliation". In which case we have here an understanding that salvation begins with God's regard to human shame; the incarnation promises redemption from the affects of humiliation but through humiliation. And these were real affects for Mary, who was found pregnant as a betrothed virgin.

Between the in-breaking surprise of the Annunciation and the inner-revelation surprise of the *Magnificat* a process of sanctification is made visible: the external is internalised; the receptive response to the external announcement, in faith, has deepened within developing a capacity for further announcements issuing from within. What is evident is a participation in the operations of God's grace; a letting-go that enables a letting-be (genoito) – with all the resonances of new creation ringing in its wake. What is evident in both these narratives – the Annunciation and the Visitation is that the hallmark of grace is surprise. And surprise is one of the Big Six basic emotions, only one of two (the other being enjoyment) positive affects. If, like von Balthasar echoing a long line of Catholic teaching on Mary, we recognise in Mary's response the response of the Church yet to be (see von Balthasar 1991:161), then the process of sanctification in her is the process of sanctification that is intrinsic to discipleship itself.

Discipleship inaugurates then a pedagogy of affect; an operation upon the emotions which is, in turn, an operation upon the senses – how we sense, what we sense and how we process and evaluate the ways in which the world impacts on us and we

impact on the world. There's a rhythmic oscillation here that takes place is specific practices. As Susan Ashbrook Harvey has pointed out in her wonderful exploration of the sense of smell in early Christianity: "Liturgy, like ascetic practice, was a means by which the body was reformed and remade. The sense no less than bodily desires were disciplined and refashioned in the process of the liturgy's movement and over the course of the liturgical cycle" (Harvey 2006:5). Sensing is not passive, in other words, and this has been known since the mid 1960s and the pioneering work of the environmental psychologist James J. Gibson. In his book, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (1966) he demonstrates the aggressive, searching mechanisms of our sensing. The pedagogy of affect works then through a more primary pedagogy of the senses. This pedagogical work is traditionally understood by the Church Fathers in terms of sanctification or formation through the development of the spiritual senses. It is a work that embeds any teaching about the atonement in the practices of everyday life. Justification deals with the issue at a Christological level, but the level at which is affects us is the anthropological, the existential, the ensouled body.

To Church Fathers from Clement of Rome to Gregory of Nyssa, there is a translation of the Greek understanding of *paideia* into a Christian understanding of redemption. Clement will speak of the "paideia of Christ" or the *paideia tou kyriou. Paideia* concerned a cultivation that was simultaneously aesthetic, moral and political. It was an education, but not simply by instruction. Clement extolls God and the Christ "through whom you have educated and sanctified and honoured us" (see Hodgson 1999:21). The honouring concerns a raising up, an *anagoge,* from sick and damaged human living to participation in the divinity of the Godhead. As such education and sanctification are tied into a doctrine of divine providence. It might often seem this was purely an intellectual matter – a "renewing of the mind" as Paul would put it. But the soul is not to be separated from the body. It informs the body and the body informs the soul. There is a translation from the physiology of the senses to a spiritual sensing and back again. The Cappadocians like Basil and Gregory bring to their own examinations of this material and spiritual operation an understanding of fourth century medicine. The *paideia* is a process of healing with Christ as the physician and the Spirit is his recuperative *dunamis.* A *morphosis,* one of Gregory's favourite words, of sensing generates a *morphosis* of emotions, *pathos,* which in turn generates both a *morphosis* of the mind and behaviour. The human subject opens himself or herself up to this healing through contemplation of God or theoria, and what is meditated upon is the Bible. The search for the pneumatic meaning of Scripture, that which inspired the writing of the Scriptures and continues to breath in and through the church in its reading of them, is a submission of the whole body to a divine movement. And this submission was not necessarily in the privacy of a

 2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

study. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of Christians needing to come together to read the Scriptures and hear an exposition of them. In this way the contemplation is enfolded with the liturgy. This reading and healing is an ecclesial praxis. The body discovers the immanence of the divine within itself that it might transcend the physical not by leaving it behind but by orientating it to the one who is above and in all things. Athanasius explains that human beings were made as sentient creatures that they might "turn their senses" to Christ (see Athanasius 1971:173). This is then that pedagogy of affect that I spoke of earlier, and all notions of repentance, *metanoia*. It dictates a number of key terms explored by Augustine, such as *creatio, formatio, conversio* and *imitatio*. It affects our wellbeing, our *salus* – turning negative affect into positive, joy oriented, and peace oriented, worship.

At this point an important theological question arises about the one's experience of the world and salvation. If, as I am advocating, we can understand salvation as the move towards a life expressive of positive rather than negative affect; of sin as engendering a bondage to negative affect, a bondage that damages and a damage that is passed on in endless cycles of sinning and being sinned against, from which redemption delivers us; then, am I also advocating a lifestyle of enduring "happy-clappy" charismatic effervescence? In other words, are Christians, even in the process of being formed by positive affect, still not subject to suffering? And the answer must be, because anything else would be counter-factual to Christian experience, yes – Christians still do suffer. The life of unending doxology is an eschatological life. That is the goal towards which sanctification proceeds, but the pedagogy of affect still works with that groaning of all creation and that yearning for the redemption of the body. Suffering remains, because the emotional damage of sin remains. While Christians are in the process of being released from the dominion of sin's bondage, that bondage is practiced and recycled: by both Christians who are "on the way" and those who are floundering without God. But we need to make one terse but final comment about the suffering that perdures with respect to the pedagogy of affect. And that is, the continuing impact of negative affect and the inner shrinking of the heart, its petrification, cannot have the final word. Otherwise salvation is of no effect. It would take more space than I have at present to explore theologically and psycho-biologically the claim I am about to make, but I would argue that there are certain affirmative emotions (like joy, peace, love, forgiveness, mercy, for example) which are more primordial than any experienced affect negative (fear) or positive (happiness) by the Christian. There can be both a suffering and a deeper sense of peace, for example, in a Christian's experience. The reason for this is that these primordial positive affects are divine before they are human. These are, if you will, Trinitarian "affects"; "affects" circulating within the nature of the

Godhead in which, en Christo, Christians participate. If "affects" here, with the impassibility of God, are within inverted commas, that is because we know them only by analogy. They are in themselves ineffable and we only have intimation of what "joy", "peace", "love" etc. mean with respect to the divine. I take this situation as parallel to what Philip Melanchthon describes when he states in *Loci communes:* "Since these affections are not in our power, there can be no understanding of what trust, fear, or the love of God is except in a very spiritual sense" (see Melanchton 1969:52). I employ the term "analogy" to convey that "spiritual sense". There is then the continuing play of negative affect in the lives of Christians as they undergo the paideia of these affections throughout an unceasing sanctification. This does not "undo" the operation of positive affect that is grounded in the work of the Spirit. Theologically, both of these labourings have to work within an examination of the doctrine of Providence, given Scriptural warrant in Paul's statement that all things work together for the love of God.

Now let me add an important addendum that I will organise according to three points. First point: my analysis of the affects of "salvation" must not be construed as the endorsement of a "happy-clappy" Christianity. The shift from negative affect to positive does not do away with grief, suffering and pain. It does not do away with what the mystics identified as "dark nights of the soul". It does not understand boredom or "feeling flat" or apathetic as unchristian emotions. As two sociologists of religion have written, and my own experience of attendance at Morning Prayer testifies: "a monk saying the offices every day is unlikely to be overcome with emotion each time. But such regular practice may nevertheless have a significant effect in shaping the structure of feeling and laying down affective dispositions" (Riis & Woodhead 2010:76).

Second point: there are no unchristian emotions as such, just as religion does not find its essential and defining emotion in experiencing "the numinous" (Otto), or "effervescence" (Durkheim) or the "charismatic" (Weber). Philip Melanchthon, in his *Loci communes* (one of the most dramatic calls for Christians to embark upon what some sociologists have called an "emotional regime"), makes a distinction between "fear" and "holy fear". A feeling becomes Christian because of the context in which it is experienced, the liturgical and disciplinary practices, the theological meanings and the way they have shaped understandings of divine operations, and its orientation towards *salus*. Look at the way eros is figured for the Christian religion by theologians like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, and, as I have said, the Bible is full of emotional, negative affect language with respect to God – His jealousy, His hatred, His anger, etc.

 2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

Thirdly: the orientation of *salus* is participation in the Godhead. For the Christian living en Christo positive affect can co-exist with negative affect: there can be pain but hope, there can be suffering but peace, there can be grief yet joy. Understood theologically, this co-existence of negative and positive affect does not create cognitive or emotional dissonance. It can be explained by recognizing that positive affect is fundamentally that which is enjoyed by God Himself, God intratrinitarian communion with Godself. In Christ, in that participation vouchsafed by the work of salvation, we engage with levels of affect that are divine; even when experience levels of negative affect that issues from our human situations. Put most simply, Mary's joy and surprise, registered in the *Magnificat,* is an entering into God's own delight in Christ and our redemption. We might call such experiences transcendent or transcending affects. They assist in identifying and clarifying the presence of the divine with respect to the quotidian. They incarnate and embody structures of sensibility. They can affect us because the desire for redemption, the redemption of the body, is written deep within our fragile corporeality.

There is a rather unusual clause in *Acts of the Apostles* and it is found within the speech Paul makes to the Athenians with respect to their shrine for an unknown God. Prior to the famous quotation from the poet Lucan, Paul speaks about God creating from one human being every nation of human beings in such a way "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find" (Acts 17:27). Now I am not concerned here with entering the field of subtle debates around Pauline teaching in the authentic letters and the presentation of Paul in *Acts of the Apostles.* And so I am not concerned with whether this phrase fits with Pauline theology found in those letters. I am interested in the use of one word, one verb. That Christians should seek God is written into the presentation of Christ as the repristination in perfect form of the primordial Adam, based on human beings having been made in the image and likeness of God. That Christians hope in and through such seeking to find God is a familiar understanding of the work of faith as Christ Himself describes it. But the verb "to feel after" God is unusual and opens a level of enquiry into the relationship between the body and its affective life and a theology of experience that I am pursuing throughout this study. The Greek verb is *psēlaphaō* which means "to grope one's way" and hence the translation in the RSV "to feel after".

Furthermore, these experiences of transcending or transcend affect play a fundamental role in the orientation or pedagogy of affect I have been sketching: they are intimations of the telos of sanctification and as such they point towards the integration of the polyphony of our emotion lives, individually and corporately. They also establish affective benchmarks for that integration which has wider social and political effects; for they offer models of *communio* and therefore societas in

which church life situates itself with respect to civic life and other forms of corporate activity (one's place of work) more generally.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Austin, JL 1975. *How To Do Things With Words.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Athanasius 1971. *Contra Gentes & De Incarnatione (Oxford Early Christian Texts).* Ed.: Thomson, RW. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balz, H 1985. The Fear of God in Formulas, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* Kittel, G & Friedrich, K (eds), translated by Bromiley GW. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Csikszentmilhalyi, M 1998. *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement With Everyday Life.* New York: Basic Books.

Damasio, A 1994. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain.* New York: Harper Collins.

Ekman, P 2003. *Emotions Revealed: Understanding Faces and Feelings.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Furedi, F 2002. *Culture of Fear Revisited: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* London: Continuum.

Gibson, JJ 1966. *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems.* Westport: Greenwood Press.

Glassner, B 1999. *Culture of Fear.* New York: Basic Books.

Harvey, SA 2006. *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hodgson, PC 1999. *God's Wisdom: Towards a Theology of Education.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Keller, C 2003. *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming.* London: Routledge.

Ledoux, J 1998. *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Lyotard, J 2000. *The Confession of Augustine.* Translated by Beardsworth, R. Stanford: Stanford University Press.


2014 © PIETER DE WAAL NEETHLING TRUST

McGilchrist, I 2009. *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Melanchthon, P 1969. *Loci Communes Theologici* (1521), in: Melanchthon and Bucer, translated by Satre, LJ, edited by Pauck W. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Morrison, AP 1989. *Shame: The Underside of Narcissism.* London: Routledge.

Ngai, S 2005. *Ugly Feelings.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Riis, O & Woodhead, L 2010. *A Sociology of Religious Emotion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sedgwick, EK 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press

Spinoza, B 1994. *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works.* Translated by Curley, E. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tomkins, S 1995. *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader.* Edited by Sedgwick, K & Frank, A. Durham: Duke University Press

Von Balthasar, HU 1991. Who is the Church? in *Explorations in Theology II: Spouse of the Word.* Translated by Littedale, AV & Dru, A. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.