

A New Reading of the Story of Atonement in dialogue with Julia Kristeva's Maternal Semiology of the Abject/the M-other

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"A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.'(Luke 23: 27-28)

Introduction: "Pieta!"

"Pieta," a Korean film awarded with the Golden Lion at the 2012 Venice Film Festival, shockingly accuses the contemporary Korean society of the secret power of lawlessness caused by mammonism. Jeff Shannon calls "Pieta" a bone-breaking, gut-wrenching Korean drama.(Seattle Times) It is the story of a young man Kang-do and a middle age woman Mi-sun. Kang-do was abandoned by his mother right after his birth. He grew up to become a loan shark's money collector, a man of abject cruelty, devoid of emotion. He routinely tortures and disables destitute debtors to collect their insurance payouts. One day Mi-sun, whose hard-working son committed suicide because of Kang-do's threat, encounters Kang-do. While endlessly tears flowing down all over her face, Mi-sun claims herself to be Kang-do's long-lost mother. After his initial shocking responses with violence, he eventually believes her. For the first time in his life Kang-do feels loved.

The film ends up with a devastating tragedy. Mi-sun throws herself from a building to die in the sight of Kang-do. Finally realizing that Mi-sun attempted her revenge for the dead son, Kang-do executes his own death-sentence by tying himself unto the bottom of his former victim's vehicle. In the last scene of "Pieta" the blood flowing from the victimizing victim of capitalism draws a crimson line on the road. Jeannette Catsoulis' review of "Pieta" in the New York Times is one of the most perceptive understandings of the deeply unnerving revenge movie. She writes, "Vanquished by the woman's gentle presence and sorrowful gaze, he begins to lose his stomach for the job; for the first time, he feels vulnerable."(NYT, May 16, 2013) Despite its passing religious allusions and "redemption is dangled like a cat toy before a cougar" in it, it is most intriguing that "Pieta" is filled with feisty women such as the various victims' wife and mothers and cowering men.

As a seminary drop-out, Kim Ki-duk the director of the film chose its title as the image of the Virgin Mary embracing the dead body of Jesus. Besides that, from time to time the neon cross of a run-down Bible school outside of Kang-do's room keeps reminding us of the vain presence,

therefore, actual absence of God. It must have something to do with his implicit indictment of impotent hypocrisy of the Korean Church in the heartless situation of capitalism. What would be a theological response to it? I am going to deal with one of the Gospel texts which have been the background of the popular imagery of the middle age Catholicism, namely, Pieta. It is Luke 23: 26-31, 48-49. I will interpret this text in light of Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject.

The symbolic of the Word of God vs. the semiotic of the 'Womb' of God

"The Father's secret is his stolen womb.... The erasure of the female from representation of divine generativity framed exclusively in terms of fatherhood and sonship is crucial to a construction of transcendence.... By absenting the maternal womb from theological discourse, it becomes possible.... to transform that 'first veil'... into the shroud of woman's invisibility – so that there remains only one sex." (Virginia Burrus) (Wonhee Anne Joh, Heart of the Cross, 107-108)

It is intriguing for me that an atheist, feminist thinker, Julia Kristeva is most challenging and inspiring for my theologizing in Asian context today. Despite her early giving up of her career as sinologist Kristeva has held and developed a quite long time her imaginative and thought-provoking understanding of Chinese civilization. According to Kristeva, there is no individual in Chinese tradition, but "complementarity between male and female in each entity." (website of Julia Kristeva) Unlike the Christian West dominated by the patrilineal model the matrilineal and matrilocal model of descent has dominated Chinese people with the assurance of their psychosexual duality (equally important dependence in relation to both mother and father). She wagers on the promise that a new Chinese civilization would reinvent "a political, social and symbolic realization of the psychosexual duality capable of putting the old Europe of God and Man (with capital letters) to the test."

It is my intention that Kristeva's maternal semiology is a helpful dialogical partner for reinventing a fully Trinitarian interpretation of atonement. I will differentiate my perspective from Korean American feminist theologian Wonhee Ann Joh's 'post-colonial Christology of Jeong.' Joh's creative appropriation of Kristeva's thought in her Christology does not go beyond the dichotomy between the masculinist symbolic of Logos-centered theology and the feminist semiotic of Jeong Christology. I would rather like to find out the third way beyond the symbolic of the Word of God and the semiotic of the 'Womb' of God.

The semiotic and the symbolic are the two modalities inseparable within the signifying process that constitutes language. Semiotic processes which predate the symbolic one are instinctual and maternal as well as archaic and pre-linguistic. Kristeva adopts the idea of *chora* (from Plato's *Timaeus* for 'land') to describe the maternal semiotic space prior to the acquisition of language proper. The symbolic is the order, the syntax, the grammar of language. The very process of the arising of the symbolic through the repression of the semiotic is named as abjection by Kristeva.

Abjection "is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling."(Powers of Horror, 13)

Kristeva posits a crucial pre-linguistic stage of abjection(4-8 months of age) between the first stage of the *chora*(0-6 months of age) and the *mirror stage*(6-18 months of age). During this time, one begins to separate oneself from the maternal. As Kristeva puts it, "Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be."(Powers, 10) In the process of the individual psychosexual development, abjection marks the moment when one separates oneself from the mother, beginning to recognize a boundary between me and the other, i.e., between me and m-other.

It is my contention that Kristeva's critical distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic can be appropriated in our discussion on the story of atonement in the Gospels. Instead of taking the traditional theories of atonement for granted, I would like to differentiate the two layers of response of the first witnesses of the Crucifixion, i.e., the symbolic of the ransom theory vs. the semiotic of the traumatic experience.

The symbolic of the ransom theory is most clearly demonstrated in the two verses of Matthew and Mark: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."(Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45) These verses are the ending of Jesus' own prediction of suffering and death. Most of New Testament scholars agree upon that they are not the genuine words of Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, they are derived from the *kerygma* of the early church. However, N. T. Wright who has delved into the first century Judaism convincingly argues that Jesus himself interpreted and performed the ransom tradition of the second Isaiah particularly.

I am not interested in proving or disproving that the symbolic of the ransom theory is a theological invention of the early church because it may go back even to the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth. But my thesis is rather that, underneath of the symbolic of the ransom theory interpreting the death of Jesus of Nazareth flows the current of the semiotic of the traumatic experiences of Jesus' women followers. Of course, the male disciples of Jesus must have gone through the same trauma of the sudden loss of their beloved teacher. Yet it is not they who were present to the last moment of Jesus' life and became the first witnesses of the Easter. What did prevent the cowering disciples from daring to wail at the site of execution and even intruding the forbidden area of the sealed and guarded tomb of the dead Jesus? And how come only some women played the role of feisty woman at risk of their own lives! This ironic contrast of feisty woman and cowering man is no surprise for the oppressed minority in the colonial world dominated by the empire. And this contrast is most outstandingly described in the Gospel of Luke which is considered uniquely countercultural within the empire.

The story of Jesus Christ according to Luke aims at "turning the world upside down."(Acts 17:6) One of the most frequently used word in Luke is "kyrios" which means the Lord. The term cuts in

both ways; i.e., it refers to the Yaweh kyrios(namely, the Tetragrammaton) on the one hand and to the true emperor of the kingdom of God replacing the false one on earth. Jesus' coming to the world is the coming or even return of the long waited king, the Messiah promised in the law and the prophets. But his coming is different from the violent revolution as his contemporary Jewish nationalists' movement expected. And his coming is also different from the coercive rule of the empire. Luke describes Jesus' birth as the birth of "a Savior"(soter in Greek) which was exclusively used for the Caesar in the Roman empire.

The symbolic of the restoration of the reign of God through the messianic word and act of Jesus, according to N. T. Wright, is convincing, yet still in his account the symbolic of messianic language remains severed from the semiotic of the abject/ the ochlos. Wright's inter-textual hermeneutic between the Gospels and the 2nd temple Judaism articulates Jesus' messianic symbolic as representing the long-awaited expectation of the exiled Israel. Yet Wright only focuses on Jesus' solo action at the temple and the Last Supper table as well as on the cross at Golgotha and misses the point that Jesus' action is the most concrete resonance with and response to the semiotic irruption of the most traumatized and abjected in his times.

This point is significant in two ways: it invites us to think Jesus' atonement in terms of the Trinity on the one hand and it can be linked to the landscape change in global Christianity in which the semiotic of the groaning and mourning of the Spirit is erupting while far too long awaiting for its own theological poetics/symbolic. The Trinitarian reading of the atonement is crucial for the future of the new millennial theology of mission and evangelism from the margins. In the West the Father-Son transaction in the atonement has been overemphasized at the cost of the third person of the Trinity. And this patriarchal model also must have something to do with the neglect of the groaning creation in the traditional soteriology.

However, it is not my intention to merely overthrow the symbolic of the masculine and binarian understanding of the atonement. Rather, I would like to illuminate the semiotic dimension of the Passion narrative in the Gospels. This means to regress to the rhythms, tones, and movements of the abjected among Jesus' followers. Jesus and the abjected/ochlos are not severed from each other since Jesus' poetic and prophetic imagination was connected to the very fountain of the Spirit groaning and mourning among them. It is particularly the story line of the Luke-Acts that we can identify the source of both Jesus' ministry for the Kingdom and the birth and continuing mission of the church, namely, the Holy Spirit. In the first 3 chapters of both Luke and Acts clearly demonstrate the outstanding agency of the Holy Spirit in the initial stage of Jesus' ministry on the one hand and in the birthing of the early church on the other. And it is not surprising to find that the 4th chapter of each book begins with Jesus' Spirit-filled announcement of the liberating ministry of the Messiah at the synagogue of Nazareth and Peter's audacious witness of the messiahship of Jesus the rejected stone before the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. Jesus and his followers, especially women in Luke and the Spirit and the church in Acts are two parallel parts deeply united.

I cannot believe my eyes when I did not find any serious treatment of Jesus' healing the sick in N. T. Wright's more than 1,000 page long book on *Jesus and the Victory of God*. I suspect the masculine and logocentric concentration of his royal image of both God and the Messiah prevented him from empathizing with the subaltern's traumatic suffering and miraculous healing. Jesus' healing by the power of the Spirit of Love usually corresponds with the revolutionary change on the part of the ochlos from being the patients of sin and despair to becoming the agents of faith and hope. It is my central contention that the closest contemporary analogy of Jesus' healing is not so much the so-called faith healing among the Pentecostal Christians as psychoanalysis described by Julia Kristeva. In the faith healing practice there is seldom personal communication between the healer and the sick. Instead, a magical pronouncement of the name of Jesus is imposed upon the sinful patient by the authoritarian mediator of healing. However, according to Kristeva, "it is want of love that sends the subject into analysis, which proceeds by first restoring confidence in, and capacity for, love through the transference, and then enabling the subject to distance himself or herself from the analyst." (In the Beginning, 3) Now I am able to understand why Jesus always sent the healed back to their own life-world instead of allowing them to become his manias.

"Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait upon them." (Luke 4:38-39)

"On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity. Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.' (Luke 13: 10-13)

"And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. ... In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.' (Luke 8: 43-44, 47b-48)

When we read these stories of healing, we used to focus on Jesus' miraculous power and to ignore the patients whom Jesus transformed into the agents for serving, praising and peace-making for the Kingdom. Furthermore, we seldom even speculate on the personal, familial, social, and spiritual causes of their sickness. It is amazing to notice how Julia Kristeva pinpoints this issue in our contemporary setting:

"Your headache, your paralysis, your hemorrhage may be somatic return of an unsymbolized

repressed object. The repressed language of hatred or love, or of emotions too subtle for words, then reactivate energies no longer filtered by any psychic trace or representation; these attack and disrupt the functioning of the body's organs. Mute signs are deflected into symptoms. Or perhaps you are obsessed by figments of your imagination, figures of your desire, stimulating enough to be exhausting, gloomy enough to be depressing."(In the Beginning, 6)

It is necessary to integrate the semiotic of the distorted drive of the *ochlos* to interpret the above quoted passages from Luke in the contemporary context of the landscape changing global Christianity. However, it does not mean to exclude the symbolic of the Word of God, N. T. Wright's account of Jesus the Messiah in particular, in our new reading of the atonement story. It is rather to retrieve the repressed foundation of Jesus' messianic movement in order to better understand Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God, namely, the eternal Gospel for today.

The signifying process of Jesus' messianic language is not completely controlled by a unified subject, i.e., 'Jesus the Messiah.' Jesus in the Gospels implies a split subject with the two registers of semiotic and symbolic, always operating between unconscious and conscious realms. Therefore, the speaking subject of the Gospels is a precarious subject-in-process or on trial. In the Prolegomena of her work *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva writes,

"(The) kind of activity encouraged and privileged by (capitalist) society represses the process pervading the body and the subject, and that we must therefore break out of our interpersonal and intersocial experience if we are to gain access to what is repressed in the social mechanism: the generating of significance."(The Portable Kristeva, 27)

The shattering of the repressed process reveals the linguistic change which constitutes the change of "the status of the subject – his relation to the body, to others, and to objects."(29) This shattering can also display "the productive basis of subjective and ideological signifying formations – a foundation that primitive societies call 'sacred' and modernity has rejected as 'schizophrenia.'"(30) The sacred and 'schizophrenic' foundation can be identified as "magic, shamanism, esoterism, the carnival, and 'incomprehensible' poetry" which "underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses."(30)

The psycho-somatic symptoms of the sick people were treated by Jesus by personal touch as well as by exorcism. For instance, Jesus healed the headache of Peter's mother-in-law caused by high fever by both "bending over her" and "rebuking the fever." Jesus' touching the body while exorcising the evil spirits implies Jesus' way of letting-go of the repressed in the deep psyche of the *ochlos* in order to cure them:

"When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak,

because they knew he was the Christ."(Luke 4:40-41)

In the process of healing Peter's mother-in-law Jesus "rebuked the fever, and it left her." The evil spirit that caused her to have headache refers to the repressed and distorted energies of hatred or love, or of emotions too subtle for words, therefore, helplessly groaning and moaning. Jesus neither judged nor rebuked the sinner and the patient, but he fiercely challenged and rebuked the fundamental cause of the psycho-somatic symptoms. Another story of a woman who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years is also very intriguing. Her seriously bent over back made her life crippled so that she could not straighten up her life. It is significant that Jesus healed her on a Sabbath to make the Jewish authorities indignant. And Jesus challenged their hypocrisy and impotence for they also took care of their cattle while they ignored the poor woman in their community of faith for 18 years. We need to discern Jesus' critical distinction between a crippling spirit and Satan that had kept bound her. The symptom of a crippled back was caused by an evil spirit by which Satan had dominated the life-world of a daughter of Abraham. And Jesus' healing was not so much a mere medical treatment as a victory over Satan through freeing the person from what bound her.

The incident of Jesus' healing of a woman with hemorrhage is exceptionally unique in the sense that there was no report of Jesus' touch (rather she touched him!) or of driving out a demon. Her gesture to touch the hem of Jesus' robe can be considered to creatively regress to the fountain of her life, i.e., the rejected, abjected, and long forgotten womb of God the Mother. It reminds us of the passage of Julian of Norwich: "God joined himself to our body in the maiden's womb, he took our soul, which is sensual, and in taking it, having enclosed us all in himself, he united it to our substance."(Julian, 292) It is amazing indeed to find out how Jesus called her after she had been instantly healed:

"Daughter, your faith has healed you, Go in peace."(Luke8:48)

Here Jesus assumes his own role as our true Mother "for in our Mother Christ we profit and increase, and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and by the power of his Passion, his death and his Resurrection he unites us to our substance."(Julian, 294) One of the Scriptural texts which might influence upon the theological imagination of Julian of Norwich is the following:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"(Luke 13:34)

Julian identifies the second person of the Trinity with Christ as Mother. But for Jesus of Nazareth it may be more fitting to claim that he has the motherly heart of God as well as the

fatherly word of God. When Julian sees in Jesus Christ "the foundation of motherhood"(Julian 295), it means that "our savior is our true Mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come."(Julian 292) Therefore, it is misleading to interpret Julian's poetic language literally. She never loses sight of "the prescient eternal counsel of all the blessed Trinity": "(Our great Father, almighty God, the first person of the Trinity) wanted the second person to become our Mother, our brother and our savior. From this it follows that as truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother. Our Father wills, our Mother works, our good Lord the Holy Spirit confirms."(Julian 296)

The bleeding woman was healed by the flow of power from Jesus who is also the bleeding savior/healer on the cross. This was a revolutionary and subversive action against the stronghold of the Jewish symbolic of purification code according to which "a woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period."(Leviticus 12:2) Even though woman's bleeding was for life-giving, it had been considered unclean. The bleeding Jesus is the giver of life which has been identified with the Holy Spirit according to the Nicene-Constantinople creed. Therefore, Jesus' witness, "power has gone out from me"(Luke 8:46b), caused a poetic revolution rupturing the oppressive system of Jewish patriarchy. This was finally symbolized by the incident that "the curtain of the temple was torn in two."(Luke 23:45b)

After recognizing the healed woman as daughter in faith, Jesus commissioned her to go in peace. It does not mean to go back to the same miserable conditions of her past life. It rather means to go forward to become the agent of the Kingdom of the abba Father. It was Jesus' way of operation to appropriate the semiotic drive of the ochlos and to weave it into the symbolic of the will of abba or of the Kingdom of God. The symbolic self of Jesus was considered the object of the messianic aspiration of the semiotic other of the ochlos:

"As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.' He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'"(Luke 11: 27-28)

The immediate context of this text was Jesus' prophetic repudiation of the Jewish leaders' vicious accusation against Jesus' exorcism. When the ochlos watched this, a woman among them must have been deeply moved and overjoyed by the persuasive power of Jesus' wit. She was so much overwhelmed with wonder and amazement that she spontaneously exclaimed her holy envy of Jesus' mother who gave him birth and nursed him. For Jesus, however, not regressing to the womb or breast of mother but hearing and obeying the word of the abba was true blessing. It is not erasing the semiotic of the maternity of God but incorporating it in the symbolic of the Kingdom of God. We need to remember the paradoxical nature of Jesus' understanding of blessing:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you because of the Son of Man."(Luke 6:20b-22)

Jesus' pronouncement of blessing was for the *ochlos* who had been filled with messianic aspiration, namely, who had nothing to lose on earth. And Jesus' pronouncement of woe went to those who were rich, well fed, and laughed. Jesus considered those were the Jewish leaders of whom all men spoke well, (and he added), for that was how their fathers treated the false prophets.(Luke 6:26) In other words, Jesus implied that the wailing and suffering of the *ochlos* belonged to the prophetic tradition of Israel. This point guides us to delve into the deeper meaning of the scene of the wailing women at the sight of the Crucifixion.(Luke 23: 26-31)

N. T. Wright focuses on Jesus' saying to the wailing women without paying attention to the context of their wailing and of Jesus' response to it. According to Wright, Jesus' prophesy of the time when the *ochlos* would say, "Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!"(Luke 23:29) is Jesus' warning against the anti-Roman revolution with violence. Wright tries to justify his argument by interpreting Jesus' enigmatic statement: "For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"(Luke 23: 31) Wright identifies the green tree with Jesus, the dry one with the children of the *ochlos*. I think the intention of Jesus' distinction between the green tree and the dry tree is not so much of his critical warning against military chauvinism as his prophetic solidarity with the abjected people. The two different trees do not directly refer to persons. Instead, they refer to the two different times, i.e., peace time and war time. Despite of the difference of the times the *ochlos* still had to mourn and wail when they, especially women, faced the trauma of the sudden loss of their beloved children. The immediate reaction of women as mothers to the materiality of the death of children is severe mourning accompanied by the painful memory of their trauma. Therefore, the mourning and wailing of women following Jesus on the way to Golgotha was the semiotic eruption of the *ochlos* from the *chora*/ womb of God.

It is no wonder that in the Gospel of Luke there was no quotation of Psalm 22:1 by Jesus on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"(Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) Jesus' appeal to the symbolic of God-forsakenness in Psalm 22:1 was Jesus' poetic-prophetic imagination erupting from the semiotic womb of God. Here Jesus' cry on the cross resonates with the wailing of the traumatized women. Therefore, Jesus not only symbolically represents the true Israel obeying God to sacrifice himself for the sake of redeeming the rebellious and exiled people, but also recapitulates the semiotic eruption of the abject among the suffering of the *ochlos*. Indeed, "What is not assumed cannot be saved/healed."(Gregory Nazianzen) What is disconnected with the M-other of God cannot be atoned. The M-other of God has been long forgotten and repressed in the history of Christian theology in general, and of Christian understanding of

atonement in particular. In the words of Irenaeus, "inasmuch as blood cries out (*vocalis est*) from the beginning (of the world), God said to Cain, when he had slain his brother, 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me.'" (Irenaeus, ch. 14.1) Irenaeus omitted the last part of Gen. 4:10, "from the ground." From the abjected ground, i.e., the M-other, the ochlos cry out to God.

Jesus was keenly aware of and extremely sensitive to the semiotic rupture caused by the bleeding cries in the history of the people of God: "Therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary." (Luke 11:50-51) Irenaeus interprets Jesus' words in terms of the notion of recapitulation:

"He(Jesus) thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of Himself there should be a requisition of their blood. Now this (blood) could not be required unless it also had the capability of being saved; nor would the Lord have summed up these things in Himself, unless He had Himself been made flesh and blood after the way of the original formation (of man), saving in his own person at the end that which had in the beginning perished in Adam." (Irenaeus, *ibid.*)

Conclusion:

What Jesus of Nazareth attempted to envision the Kingdom of God was first to creatively regress to the semiotic fountain of the M-other of God in the midst of the most abjected in his times; then, to incorporate and recapitulate the first Adam's primordial process of abjection in order that he could imaginatively re-envision, reinvent, and re-symbolize the true reign of God the abba. Jesus was indeed the Messiah in whom the sin and the infirmities of the exiled people of God were fully assumed so that they could be fully redeemed and healed. Being anointed by the Spirit of God, Jesus the Messiah was able to vicariously empathize with the groans and moans of the suffering ochlos whose messianic aspiration had been long repressed and disillusioned by the dominant symbolic of the Jewish leaders as well as by the consecutive powers of empire since the exile.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole crowd of disciples joyfully praised God in loud voices. The Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke them. But Jesus replied to them: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40) Jesus' poetic imagination was so profoundly vivid that he sensed the 'han' cry bursting out of the stone "the builders rejected and that had become the capstone." (Psalm 118:22) Jesus used the same expression to criticize and challenge the Jewish teachers of the law. The context of Jesus' quotation of the verse was Jesus' subversive teaching of the parable of the tenants. (Luke 20:9-16) And Jesus prophetically warned them:

"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."(Luke 20:18)

This prophecy was preceded by another version of Jesus' passionate cry over the city of Jerusalem. Once again the suppressed and ruptured anguish and 'han' of the abjected stone was poetically let loose by Jesus' most poignant expression:

"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."(Luke 19:42-44)

As N. T. Wright points out, Jesus who was innocent vicariously bore the judgment of God which the rebellious and disobedient people of God deserved. Through Jesus' "atoning sacrifice not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world."(I John 2:2) Jesus rebuilt the temple of God as his own sacred body! Most remarkably St. Paul identifies Jesus Christ with "the chief cornerstone" in which "the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."(Eph. 2:20b-21) This is indeed the very mystery of the Gospel that God will "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head (the cap/stone), even Christ."(Eph. 1:10b)