

"Going Down"

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[Bold supplied; italics in original]

So far, there is one thing we should carefully note. But for that purpose I must first admit something in favor of Nygren's thesis. There is nothing in what I have hitherto stated which, in any way, reduces one wonderful truth in Nygren's argument. It is this: Agape is characterized by a typical **down-going** line, the line of utter humility and meekness, in sharp contrast to the line of hectic climbing so characteristic of the proud Eros of pagan thinking and pagan doing.

In fact, this is one of the salient points in my own argument in favor of the bold claim that Agape is absolutely sober-minded and reasonable. And when I here say sober-minded and reasonable, then I understand this in the only way any common-sense human child is bound to conceive of sober-mindedness and reasonability. Agape too, you see, manifests this humble preference for a modest, down-to-earth simplicity which accepts with perfect candor and sincerity the rational faculties God has granted to his human creatures.

It is the proud elite of intellectualistic Eros climbers in the Western World who have always tended to look down upon the common sense intellect falling to the lot of quite ordinary people. So how could you expect them to honor this down-to-earthness as a God-given endowment. The only kind of intellect that was granted high prestige among members of that sophisticated elite was rather some weird subtleties machinated by speculative philosophy. In this field of spiritualist vanity the most absurd things have been propounded with a lustre of academic glory that is incredible with sensible men.

Agape and Eros, p. 77.3-5

Here again it is comforting and reassuring to know that Agape is to be found in the field of a well-balanced, happy medium. Some will again wrinkle up their noses, calling it mediocrity. Never mind. Agape knows what is safe--and sound. Let people call it whatever names they like. Let us see for ourselves how Agape has all the time stood out as the kind of love which steps **all the way down** to earth, completely, and in all essential respects.

Agape and Eros, p. 78.2

What the spiritualism of a would-be Protestantism tries to get rid of now, however, is precisely that very body of all true faith: the good works of the believing Christian. What it insists on *spiritualizing away* as something deemed "unworthy" and "evil," what deluded man fights unwittingly is the concrete substance called good works. Nevertheless, in reality, that practical willingness to obey God implicitly is man's literal and most realistic act of **going down**: so imitating Jesus Christ, the **down-going** One par excellence, the realistic One par excellence.

In order to resemble his Creator, the creature must *do* something. He must realistically obey. Accepting grace is the most significant and the most indispensable act of obedience you could ever think of. It means nothing more and nothing less than a literal deed of submission to the Creator, the Logos, the Word, as Supreme Authority. It means an elementary *willingness to obey*

without grumbling. The Christian must have Metanoia. It could not be expressed more simply than that by the Bible: *Metanoia*.

Agape and Eros, p. 126.1&2

The humble God! This is the great mystery, the un-heard-of thing in the history of religions. It was the unique thing happening when Christianity came upon the scene. But it is not a paradox. It is not an absurdity. We had better save those terms for other phenomena. It is realism of the most down-to-earth type we encounter in the Person of Jesus Christ. *Humilis* means bending down to *humus*, the very soil. It is the incomparable story about the *geo-centric* God who "so loved the world" that He gave Himself as a ransom. He saw nothing unworthy about **coming down** to *earth* in human flesh.

Agape and Eros, p. 130.3

But then, if still tremendous things do happen in the life and history of that God, how can this be interpreted? The matter is simple enough: Whenever God, the only Self-Existent One, is suddenly seen to dive **all the way down** to wretches like you and me, the dark world of the lost ones, He performs one obvious task: He simply turns back to those whom He openly admits to be His own creatures. The fact of creation is never denied or reduced. How could there be any denial or any reduction of that? If we do exist--and we assume we do--and if we still fail to realize that this existence has its source in Him, and in Him only, then there is just one alternative left in our thinking: We must be gods every one of us. That is self-deification. And there is no presumption more foolish than that. In the last analysis, it is exactly what all spiritualists come to presume about themselves.

Agape and Eros, p. 144.1

I believe Luther and Calvin did see a certain way of reconciliation. I was astonished to discover something the historians fail to tell you here as well. Both Luther and Calvin did find a solution that satisfied them. For they both have an addition to that "simul justus, simul peccator." It was another "simul," and a decisive one. The Christian is: simul justus, simul peccator, *simul penitens*. So penitencia (metanoia) is the *conditio sine qua non*, as far as man's attitude is concerned. But how then can this fact of a *constanter justus* (in spite of the fact of a *constanter peccator*) be an unflinching reality in man's life? That state of a constantly valid justification of the human sinner can only happen on one condition: The additional ingredient, the reconciling attitude of repentance in man (metanoia) is bound to be an equally constant state of the human heart. It means having a contrite heart *all the time*, bowing down to the ground in a state of absolute brokenness and humiliation *all the time*. It means going around in a constant attitude of prayer. For *prayer* is the indispensable expression of Metanoia.

It is by demanding of man this strange constancy, that God reveals to him what He Himself is like. He is the Agape that **goes all the way down**, *all the time*.

Agape and Eros, p. 221.3 - 222.1

There will always be, at the back of human minds, the remembrance of Bethlehem, and the remembrance of *Calvary*! Remember: After the destruction of evil, nothing but sheer historic realism causes Agape, in the case of man, to be received into his heart in the form of Metanoia. Therefore, Metanoia is a realism which will remain real for all worlds and for all eternity. Metanoia gives infinite courage. It means God-dependence. And only the God-dependent child

can reasonably be courageous--at the same time humble--**bending down**.

Agape and Eros, p. 234.1

What does all this mean? Has the serious question of the weekly beginning of holy time been left dangling in mid air? Not at all. It is you and I who keep dangling in the air. The Sabbath truth had been entrusted into our hands, but we have been unfaithful stewards. The sacred has been desecrated. Even for the solemn question of our salvation or perdition, God has made himself dependent on our cooperation. It is for our sake as persons, creatures endowed with a free will, He has agreed to accept that fantastic degree of other dependence. It is part and parcel of His **going all the way down**. In this, too, He has proved Himself to be the Realist par excellence. He does not push us, high-handedly, into his realms of holiness. Only through a corresponding spirit of lowliness on our part can the reality of Sabbath holiness, with the solemn stringency it implies, flow abundantly into our lives and transform our nature to the likeness of His nature.

Crucial Events in SDA Theology Today, p. 19.1

So the uniqueness of the fourth commandment is a mystery indisputably asserting itself. And it is a uniqueness asserting itself precisely in what I have called God's "**coming down**". If He had not come **all the way down**, man's predicament would have had no solution. In the New Testament that *total* condescension on God's part is further revealed in his "coming in the flesh". The incarnation doctrine is the essence of New Testament theology. A denial of that doctrine is equated with "*non-Christianity*". This is the "spirit of the `anti-Christ'". I referred to it already in my introduction. So you know exactly how distant that spiritualism (or spiritualizing *away* of all concrete reality) is from the Spirit of realism, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the truth.

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth *not* that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is *not* of God. And this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." I John 4:2,3.

Spiritualizing away the concrete reality of God's coming **all the way down**, this is the sham spirituality the great adversary has chosen to reduce God's plan of salvation to naught. Prophetic revelation also describes it as the mystery of iniquity, or the mystery of *lawlessness*.

"For the *mystery of iniquity* doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness and unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be save." 2 Thess. 2:7-10.

It is the denial of the bodily "**coming down**" of a personal God, that encourages man in his natural inclination toward lawlessness. At the same time this is a denial of God's love for man in the radical sense of His "**coming down**" as the extremely *Humble One*. It is interesting to see that this divine humility is qualified as the "mystery of godliness": God was "manifest in the flesh" (I Tim 3:16). This is, of course, in all respects the diametrical opposite of the spirit of the "man of sin", "the son of perdition:", who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called

God" (2 Thess. 2:3,4). Titanism and super-man *pride* is the essence of the "mystery of iniquity" (lawlessness), the "lying wonders" of vain spiritualism, cited above.

Day of Destiny, p. 57.4 - 58.3

We have stressed the Sabbath commandment's character as an absolutely free and spontaneous initiative on the part of a living God to step **all the way down** to man's world, making personal interference in his everyday life. But how could we account for this initiative if not precisely in terms of a positive interest of God in man, and let us add: His interest in man as an individual, a creature considered in the full context of his destiny. This is the Genesis record's graphical portrayal of man coming to life in an environment minutely prepared for him. It is precisely in that same context that the Sabbath, as well, makes its majestic entry, isn't it?

Day of Destiny, p. 61.1

And then comes the crucial question of critical verification in our present case: Does tender mercy characterize the Sabbath commandment? Does this mark its essence more than any other quality? And notice: here we are not satisfied with "mercy" in terms of some mystic hidden interiority which does not come out. Oh no, mercy in God's sense is characterized exactly by this peculiar practical quality: it does come out. It is alterocentric. It is out-going, even **down-going** (condescending). So our questioning regarding the nature, the essence, of the Sabbath goes on: Does that assumed mark of penetrating love and mercy constitute something that visibly and tangibly manifests itself, even in the concrete wording of the commandment under debate?

Day of Destiny, p. 66.2

The type of "love" man is naturally acquainted with, is *Eros*. But that is the type in which the creature has perverted his freedom. *Eros* is the perversion of *Agape*. Hence it comes to happen that man, whenever he tries to philosophize about freedom, even in terms of perfect freedom, total freedom, such as the Creator has, he is tempted to reason along rather spurious lines. To the human thinker that unfailing autonomy of God (His unlimited freedom)--for instance in matters of creative power, of unhampered initiative, His perfect ability to do or to refrain from doing--all this is immediately conceived of as something that would tend to "prevent Him from being primarily the Loving One." What a fallacious trend of philosophy.

This is where we human reasoners need to be reminded again of one remarkable coincidence: In what does that constant initiative on the part of God consist? It consists in His free movement of **bending down**. And in what does His character as the Loving One consist? It consists in that same **bending down**!

This is the practical way things infallibly work with God. And every time the outcome is bound to strike, with utter astonishment, those theoretical experts in this little world of ours who have made it their speciality to observe "how gods generally behave". The God of the Bible inevitably dumbfounds them. He scandalizes them, for this is not at all the way gods "are supposed to behave"!

Yahweh does not only turn to "the other one". He even turns wholeheartedly to the smallest of the small among His millions of other ones. The incredible marvel of this divine alterocentricity is not just in its going out. It is in its **going down**! This is humility, if ever there was one. And what philosopher-theologian, I wonder, could ever refrain from being scandalized when some non-philosophical or non-theological layman speaks about his "humble God"? Where else, except in the Bible, did men ever read such "laughable stuff" as the story about

God's divine humility"!

Day of Destiny, p. 160.7 - 161.3

In the life of God this longing must be closely concatenated with what we shall observe as His willingness to "**go down**," nay, **His veritable passion for going down**. For just as surely as God longed to create beings with the freedom of will necessary for true personal communion with Him, He did know, as well, another possibility inevitably implied in such creaturely freedom: that is, the potential event of a fall into sin: He was fully aware of the creature's possible choice of a course of disobedience (sin) rather than a course of obedience (sinlessness). This eventuality would be a cruelly painful blow against the tender heart of God. But His love and His longing for an infinitely extended other-centeredness were strong enough to take all the risk here implied.

The Maligned God, p. 17.2

Are we wrong in saying that there is a tremendous risk involved, on the part of God, at the moment when He determines to reveal the supreme secret of His glory? We have already suggested that this glory consists in something no one of us would, of himself, assume: It is His characteristic of "**going down**". Obviously this "**going down**", in terms of going into creation, is a matter of such momentum that man has no inkling of its far-reaching implications. This is why he fails to understand why the Bible attaches such a unique significance to this very theme: Creation. A human brain alone is utterly incompetent for these depths. It is more a matter of the heart's perception than of the brain's perception. For the sense demanded is the sense of love. And the surprising summit of this love is humility. Although it may offend many, we must dare to state that God is, above all, this: He is humble. The practical unfolding of that quality in God was His **going all the way down**.

Here we must now point out one thing that is seldom properly understood: It was not only at the moment when such "**going down**" became a desperate necessity, for the salvation of fallen man, that the Eternal One began to manifest this peculiar essence of His being. Thanks to the simple testimony of the Bible, already, it becomes evident that God has been "like that" all the time. The foundation of the plan of salvation is from eternity. And the Spirit of Prophecy adds fascinating specificity to this fact by giving us a glorious glance into things happening prior to the earth's creation.

The Maligned God, p. 26.2&3

Christ's approach of humility certainly is no mere trick. It is a realistic **going down**, if such has ever happened in this world. I can only shrink back in awe and admiration before the virile realism beaming forth from that key text of ours, Matt. 11:29,30. What a treasure of wisdom, for the one who wants to dig for eternal depths, in the nature of God.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me:
for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Of course, Christ is the one who keeps on revealing God to His creatures. But how does it come to pass that the core of this revelation is simply: God as the Meek One? Has God always been like that? Will He always go on being like that? Or is it just a mode of momentary crisis, a transitory phase?

Let me hurry to say: I do not believe it is a mere transition. This is among the most permanent features in God's nature. He IS "like that."

There is evidence enough to establish this as a fact. The attribute of "**going down**" is not an attribute of God developed only at the critical moment when such "**going down**" became a desperate necessity, an emergency measure for the sake of our salvation. It is not limited to the accident of our father Adam's fall into sin, in the Garden of Eden. It is an effulgence of God's very being, all the time. God's descent into the depths of creation and redemption is an expression of His constant nature. He **goes all the way down** to the lowest levels because His essence is lowliness. And this is not by virtue of an automatic principle. He is the One who **goes down** to me, because He loves me, and that is a love that makes separation an unbearable atrocity to Him. And His **going down** to me was a personal heart affair, involving fatal personal risk. In fact, God's act of creation and redemption never avoids being an act of destiny-laden drama. It is high time we become more anxious to look into the elements of that drama.

Creation is, indeed, a most many-sided thing. It is God's supreme glory in a double sense. And this is, indeed, a mysterious doubleness.

(1) In the first place, it is mysteriously glorious, in the sense of that boundless **going down**. God never makes a new world without **going down** into it Himself. Is not this in fact the great difference that has been established regarding Eros versus Agape? While Eros, the pagan principle of "love," fails in love with a value that is already there, just becoming ablaze with passion for that value, in order to enjoy it in what I have preferred to call the egocentric way -- Agape, the unique heaven-born principle of a Christian love, has an entirely different attitude: Agape creates the value, miraculously calls it into being, where it never existed, as yet. That is how Agape manages to love me, an entirely unloveable creature. It creates the value, as it loves, and this creativity is part of its essence.

Love cannot help creating. Does this mean that God's love is unreasonable? We shall discuss that question thoroughly in another book, a book on Love's IQ, a book wholly dedicated to the mystery of divine Agape, in terms of meaningfulness to the realistic mind.

(2) On the other hand, if God's act of creation is this mightiest of all demonstrations of His unfathomable lowliness, His bottomless **going down**, to the deepest depths of the absolutely valueless, which is made valuable by so doing, then it is at the same time an equally salient demonstration of his "remaining all the way up." God is, and remains, above His creation. He stays outside of it, and is entirely independent of it. He goes on forever and ever, to be the absolutely Self-dependent One; in fact, the only Self-dependent Being ever known.

To tell the truth, this "aboveness" is the very presupposition for His **going down**! His absolute supremacy and autonomy is just what makes it possible for Him to realize that whole generous trend of a most efficient condescension and intervention in the creature's behalf. His very platform of absolute self-dependence, in the divine sense, is what enables Him to do the strange thing he actually does: He makes Himself dependent on the "other ones," the little ones, the definitely impotent ones. This divine other-dependence is one of the most incredible things that have happened in the universe. I am referring to the way He makes Himself dependent today; for instance, on you and me, for the purpose of having certain essential things done in the world. This is indeed incredible and incomprehensible. The only sadness is that we so often fail to be the dependable ones we ought to be. We prove ourselves to be undependable, unreliable servants. We put to shame the trust of which He has deemed us worthy.

Well, you may say, all this applies to our world, to Christ's historic "**down-going**" at the time when the Father agreed to the Son's proposal to sacrifice Himself in man's behalf on this earth

some 2,000 years ago. Then, to be sure, some foolish men did misjudge the generous Supreme One's inscrutable plan to condescend, to walk the painful path of the humble Lamb of God, right on to the slaughterhouse. Then, to be sure, we did avail ourselves of every possible chance to misunderstand His condescension. We displayed the full range of foolishness forged by wicked hearts: We were as ungrateful, tactless, impassive as we could be. We said, in unison with the Pharisees: "That dumb fellow over there is no better than I am. His extraction is the most poverty-stricken one in Nazareth. True, I do become somewhat uneasy sometimes. I begin to wonder whether He may be above me, after all -- in some respects. He attracts followers I never reach. But then I establish the pleasant fact of 'human equality'. He is a man, like myself. I am fully justified in comparing myself to Him, compete with Him--perhaps outstripping Him completely. I cannot afford to be below anybody. My principle of self-sufficiency forbids it. My way to rise above the others is to cut the others down." Do you hear the voice of the Pharisee?

This is the law of a wicked world. Here humility is seen as the one unpardonable weakness--together with pity, that is! The deliberate plan is to ignore the other one. The other one is dead, or ought to be. Even God, the Great Other One, is dead. God has died of His pity with man. Thus spake Zarathustra. Let us proceed to our next deeds -- the deeds of the Superman. Let us prove to anyone who cares to look on, that we are the superior ones, that we are above all gods and all 'God-talk'!"

But that is the reaction in a wicked world, you still object--we are not speaking about a wicked world. We are speaking about the world of Lucifer, at the time when the heavenly host joined in song -- "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7)

Where was Christ then--and how did He reveal God then? What do we know about the time prior to our world's creation? Do we have any evidence that Jesus Christ, the One equal to, and co-eternal with, the Father, already at that juncture, had the strange habit of "**going down**", of concealing His glory in humility?

From the Bible already, we have evidence enough that God identified Himself with human beings, **going down** to their lowly level. Do we have any evidence that He ever identified Himself with the state of angels?

An identification in terms is something we know well enough, both from the Old and the New Testament. Many readers have marvelled, in fact, that the Scriptures qualify the Messiah as an Angel. The reaction among men is here sometimes one of downright offense. It is looked upon as a certain depreciation of the great Yahweh.

Is there a feeling among us almost similar to the fear known to lie at the very root of Arianism in the history of the church: Theologians and laymen alike seem overanxious to point out that Christ is the true God. Consequently, they finish by not daring to pronounce, in clear words any longer, that He is true Man at the same time.

One thing is here remarkably characteristic of man's reasoning: and the same comes out in his constant failure to understand the simplest fact about Agape: From age to age, the great descent--God's fabulous **going down**--was something men never seemed capable of taking. Obviously our human way of reasoning is so entirely different from God's way of reasoning. Our value scale is so entirely different from His value scale. The result of this is our complete inability to grasp one plain idea: **GOING DOWN** is God's supreme glory. Humility is Love--short and sweet.

The Maligned God, p. 28.2 - 33.6 (Sections "The Strange Risk Incurred by the One Who Humbles Himself" & "Jesus Christ--an Angel Among Angels")

This mystery started with a creature who did think it "a robbery" to be equal with the Son of God, the Eternal and Unique One. Precisely that was Lucifer's reaction at the time when Jesus Christ had the generous approach of **coming down** to his level. He constitutes the first and classical instance of how completely generosity can be misunderstood, when a substratum of good will is lacking in the heart. The most exquisite tactfulness, and unheard of modesty, are then like pearls thrown before swine. Did Lucifer discover anything whatever of the matchless greatness of Jesus Christ, flashing out like brief glimpses of discrete sunlight behind a veiling cloud? Did he discover the greatness taking such endless pains to make itself small, unobtrusive,--that is, not the proud greatness of standing aloof, but the humble greatness of being together. No, not a bit of it, for he himself had already become enamoured with that cold type of greatness which enjoys to bask in its own glory. This is precisely the greatness of aloofness, not of togetherness with the other ones. He was on his way to become the robber above all robbers, the great usurper of divine rights.

The Maligned God, p. 37.2

John 1:1 is indubitable: "Without Him (Christ) nothing was made of all that was made."

But what about Lucifer, then--the Son of the Morning? Who had created him? Could there be any doubt about that in our minds? It was Jesus Christ, of course. Then why did He not tell him so? Why had He not made this clear to that rising "Son of the Morning" a long time ago?

Christ had more important missions than that of demonstrating in front of His heavenly associates His own remarkable might and external glory. He had the mission of demonstrating His love--the small, still voice of meekness and mercy, of spirit and grace.

But at this extreme moment any amount of that sweet delicacy on the part of the definitely "**Down-Going**" One, the utterly Self-Abasing One, seemed to be of no avail. Lucifer's heart had too long brazed itself against the fragrant and tenderly touching mildness of God's appeal, the God who had created him and loved him with an infinite love. That outgoing love seemed like nothing to the wayward one who needed it so desperately. Every sweet little manifestation of it was taken in evil part:

"The warning given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined." (Ibid.) [PP36]

The Maligned God, p. 40.1-5

How different from Christ's own fundamental attitude. The Lord of the universe who really did have something to glory in, a glory entirely His own, He actually makes conscious efforts to hide His glory, as long as it is not profitable to the other ones to have it revealed to them, as yet. He who was, from eternity, the Self-sufficient One, the truly Self-dependent One,--He, of all beings, deliberately makes Himself dependent-- heartily dependent--on the other ones. For their sakes, intentionally and systematically, He veils the radiant glory of His absolute supremacy, His divine Self-sufficiency.

How pitifully contrasting to this is that "self-sufficiency" which Lucifer introduced into the universe. In fact, self-sufficiency in connection with mere creatures is not only a miserable sham phenomenon. It is an abomination. It is a mocking of God, an affront against His divine

uniqueness.

So it appropriately maintains its position, becoming the symbol par excellence for man making himself into a god, assuming all the sacred prerogatives of God. That is self-exaltation, self-deification. It is the creature's proud way up, in marked contradistinction to the Creator's humble **way down**. Briefly, it is paganism versus Christianity.

The Maligned God, p. 45.4 - 46.1

And what is the trend of disposition Satan now discloses? A new stage of his warfare with God is reached. He goes into open battle. He avails himself of every unfair argument which is the apparent advantage of the unscrupulous evil-doer in his work of misrepresentation. Most eloquent in this respect is the argument he now uses in order to alienate the other angels from God: He points to "the long-suffering of God as an evidence of his own (Satan's) superiority" (PP 39). In other words: God's **going down** is represented as a sign of His "inferiority". As the Spirit of Prophecy puts it: "His mercy was misrepresented". (PP 39).

The trend of "reasoning" is strikingly uniform: "That person over there, who I feared was superior, has finally come down to my level. So this is where he belongs. It is exactly as I thought all the time: I am certainly a match for him in anything. Perhaps I can even climb far above him. That is what I am going to do!"

What a pitiable set of logics, -- the logics of envious minds, a frantically distorted pattern of thought. Particularly pathetic becomes the tragedy of the present case when viewed in the light of what was due to take place shortly afterwards, -- and did take place, according to the plan, a divine, irrepressible plan.

You certainly recall what was the great issue to be agreed upon by that divine council to which Lucifer was not invited: According to the Spirit of Prophecy, it was precisely when the great cherub discovered that he had not been deemed worthy of taking part in the deliberations of this divine council, that he permitted his jealousy to burst out into open flame. So we have good reason to be curious about the agenda of that council. What was the great question at issue? It was whether God the Father and God the Son should now put into practice their eternal purpose of **going down** as they had never **gone down** before, and take all the risks involved in this most radical **going down**! We happen to know today something about the suffering and sacrifice implied in pursuing, with divine inflexibility, and to the bitter end, the original plan of creating the planet Earth and the creature man.

If there is not an irony of fate in this, then an irony of fate has never occurred. What was the precious glory and exaltation from which Lucifer imagined that he had been "shamefully excluded", "treacherously bypassed"! It was simply the glory of **going down**, absolutely **all the way down**.

The Maligned God, p. 48.1 - 49.1

The same problem could be formulated in a different way: Was not this unique plan of Christ, of **going down**, a manifest failure, a sad mistake?

No. First we may here remember that all the angels were faced with the same testing experience. But did they all react to it in the same way? No, there is a significant distinction between two different ways of reaction to that lowliness of Jesus Christ, as He made His historic encounter with them in their lives. In fact, there are principal and widely different ways in which creatures may react in front of the tremendous phenomenon of lowliness. Lowliness is a most forcefully decision-provoking thing. It simply forces a line of distinction to be drawn,

majestically and irrepressibly, between some things that must be distinguished. At the moment when lowliness appears upon the scene, crisis is there. What kind of crisis is that? It is crisis in terms of a most necessary test. That is, the test that knocks at the door of every creature who has been called to the unfathomable privilege of being endowed with personality. Personality, or will, means the solemn fact of being called upon to make a choice, the choice of life?

There seems to be something inevitably attending upon any demonstration of lowliness here. It is a mechanism of acceleration. It precipitates you toward a final decision. You are never the same after it. You are either a thousand times better or a thousand times worse. You are most precipitously on your way up, or on your **way down**. And in the very condition of the world there is an urgent desire for that ultimate determination. In Christ's own heart there is this urgency:

"Think not that I have come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34)

"I am come to send fire on the earth:
and what will I if it be already kindled." (Luke 12:49)

The Maligned God, p. 52.3 - 53.5

On the part of God, there is no deterministic or arbitrarily molding violence exerted against man's freedom of volition; not in any way. It is rather a characteristic of evil influences, to nothing but an automaton. This is the automatism of non-life. Life is never automatic.

True, as Christ gives His grace to man, thus imparting new life to the dying one, that renewal is a miracle just as great, and just as total, as the act of original creation. Still there is a certain difference between what Jesus Christ, the Creator, did and what Jesus Christ, the Recreator, does. To create is to make something out of nothing. But man today, in his natural condition, is a thousand times worse than nothing. He is not a zero. He is way below zero. At the same time he is still blessed with the most tremendous dignity ever conferred upon a creature. For he still has not managed to wipe out some decisive traces of the fact that he was made in the image of God. He still possesses personalism, the freedom of the will; hence also full moral responsibility. The fact of man's having been created on this dignified level, is a historical reality which can never be done away with. That reality irretrievably includes the fact that the Creator, the only Independent One, has made Himself dependent. That is part and parcel of His own **going down** (his prototypical divine humility; God establishing humility as a pattern for the other ones, the ultimate model of an agape-life attitude for all intelligent creatures in the universe). In other words, at the very moment that He had created man, Christ had already, in His established relationship with that man, made Himself dependent on the gentle freedom of reciprocity which is the deepest nature of grace.

The Maligned God, p. 214.4 - 215.1

The love that saves (agape or charis) distinguishes itself as precisely the thing that cannot be commanded. If there is one thing that depends implicitly on freedom of choice, it is that.

This is a matchless demonstration of how the principle of "**going down**" works out in practical reality. In the redeeming process the extreme delicacy and gracefulness manifests itself. It consists in one person "making himself dependent on the other ones." This reaches the peaks of its uniqueness in God: For it is God Himself that thus leaves a large part of the task to man. Everything is permitted to hinge on man's voluntary option, just as much as on God's own voluntary option. Negatively expressed, man has been granted an absolute "veto": He can at any

moment refuse to be saved.

The Maligned God, p. 217.3&4

There will, in the fully restored universe of God, be a strange kind of universal emulation; that is, an emulation in "**going down**", an emulation in the spirit of radical submission. From day to day, God's creatures will realize more and more clearly what constitutes the real basis of all creaturely happiness: It is to submit to God and to one's fellow creatures. It is to excel in lowliness. This means the urge to be of service to the other ones. That will be the glorious pursuit, and the supreme joy, of the privileged creatures who have been granted personalism for all eternity. Christ will be the self-evident center of all submission. Then it will be discovered to what extent submission to Christ is identical with adoration. The culmination of all realistic knowledge will be the knowledge of the Holy One, a daily penetration into further mysteries of His holiness, His character as the entirely Other One.

The Maligned God, p. 231.3

Notice how harmoniously the individual finds its place in the universal in this realism. And notice the role truth has in it, truth as a certainty, truth as something resting on a firm, unshakable Rock as its eternal foundation, truth as something whose reliability can be subject to trial, openly and with such simplicity that a creature endowed with the common sense God provides liberally to all of us, without "upbraiding" (James 1:5), can come and see for himself what is right and what is wrong. What an astonishing "democracy" on the part of an all-wise and almighty God! He never ceases His once adopted plan of **going down**. In front of us, the little ones, the judged one. He is, of course, the Great Judge. But, not content with being this only, He here again turns the roles upside down. He places Himself "in the dock", as it were. He steps down to the level of becoming the one who is judged. God is "on trial", as the NEB expresses it; and that is the sensational way in which He proves Himself true:

"God must be true, for we read in Scripture: 'When thou speakest, thou shalt be vindicated, and win the verdict when thou art on trial,'" Romans 3:4.

What more efficient way could anyone ever find to prove himself in the right. There is no more efficient way than the way of lowliness. And that is a way you and I certainly have not invented. Christ has invented it: the way of **going down**.

The Maligned God, p. 265.5 - 266.2

Creation is, on the contrary, the entirely free gift of God's love. God is perfectly able to maintain peace with Himself, and at the same time peace with the world which He calls into existence. Disruption is by no means any inevitable condition of this universe.

The real disruption is always exclusively in the mind of the pagan philosopher himself. His idealistic and spiritualistic radicalism constantly makes that convulsive effort to press things 'all the way up'. After that, 'the **way down**' - which he is forced to admit as a *fait accompli*, an inevitable reality - becomes to him nothing less than a tragedy. Hence the interminable rupture and oscillation between two opposites.

On one hand, God is the *Good* (philosophically speaking), i.e. the perfect apotheosis of self-sufficiency, quietude, the undisturbed unity where He finds Himself, nothing more.

On the other hand, God is *goodness* (more humanly speaking); i.e. He makes His incredible descent into the world of generation - and re-generation, as Christianity adds.

The only way intelligible to the pure speculative philosophy is the proud way *up*. But the

way of the Christian religion was above all just the humble **way down** - even the way of the Incarnation and the Cross. This is a way not of the rational, but rather of the irrational. In fact, 'pure' human reason has invariably led away from the Cross. It has also led away from the truth, sometimes even the plainest truths of objective and properly scientific order.

Man the Indivisible, p. 244.2-6

Men sometimes seem to fancy that they can arbitrarily cut this "inward" facet of their very selves apart from their own "outward" realization of themselves; that is, apart from the way they realistically "come out" in their "works" reality, their external expression of their inward essence, this is "not all that significant." For "the important thing," to the spiritualistically reasoning fancy-monger, was always his deep interior, and nothing but that. Traditionally, it was assumed that what practically "came out" in the open in terms of external deeds, a visible behavior, was something "different," something rather irrelevant and insignificant. But let me warn you: This is a part of the very same irrationalism that is bent on murdering Christianity, by simply spiritualizing away its concrete reality. The truth is far more realistic than that Nirvana dream. According to Biblical realism, a man's outward actions are just simply the "body," the concrete substance, of inward faith. Now, if you insist on making faith bodiless, you are yielding to the same irrational spiritualism. You despise the body like pagan idealism has always done. Your ideal is not incarnation, but rather, discarnation. You are partisan of the bodiless specters. You foster the spirit of the anti-Christ. You insist on cutting reality into separate parts. And the part called the body, this is something you are trying to squeeze out as unworthy, utterly despicable. You are bent on denying to inward faith any chance of its becoming flesh and bones, of realizing itself in a bodily substance, of "coming out," of "**coming down**," like Christ Himself came out and down. You are a representative of pagan pride rather than of Christian humility.

The Mystic "Omega" of End-Time Crisis, p. 9.2

That wholehearted spirit of absolute truthfulness is not only equated with the open-minded concession that God exists. No, it goes infinitely beyond that general statement. It is a spontaneous and unreserved willingness to go all the way up--or **all the way down**, if you prefer to express it that way--to a most radical expression of truth about God. It is also a most specific utterance of truth, and one that is obviously absolutely indispensable for man's salvation: full realism in this cases states freely and with firm conviction: God has made Himself man. He is truly Emmanuel, "God with us." God has--oh, what an overwhelming idea!--established forever His dwelling among men.

This is, indeed, something infinitely greater than simply admitting that God is. It states in breathtaking terms of concrete realism, *how* He is. In strains of thankfulness and praise it shouts out: God is love. He is love in the most extreme, the most remarkable form love has ever taken: Humility; that is, a total **bending down** to "humus," to man's earth. That can never be simply the dry theoretical announcement of an objectivistic fact. No. It must be a song of jubilee: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

In other words, realism here suddenly becomes synonymous with man's spontaneous participation in the great vindication of the maligned God. The downtrodden One has again become the great sensation of the world. He has reveled Himself as the Lamb of God, slaughtered from the foundation of the world. That is the God who even **stepped down** to the ultimate depths of humiliation, letting Himself be a God on trial. From that trial He has come

forth as the provenly Righteous One, the Sacrifice without a blemish. At the moment when this unfathomable truth dawns on the minds of well-intentioned and honest men, realism becomes an entirely new experience to them. The love of the truth is a force that grips them, transforms them entirely. From being man-centered, that is, more or less humanistic searchers of the truth, they become God-centered ones. Uppermost in their hearts is now only this question: "What can I do for God, for Jesus Christ, the Man of matchless charm? How can I beat the drums, proclaim, with maximum effect, to every intelligent creature I come across on my way: God is righteous. God is good. He is perfectly righteous, endlessly good. And there is none beside Him." This is the only thing that really matters in the whole world, the full vindication of the lovely name of the downtrodden God. Before this theo-centric spirit has entirely overcome the natural anthropocentricity in man, realism has not yet had any penetration to speak of in the human heart.

The Mystic "Omega" of End-Time Crisis, p. 39.4 - 40.3

So--without controversy--the wholehearted proclamation of the mystery of Christ becoming literal man, a full man in flesh and blood and bones, this is the climax of all realism. It is the truth of the ages that must be received in love. There must be a glad willingness in the true realist to accept to the full this stupendous reality. What must *not* be yielded to, under any circumstances, is the sophisticated attempt at spiritualizing away that glorious fact of a divine condescension. So the great cornerstone, the infallible criterion of Christian realism is right here. You must believe in the concrete reality of the tangible, visible flesh. Even God Himself has not disdained to appear in human form. That is what He has solemnly proclaimed with His own words. Any realism definitely presupposes that candid straightforwardness with which the child of God takes, at its face value, the simple Biblical word about God's total **coming down**, His literal tangible **coming down** to you and me. In other words, there is no room whatsoever left open for giving to basic Biblical truths of this concrete order any kind of spiritualistic interpretation. Its tangible, palpable, rock-bottom realistic nature manifests itself in the way man himself, in his turn, "comes out," literally, visibly, tangibly, and palpably in his own practical life from day to day.

The Mystic "Omega" of End-Time Crisis, p. 41.2

[Christ:] "Notice, my dearly beloved ones: Heaven's fundamental principle of survival is not as complicated, or as contrary to sensible logic, as many of you seem prone to think. On the contrary it is an understandable principle, a natural one, an inevitable one." And then he points out to his more or less reluctant hearers what any normal farmer, with a minimum of common alertness, can observe happening right there in that black soil to which he is so intimately close.

By the way, that very closeness constitutes the great call from heaven in that plain peasant's every-day life. Every Christian, in fact has obviously been called upon to be, not a sophisticated fool, with thoughts rambling far up in the clouds, but, as far as I can make out, just a lowly child. That means *humble*; and "humilis", we remember, means literally **bending down** toward HUMUS, that is toward *earth*. Christ Himself was precisely like that. He was the Humble One. His "bias" was down to earth. His heart's inclination was earthward. I am even speaking about *Earth*, the rebellious planet. This was the literal place He was eternally bound for.

Woe to you and me, by the way, miserable earth-worms, if our Lord had not been just that way: *humilis*. See Matthew 11:25:

"I am lowly in heart."

If Jesus Christ's attitude had not been that lowliness, we would have been lost for ever. But if this is essential to His character, how then could His followers fail to manifest the same characteristic? There is no Christlikeness, it would seem to me, without a fundamental lowliness. But remember now: that includes plainness and childlike simplicity in a person's inmost thinking, in his entire life-style. You must be humble in order to be a true realist. You must have both feet safely planted on the firm ground of plain reality.

Omega II, p. 60.4 - 61.3

I have pointed out, as a main characteristic of Agape, the simple willingness to **go down**. That is a genuine desire of keeping both feet securely planted on the earth (humus). That important aspect of rock-bottom humility is the diametrically opposite of what Eros stands for, namely the furious climb toward the stars, the glorious summits of sophisticated speculations.

Now is it the humble **going down** that has characterized us as a people? Sometimes I fear that there may be, in our every-day organization, a secret principle of just *climbing*. It is almost as if there had been a literal paragraph in our policy manual on how to avoid letting a worker *go down* again, once he has *gone up*. I know, for instance, so many cases in which administrators have felt the need of simply taking a teacher away from the class room for the obvious reason that his teaching was dangerous to the basic formation of his students. But what was the solution arrived at again and again? Simply raising him to the higher position of a leading administrator in the same school, or another office; for of course, you could not let the poor fellow **go down** into a position of lower prestige!

And what was the practical result of this maneuver? That worker's evil influence increased considerably. Now he might for instance be the one who decisively led the appointments of other teachers. The same secret rule seems to hold sway in the case of ministers: One should always see to it that a worker who has had some "superior position" in administration should not be "forced" to "**go down**" ("go back") into the position of a "regular pastor". Is this a policy inspired by the Christian Agape? No, it is just the inherent essence of time-honored Eros.

Omega II, p. 87.2&3

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