

There's some hard hitting stuff in all of today's readings. In the reading from Isaiah we have the image of being spat at and yet setting the face like flint in the belief that God will vindicate the victim: in the Psalm although surrounded by the snares of death the psalmist also reaffirms their faith in God: in the letter of James this faith is condemned if without good works and in the Gospel passage Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ or Messiah but is also rebuked or condemned for not understanding that this Messiah will suffer death in the most shameful way against all the expectations of Jewish scripture, and only then will rise again. Isaiah, the Psalmist, James and Peter are all highlighting our impoverished understanding of reality, our thinking always in terms of opposites or, dare one say, of "false oppositions" bearing in mind that God is one and all is one in God. Dom Gregory was always warning me against false oppositions and I'm still trying to puzzle it out. There's a clue perhaps as to why we keep on doing this in the thinking of Ian McGilchrist who traces our incomplete thinking to the divided brain: our possession of two hemispheres in the brain the left and right, which are asymmetrical and seem to perform different functions but are still necessary to one another to making a person whole, to giving us a complete take on reality. It's a lot more subtle than that but I'm only on page 28 and there's another 500 pages to go, and he's written another immense volume since. It may become clearer in heaven presuming I get there, but one instance may suffice to make it clearer- it's a matter of, "attention". Birds, for example, use one hemisphere and one eye to focus "narrowly and with precision", say to peck out a piece of grain from all the grit and the other hemisphere or eye to maintain a broader perspective, to keep an eye out for predators or rivals for example. Both the narrow and the broader perspective are needed: there's a lot more to say on this in terms of law and spirit but it may go some way to understanding why, like Peter, we so often get it wrong and why we need to hear a larger understanding such as that of Isaiah, the Psalmist, James and Jesus. But this larger understanding comes at a cost for paying attention not only changes how we see the world and one another, and God, but changes us, demands the taking up of a Cross where the horizontal and vertical ways of attending to the world are made one, are fused. We have, in other words, to experience the contradictions of time and space if we are to overcome them. As James and Jesus so clearly say, it's not enough to merely think the matter through, we have to make a sacrifice of ourselves in order to know it, to allow our attention to God and one another to change us into that greater reality we call love.

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