

“What does it mean for you to be preferred?”

“GENERATING TRACES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD”

## 6. The Event Goes on in History (the Temple in Time)

by Luigi Giussani\*

### 1. THE GENERATIVE AND DYNAMIC LAW OF “COMPANIONSHIP”: ELECTION

The spread of Christ’s Body, the Church, the spread of this mysterious unity, is the peak and the meaning of creation that Christ’s Spirit carries out, bearing down on worldly reality, time, and space like a wind, continually transforming it. The event of this organism that God awakened to be the rallying point and the horizon in the world, the point of departure and the final aim of everything, has a law of generation, which is also the law of its development. The kingdom of Christ is like a great organism whose law of creation and growth to the point of fulfilling its destiny, its final end, which is the full glory of Christ,<sup>1</sup> is the law of choice or election. In order that Christ be “everything in everyone,”<sup>2</sup> in order that the glory of Christ appear as the form and content of all things (“In him all things hold together”),<sup>3</sup> God, the Mystery, the Father’s Word, makes a choice or election, a call. [...]

#### *Christ the one Sent*

The great call, the great choice, the great election that God has made in His plan for the world is the call of Christ, the Man who said, “What I see the Father doing, I do always. I do nothing but what I see my Father doing.”<sup>4</sup> This mysterious and eternal election of Christ is the great call that embraces everything and explains everything: the world, the life of each and everyone, the history of peoples and their migrations, whose aim, according to St Paul, is the search for God, for the plan God has for their existence and movement.<sup>5</sup> The election of Jesus Christ coincides with the mission of making the mysterious plan of the Father for all things visible. “I was sent for this.”<sup>6</sup> If anyone living at the time of Christ were to have asked Him, “Who are you? What is your name?” Jesus could have replied, “I am the one sent by the Father” (*missus*, the one sent by the Father).<sup>7</sup> “Sent by an Other”: this expression implies the mystery regarding His origin and His end, the total mystery of his person, which, since »

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:28.

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:11.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 1:17.

<sup>4</sup> See John 5:19–21, 30.

<sup>5</sup> See Acts of the Apostles 17:22ff.

<sup>6</sup> See John 5:36; 6:57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3–25; 20:21.

<sup>7</sup> See Hebrews 3ff.

\* Source: L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades,  
*Generating Traces in the History of the World*,  
McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2010, pp. 36-46.

» it could be experienced and met and touched existentially, is related to the meaning of this word "sent." If we read chapters five to eight of John's Gospel, and then the final chapters, thirteen to seventeen, the word that Christ uses most often in referring to himself is "sent." John speaks insistently of Christ's reply: I am "the one sent by the Father,"<sup>8</sup> the expression amongst men of the Mystery of the Father, the presence amongst men of the Mystery who makes all things, to whom all men are subject. [...]

*The body of Christ which spreads in time and space: the Church*

[...] Jesus Christ is not an isolated presence far back in history, so as to seem a product of the imagination. He is a Presence ten years after His death, a thousand years, two thousand years after His death, right up to the present day, through that new humanity of the saints, an unimaginable human presence. [...]

*Men called*

[...] The Apostles and their successors enter with Christ into the flow of his Spirit and share in Jesus's own mission. Their fundamental function, the task they are chosen for, is to introduce mankind into a definitive relationship with the Mystery of God. And along with the bishops and the priests, all Christians are called to be part of this choice and of the responsibility for this function.<sup>9</sup>

"He called those he wanted"; "all flesh that the Father puts into his hands"; "those whom he wanted." This is the ontological foundation, the constituent factor of the Christian vocation as a task in the world. In first place lies the choice that Christ makes of us—choice, election. For human presumption and for present-day ideology, nothing is more irrational and anti-democratic than this word—"election," being chosen; but without this word there would be nothingness.

There was nothingness, the nothingness of everything, but more precisely your nothingness, my nothingness. The word "election" sets the limit, the boundary between nothingness and being. Being blossoms out of nothingness, as a choice, as election. There is no other condition that can be proposed, no other premise imaginable. This choice, this election, is the pure freedom of the Mystery of God in action, the absolute freedom of the Mystery that expresses itself.

The Mystery of God, which expresses itself in freedom of choice or in election, vibrates, it can and must vibrate, with fear and trembling, with absolute humility, in human preference, because human preference is the shadow of the choice of God's freedom. But the choice of God's freedom, which chooses One, hidden like a tiny flower in Our Lady's womb, is for the whole world. So the humble echo of preference, full of fear and trembling, does not exist unless out of love for the world, for the benefit to be brought to the world, out of passion for the world. And how wonderful is this supreme paradox of a preference that chooses and elects so as to embrace the world, so as to draw the world along with itself. In making this preference, choice and election coincide with a love that fixes itself on every living person, on all flesh. "He has given him power over all flesh."<sup>10</sup> With the man He chooses and elects, Christ shares His power over all flesh.

<sup>8</sup> See John 8:25ff.

<sup>9</sup> See *Il Senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno* (Milano: BUR 1994), 65–6.

<sup>10</sup> See John 17:2.