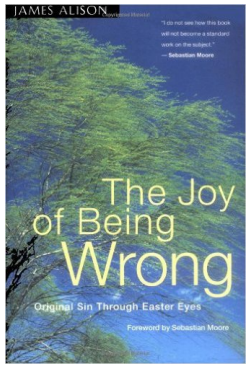
SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — March 15, 2026

Excerpt from John Dear's *Lazarus, Come Forth!* regarding John 9 (see the full John Dear Excerpt Page for today):

> Jesus walks by and sees "a man born blind from birth" — the word *anthropos* meaning not just a single "man" but also all of "humanity." John takes us into deep water again. He places an allegory on our hands. He's portraying the human moral condition: we are all of us blind from birth. When the visionary Jesus heals the blind man, he heals all of us from darkness into the light of vision that we might see one another and live in peace.

(Note: in Greek the simplest word for a single male human being, a "man," is *andros*. John uses the word *anthropos*, which can also indicate "humankind" in general.)

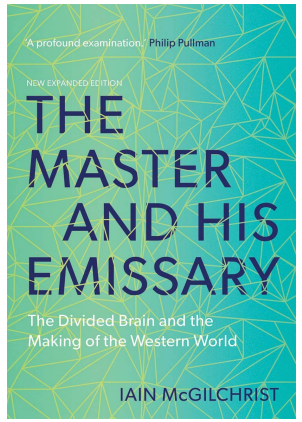


I have found John 9 to be groundbreaking in my life at least once — now, beginning this week, perhaps twice.

The first time was thirty years ago when I met Girardian theologian James Alison. John 9 is the core text from the Bible that helps to understand how Girard proposes that we have a scapegoating structure to our civilizations, represented by the Pharisees in this story. I have a separate Excerpt Page for Alison's reflections on John 9 from a Girardian view. Here's a key portion:

> Jesus' final comment, "For judgement I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind," is his assessment of the whole story. . . . It is not that Jesus simply abolishes the notion of judgement or is merely much more of a judge than the other judges: the sense in which Jesus is a judge is a subversion from within of the notion of judgement. The judgement that excluded the former blind man is revealed as the judgement (also discernment) that the expellers are really blind. In this story then we watch a revolution in the understanding of sin: . . . at the beginning of the tale, sin was considered in terms of some sort of defect that excludes the one bearing the defect. At the end of the tale sin is considered as the act of exclusion: the real blindness is the blindness which is not only present in those who exclude, but actually grows and intensifies during the act of exclusion. This change of perception is exactly the change that was wrought by the resurrection of the crucified Christ. . . . Sin is recast entirely in the light of the casting out of Jesus.

Key is seeing that 'blindness' is a metaphor in this story for seeing the world in terms of Us vs. Them. Jesus came to teach us God's loving way of seeing the world in terms of forgiveness and healing such that we can work on simply being Us.



My new possibly groundbreaking experience with John 9 came this week on my Girardian Zoom meeting on today's readings. One of the participants suggested Iain McGilchrist's acclaimed scientific study on neuroscience — on how which side of the brain is master makes a difference in how we see and engage the world. Here's a cover blurb:

> Until recently, the left hemisphere of our brain has been seen as the 'rational' side, the superior to the right. But is this distinction true? McGilchrist argues that while our left brain makes a wonderful servant, it is a poor master.

Hence, our Western world based on Us vs Them thinking? I will be further exploring the brain science behind this.

But I already am familiar with the Christian 'right brain' practice of seeking to live in God's loving way of seeing and engaging the world: daily silent prayer and meditation. Hence, the new book by John Dear on *Universal Love*, the story of practicing meditation with a young student on how to live in God's peace (see John Dear Excerpt Page).