Excerpt

Exclusion and Embrace, Revised Edition 2019

But how dare God forget, we may protest! Let God “forgive and forget” the insults God has suffered, but what “right” does God have to forget all the brutalities done to so many human victims? Would not a loss of *this* memory amount to an embrace between the perpetrator and God—a collusion of the perpetrator’s short memory and God’s forgetting—that would blur over suffering and death and leave the victims forgotten? Indeed, if God is the God of the victims (which is what the cross tells us God is), God cannot forget as long as the victims remember. With a loud voice the souls of those who have been slaughtered keep reminding God: “Holy and true Master, how long ...” (Rev 6:10 CEB). But how long should victims remember? Must victims remain eternally enslaved by what Nietzsche called “the spirit of revenge”?[[1]](#footnote-1)[1] Should not *they too* forget in the end, so that they themselves can be redeemed, the former (transformed) perpetrators dressed in white robes, and both reconciled to each other? What speaks so loudly against the victim’s forgetting is, of course, the thought—an abysmal thought—of “dressing the former perpetrator in a white robe.” I wrote these words down drawn by the Pauline vision of justified *sinners—*andimmediately erased them. My mind flooded with the images of burned villages, destroyed cities, and raped women from the recent history of my native country Croatia. It seems impossible for me to embrace a *četnik* with bloody hands just as it seems impossible for a Jew to embrace a Nazi or that mother to embrace the tormentor who let his dogs tear her son to pieces![[2]](#footnote-2)[2] No redeemed future is imaginable in which perpetrators—even judged and transformed perpetrators!—are dressed in white robes. Everything in us rebels against the image. Yet everything we know about the God of the cross demands that we seriously entertain it. If we do, the question will no longer be how dare God forget, but how can God, without forgetting the victims, help heal their memories.

1. [1] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [2] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)