

Child's love, that love of Jesus, love of the Mother for her Son, the love of that Son for the Mother, the love of both for me! We can think about it—and if God gave us tonight for instance to dream about it, what dreams would be ours! . . . We should meditate again and again on the marriage feast of Cana. . . . What can give us the sense of home? I do not know—the sense of just being loved. Of course, love always means serving in some way; the greater the love the greater service rendered. If our love for our dear Lady is great and understanding, the water of religious life shall be turned into wine. And every moment in our life will be too good to be true . . . of course, supernaturally true!

THE MIND OF CHRIST

BY

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Let this mind also be in you which was in Christ Jesus.



GOOD exercise for Lent would be the study and sharing in the mind of Christ Jesus as it was immediately before and during his Passion.

St John in his record of the discourse of the Last Supper enables us to enter deeply into the mind of our Lord immediately before his Passion. He was about to be 'made sin for us', to identify himself with and do penance and make atonement for the sins of the whole world from the very beginning down to the end of time. He was about to become 'a worm and no man', 'a man of sorrows', abject and despised, and he foreknew to the minutest detail all the agony and dereliction which lay before him. And yet, his mind did not apparently dwell on these things, but on his inner life as the Second Person of the adorable Trinity and on the participation in that life by man which he had been sent to bring about, and to which his Passion and death were directed. 'I came forth from the Father and I came into the world; and now I leave the world and I return to the Father.' Here we have his eternal and temporal processions clearly referred to.

Verbum manens apud Patrem.

This last discourse is full of the cry 'Abba, Father', which was the cry of the whole being of the eternal and only-begotten Son; and the same attitude reveals itself on the few occasions when the silent Word emerged from his silence during the Passion, for almost every time, the word 'Father' is on his lips:

'Father—if it be possible—but thy will be done.'

'If I ask my Father he will send me twelve legions of angels.'

'Father, forgive them. . . .'

'Father, into thy hands. . . .'

The love of the Father is dwelt upon, his love for his Son, and for all those who will be incorporated with him—'This is my beloved Son'. A love which drove him to send his only Begotten into the world, and which will soon manifest itself in another temporal mission, that of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter. And where the Son and the Holy Spirit of Love have taken up their abode, there also will the Father be. The entire theology of the mystery of the blessed Trinity is found in this last discourse, wherein the eternal Word shows us where, despite all the preoccupations of his active life, his mind has always been.

The love of God—the motive of all his works—and his Glory which is the end, here is his mind. He himself is the Father's glory, and so reminding his Father that he has fully accomplished his essential duty even as man, he asks, almost as a reward, for his own glorification, and for that of the Church which he has founded.

Then, turning to those whom he is to leave, he explains to them the nature of their incorporation into this his life, and warns them of the consequences of such other-worldliness—joy will be theirs, but it will be a joy in and through sorrow. Yet all the while, just as he has not been alone, but the Father has always been with him, so neither will they be alone. He himself will leave them in one way, but only so as to be able to return to them in a more spiritual and more perfect way. He will not go but will return and he will send the Paraclete for whose coming his departure is a necessary preparation, and where they are, there will the Father be. In the midst of all the sorrows and persecutions which the world will inflict on those who tread in his footsteps, the blessed Trinity is to be their home, and they to be a home to it, and in this union of love with God they will be united to each other 'that they may be one in us'.

When the actual Passion begins a veil is drawn over the soul of Christ which is plunged into a darkness which faith can only tentatively penetrate. Yet we can surmise from the few words and actions which are related something of what must have been passing in that holy of holies during the hours of suffering and dereliction.

All things which are made are, as St Thomas is fond of reminding us, but an image of what has been from all eternity, and of all things created the holy Soul of the Incarnate Word is the most complete

and perfect expression of the life of God; and that soul is the created expression of the mind of God.

The eternal Word, the only begotten Son is the Son, precisely because he receives his whole being from the Father. And having received all, he returns all save the inalienable property of Sonship and, from this double current of giving and receiving, proceeds the Holy Spirit who is their mutual love. And so in the human life of the Word incarnate, all can be summed up as a receiving all from the Father, which expresses itself in absolute devotion to the will of the Father and a returning of all to him by an absolute abandonment into his hands.

Egressus ejus a Patre

Regressus ejus ad Patrem,

can refer to his human life in its entirety as well as to his life within the Trinity. With the clarity of the most perfect human mind ever created, he saw all things as the expression of the Father's will, to do which was his meat and drink:

'Behold I come to do thy will.'

'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.'

'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' was the outcome of this attitude of mind. He saw his executioners not as such, but as instruments of the Father's love, accomplishing, though they knew it not, the most complete expression of that love. And as he saw everything in terms of the Father's will as coming down from the Father of Lights, so, too, all his own acts were in a sense not his, but those of the Father.

'I work the works of him that sent me—'

'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.'

It could not, of course, be otherwise, for the eternal Son of the Father could not change his essential nature, which is to be a relation to the Father; to receive and give back all to him. The *Regressus* has its consummation in the *Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*, of Calvary's hour of utmost dereliction, but it had been the same from the first moment of human existence. His every breath and every fibre of his being was an offering, a sacrifice, a giving back to the Father of all he had and was and did, the absolute surrender of the most perfect of human wills.

These two aspects of his inner life are manifest in the Passion: 'Shall I not drink the chalice which my Father has given me? Father, thy will be done. . . .'

All is seen and accepted as coming from him and all is gathered up and given back:

'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'.

And then follows the *Consummatum est*.

Another insight into the mind of Christ during these hours of suffering and abandonment is found in the tranquillity and peacefulness of his bearing, and his silent endurance of all that came to him. That his human sensitive nature was in anguish he allowed to be seen in the Agony in the Garden, but even there it was not allowed to disturb the tranquillity of his soul anchored in God by the hypostatic union. As Mother Julian puts it, 'God is our peace—he is very rest', and this is her way of expressing his immutability, his absolute transcendence of all created things. God cannot suffer change, cannot be injured or pained or hurt; but the bearing of the incarnate Word, who took a human nature precisely so as to be able to suffer and die, shows us how to transcend the trials and persecutions of the world, so as to participate even in this life in the eternal rest which is God himself.

Again, Christ was God; God is Goodness and Love, and goodness and love must give and diffuse themselves; and even in the midst of these, the most appalling sufferings of mind and body which human nature has ever undergone, the mind of Christ was not turned in upon itself, but retained its accustomed sensitiveness to the needs of others.

And although his state of passivity was parallel to that stage in the spiritual life when the soul must principally cease to act save for the act of absolute surrender to the activity of God, still he was not blind to the calls of charity, nor sparing of the use of his power when the occasion presented itself. Thus, immediately after his agony and sweat of blood, he healed the servant's ear, and ensured the safety of the disciples who abandoned him. After the insults and blasphemies in the halls of Annas and Caiphas, he converted by a merciful glance the disciple who had denied him; when his death was obviously inevitable and he was exhausted by the scourging, he endeavoured to open Pilate's eyes to the truth; as he staggered beneath the weight of the cross, he spoke words of comfort to the lamenting daughters of Jerusalem; and when in the throes of his death agony, he granted pardon to the repentant thief, arranged for his mother's future, and in so doing rewarded the only disciple who had had the courage to follow him to Calvary. There may sometimes be a temptation for us to become so immersed in and preoccupied with our own troubles and sufferings, great or small, real or imaginary, as to be blind to those of others; to be so intent on being what we call 'true to our contemplative vocation', passive under the divine action, that we consider ourselves exempt from the

calls of fraternal charity, forgetting that, as St Catherine says, it is only by 'love of our neighbour who has not first loved us, that one can make any sort of equal return of love to God, who loves us before we are, and by his love brings us into being'. There is nothing of that attitude in the incarnate Word, and here, as always, it is his mind which we must have in us.

The last three hours on Calvary, hours of silence broken only by the seven words, provide, none the less, as it were in cameo, a clear expression of the soul of Christ as it had been, as it was to the end, with all its characteristic traits clearly evident. Fr Bede Jarrett calls these seven words the revealing of our Lord's state of prayer; and one is reminded of Fr Martindale's translation of the psalm, *Ego autem orabam*, as, 'I am prayer', in the Hebrew. If the prophet of old could be bold enough to call himself prayer incarnate, how much more fittingly could the incarnate Word make that claim. Prayer, in its highest sense of contemplation, and a contemplation which flowed out into action; love of God expressing itself in love of man; that was his whole existence. As God knows and loves himself so that all his works *ad extra* are but the effulgence, the out-flow of his own inner Being: so the soul of Christ, united to the Word by the hypostatic union, unceasingly contemplated God in his essence, God in his works, and all things in God; and participating in the knowledge of God it participated also in his love, love of himself and of all that he had made. So, in these last hours, God is foremost in his thoughts—Father forgive—'My God why hast thou forsaken me?' 'Father into thy hands. . . .' Then in God he sees all those for love of whom he hung on the cross—his mother, the innocent, the guilty, the repentant sinner—even his enemies—all the souls for whom he lived and died. Even in the last hour it is still the case of *contemplare et aliis tradere contemplata*.

Then, too, there is the 'I thirst', which Mother Julian interprets as 'the ghostly thirst', the 'love-longing', which would draw all men to himself—'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself', and which will never be quenched until the last of the elect shall be safely united to the glorified head: another aspect of the infinite love which, while going out to all things, at the same time draws them all in to itself. He thirsts, too, for his Father's glory, for the accomplishment of his will. Before his Passion he had declared, 'I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straightened until it be accomplished'. Now he still thirsts, but the end is at hand. Every jot and tittle of the prophecies which had expressed that will have been fulfilled, the end for which he became Incarnate has been achieved, all that God could give has been given.

Consummatum est—all is complete, perfect—the created plan for him who is the uncreated Exemplar of all that is, has been fully worked out to its last detail—and in the process the human life of him in whom all things are life has been burnt up and consumed as a holocaust in the fire of love. Nothing more remains to be done, so with a loud cry he gave up the ghost. ‘Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.’

‘I came forth from the Father and I came into the world and now I leave the world and I go to the Father.’ *Egressus ejus a Patre; Regressus ejus ad Patrem. Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum, Amen.*

PRIVATE REVELATIONS: WARP AND WOOF

BY

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AT times, reading the strange stories of the Saints, we may feel: ‘This incident cannot be true: it jars on my artistic sense; it conflicts with my knowledge of history; it is “out of keeping” with theology’. Then we may feel irreverent; that it may be we who are ‘out of tune’ with sanctity. On the one hand, ever since the future Benedict XIV’s *De . . . beatificatione* etc., ii. c. 32, it has been clear that the Church does not and cannot demand the assent of faith to any ‘private revelation’; but ecclesiastical approbation can ask our human belief in them according to the rules of prudence which offer them to us as probable and piously believable. The encyclical *Pascendi* (ASS; vol. xl; p. 649: 1907) says that the Church, when allowing the publication of such events, does not go guarantee for their truth, but simply *does not prevent* matters being published for which motives of human belief are not lacking. On the other hand, it would be rash positively to disbelieve what ecclesiastical approbation has often placed before us, such as the experiences of St Margaret Mary or St Bernadette, though even here it is the doctrine rather than the visions that is approved, as notably, too, in the case of great saints like SS. Bernard, Teresa or Catherine of Genoa. But it is not merely a question of belief or disbelief. An apparently preternatural experience may be genuinely divine in origin, yet the account of it may contain elements of purely human origin, and we are positively invited—it is a duty—to try to disentangle these. We recall a few principles admitted by all, adding illustrations that may seem to us apt.