

a bond whose depths were revealed when on the cross Christ handed over the care of his mother to St John.

The crucial point is, however, that during those long years of mental passion Christ had no one to whom he could turn for comfort or sympathy. His followers even slept while he was in the Garden. 'Abba, Father, he said, all things are possible to thee; take away this chalice from before me; only as thy will is, not as mine is.' (Mark 14, 36.) This is the cry of a person at the end of his tether, but God's timing is perfect and the necessary strength was given.

The compassion of Christ is also shown by the timing of his death. By his crucifixion Christ virtually abolished crucifixion. To be crucified became an honour, since it recalled the death by which God had delivered the world; hence by dying for us in this way Christ spared many others in the future from suffering this ghastly torture. It was as if God had said, 'Man has devised such an unspeakably brutal death for his fellow men that the Heavens cannot bear it any longer'. Then it was that Christ volunteered to take our humanity. God's timing is perfect.

If we ever doubt the perfection of God's timing (and who does not?) we have only to meditate on the Passion to recall ourselves to sanity. If we sometimes think that the physical and mental tortures of this age are worse than history has ever known and are thus unendurable, the Passion of Christ and his foreknowledge of the Cross should help us to see things in perspective again. God's timing is perfect.



THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE APOSTLE THROUGH PREACHING¹

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THE apostle, at least for the thesis of this paper, is some sort of a preacher. The apostle is one who is sent by God to spread the Gospel, spread the Kingdom of God, extend the actuality of the Mystical Body; and thus he is sent to break

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the bread of the Word of God to the multitudes. We need not at this stage indicate how the apostle should preach, for there are many ways in which he may fulfil his mission. But the apostle to be a true apostle must in some way preach the Word of God to others. And it is the purpose of this paper to ascertain what effect, if any, this activity of preaching has upon the apostle himself.

I have suggested elsewhere that in order to have a suitable effect upon his hearers the apostle must also be something of a poet. Now the object of the enquiry is not the effect on the hearers but the effect of speaking upon the speaker. We might begin by asking whether the absence of the poetic genius makes it possible for the preacher to preach without in any sense being moved himself. There are occasions indeed when the histrionic talent of the preacher causes as great an emotional disturbance in his own heart as upon the hearts of his perhaps bewildered audience. There was an experienced English Dominican missionary whose powers of creative imagination were so effective in calling up the scenes of a deathbed or the judgment that he brought upon himself a permanent and irrational terror of death which required a longish illness before his own departure to dispel the horrific images of death. We have all experienced, perhaps with a certain tedium, the preacher who whips himself up into a frenzy of tears or anger. No doubt all this has some connection with the creative genius of the poet reacting on himself. But this is not the effect of apostolic preaching, which is concerned not with fear of death nor with tears or frenzies but with the conveyance of the living Word from God into the hearts of men.

The effect, therefore, of preaching in the sense in which we are using it here, is that of a union between the mind and heart of the listener and the mind and heart of God. We have said that the apostle is concerned to extend the actuality of the Mystical Body and this is simply to assist in making real and actual the unity of the members with the Body of Christ. There is no doubt, as we have suggested in a previous paper, that the preacher in order to achieve this must be something of a poet, since his field of activity is not so much the essence of the souls of his hearers, upon whom the grace of God works immediately and without means or instruments, but upon that wider, vaguer sphere of the psyche, part soul, part emotional reaction to stimuli, part mind, part imagination, part will, part passion. And the 'poetic' apostle works upon

this soil until it is ready for the seed of God's word to fall.

The preaching apostle, therefore, has a dual union to achieve, first a union between himself and God's Word—and this is not simply to be looked at from God's point of view, for the apostle is a man whose whole psyche and personality should be tuned to the Word of God—and then secondly his union with his hearers whom he must prepare for the reception of the seed of the Word. In this way I think we should distinguish the apostle clearly from the prophet, who can be worked on by the divine power of revelation irrespective of his own state of mind and soul. The prophet can be a pure vehicle or instrument. In this sense it may be that many people regard the teacher's task to be that of a certain type of prophet. They think that the teacher is filled up with knowledge, truths, facts, observations, like a dammed-up mill stream—and then at the appropriate moment the sluice gates are opened and all the knowledge is poured out through other channels into other minds. The apostle does not simply store up doctrine, and explanations thereof in his mind to be given out at the appropriate time, standing up in a pulpit remote and cut off from the people, delivering a message. This may be true of certain types of prophecy, where the prophet receives a message of which he has no understanding and simply emits what he has heard without considering its relation to himself. 'One man must die for the people.' Such prophesying has no effect on the prophet. The apostle who studied and prepared himself in this way for his preaching would gain little from his apostolate, which in fact would be likely to prove a more or less fruitless one.

Some preachers in fact become so 'interested' in their subject that they tend to become simply store-houses of distinctions, qualifications, reservations and the like. This interest may become so intense as to prevent the apostle from committing himself to the truths and so proving a barrier to the first sort of union which is necessary in his preaching, the union with the Word of God. This is more noticeable in intellectual circles. In universities, for example, we frequently meet people who are 'interested' in religion, or even interested in the Catholic Church; they discuss the subject incessantly without beginning to approach the faith, far from committing themselves to God, held back by their mental preoccupations. In a lesser degree the preacher may be so interested in the doctrine of transubstantiation as to become de-

void of any devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to live out of touch with the living presence of the Word therein. Needless to say they leave their audiences cold and bored as distinctions and explanations follow one another in an admirably logical sequence.

It is clear, then, that the apostle will not be effective in his mission unless he removes certain obstacles and avoids certain dangers in his own psychological make-up. Though he keep his eye primarily on the work to which he has been sent, his first pre-occupation must be to remove obstacles in himself to union with the Word. I do not speak here of the obvious need to live in a state of grace, but of the more subtle need to form his own psyche so that it may become receptive of the Word of God—the need to preserve his imagination and his mind from becoming fixed in his own small world. He must remove the obstacles of a sluggish sensitivity, a laziness about the training of his interior senses; he must clear away the habit of attachment to his own ideas and enthusiasms.

The human activity in the reception of sacramental grace is that of removing obstructions (*removens prohibens*); and this is the first objective of the apostle, removing the debris of his own personality. But also he has to clear away the debris of sluggish sensibility, of stupidity, of hardness of heart in his listeners. He has to become united with his hearers, who begin as a rule by erecting a protective barricade against the apostle. No union will be brought about simply by giving them the plain truth. Their armour of resistance to a preacher will be quite thick enough to throw off all his nicely fashioned arrows of finely and accurately phrased statements of exact truth. He must first leap the barricades, associate himself so closely with them that they find themselves associating with a friend and throw off all their defences. This does not of course imply talking down to the congregation from the height of the pulpit, fondly imagining that the apostle need only throw crumbs of the bread of the Word on the head of the multitude for them to open their mouths to catch it. This bread must be distributed as the Eucharist is distributed from hand to mouth, often first receiving it oneself: priest and people are associated in the one act, and the apostle also in his preaching is communicating with his hearers. This destruction of 'sermon-resistance' or 'apostle-resistance' among the people therefore demands a great humility. The pulpit raised above the heads of the congregation may be an

unfortunate physical necessity; but in reality the apostle will be the same person preaching to a thousand or talking personally to a single individual. He will be entering into the sensibility of each of his hearers, sharing by sympathy in their personal difficulties in life in this world of ours, he will share their enthusiasms, their anxieties, their way of thought and life. He is a sinner mixing with sinners, not to increase wickedness, but sharing in sin to turn his and their eyes towards the divine Word. If you stand in a busy street and stare intently at a chimney-pot it is said that you soon gather a crowd round you, all craning their necks to see what is afoot; then lost in the crowd you trip quietly away. Staring at the heavens the apostle does not trip away, yet he is lost in the crowd of his hearers. They become intent upon the glories of which he is speaking and oblivious of the speaker. By means of this sort, he clears away the debris of indifference and sluggishness. And association with one's audience on an equal footing requires true humility, an admission that their feelings and thought-forms are real, that life is a flowing stream of actual existence in the individual listener as in the vast congregation and not the quick cinematographic succession of 'still' abstractions. The apostle then must remove the obstacle of distance and height, the obstacle of being formed in a different mental and spiritual tradition from his hearers, the obstacle of self-confidence in the possession of the truth.

I do not mean to suggest that the apostle has to become identified in every way with the people to whom he is sent. That would not mean sanctification; quite the contrary. He has not to *become* a sinner. He has not to set out to experience all that the 'men of the world' experience. Such a suggestion is obviously absurd. But he has first of all to realize that he is *already* a sinner, and this self-knowledge will set him among his fellows as well as keep him at God's feet.

It is by accepting reality in himself and in the world around that the apostle gains the means of communication with men. He communicates, that is, he lives a life that is common with the men of today. He does not try to put the clock back, imagining himself another St Dominic preaching to the Albigenses or yet a St Paul expounding the resurrection to the Athenians. Brought up on the great traditions of the Church, particularly on the tradition of St Thomas Aquinas, the apostle has to beware lest he uses the lan-

guage of a past age—perhaps even he may have learnt to live in a past age, like the scholarly lady who falls in love with the historical figure she studies. Such people cease to communicate with the present. But communicating with modern man is an ascetic practice. The apostle has to penetrate into homes with the wireless blaring or even sit through a silly film in a dark and stuffy hall.

But let us leave the ascetical side of the apostle's life in which he learns the moral virtues by the very fact of fulfilling his mission effectively, and turn now to the most important aspect, the growth of the apostle's contemplation in the midst of his activities. The preacher who pours himself out in his sermons and writings in such a way that he has nothing left inside himself and falls back empty and exhausted is not fulfilling his mission. He has been sowing chaff, not seed. Fr Bede Jarrett used to say of the preacher's voice that if he trained it truly the more he spoke the stronger it should become, just as the more muscle you use the more muscle you develop. In a far deeper and truer way the more one speaks the truth the more one possesses the truth. I believe it is St Thomas who points out the contrast between material and spiritual wealth. The more goods or money you give away or spend, the less you have of your own; but the good things of the spirit, the insight into truth, the love of God and men and even the general culture of a well-balanced human life, these things you can never distribute in such a way that you are left with less. On the contrary you pour out these gifts on others and in doing so make firm your own possession of them and acquire even greater spiritual wealth. Thus, the apostle in expounding the great mysteries of the faith has to look at them first with growing appreciation and then he has to see them as they appear to his listeners. He begins to see other facets of these truths. And if he has the patience and the zeal to discuss them with a non-believer or with a half-hearted Christian or with a fervent contemplative—and this is certainly his duty as opportunity arises—so will he extend his own experience of the Word of God. This must be the fact in every instruction of a convert; so many of the misunderstandings begin to be overcome as instructor and convert combine their experiences and understanding of the truth.

Perhaps for an Editor the same may be said for the manner in which he considers all the contributions that are laid on his table. If he has his own set views and no contributor is allowed to

publish anything in his review which does not fit in with his own pretty theories, then he is failing as an editor and as an apostle. But if he approaches each MS with sympathy, i.e. with the beginning of a unity with his contributor, then his own understanding of the truth will be deepened even by the MSS which he rejects. The Editor must be *en rapport* with his contributors as well as with his readers, and that unity is part of his contemplative life, part of his unity with the Truth, Goodness and Beauty of God. Theoretically, then, the more MSS the Editor reads as well as the more he publishes the greater contemplative he becomes.

So it is that the theological virtues develop in the true apostle to the degree in which he is fulfilling his mission. He loves his stupid listeners or readers more intensely the more he speaks or writes to them about the love of God; and at the same time and through the same work his love of God increases. Closely associated with the action of the Eucharist, the action of the apostle makes for actual charity and for unity. By unity and charity, wisdom and understanding take greater possession of the preacher. Thus the Holy Trinity dwells more and more completely in the heart of the apostle to the degree in which he is sharing these infinitely good things with others. The apostle is a means towards the unification of the Mystical Body in his own person; his action draws God closer to himself and men closer to God in the living words he speaks or writes. In all this work of unification, the work of the theological virtues which synthesise all other activities by informing them with wisdom and love, the apostle who is true to his vocation is sanctifying himself almost without thinking of himself. For he is entering more and more fully into the unity of Christ's Body. This work of his then increases as his life continues, approaching more and more closely to the unity of heaven, the Vision where all unity is finally perfected. This is growth in contemplation, i.e. growth in the fulness of the unity of Christ's body through the theological virtues.

The apostle draws men and God towards each other in his action and in so doing makes for an extension of the contemplative life, makes for the fulness of vision in heaven. If this does not sanctify him, nothing can.