

partially true is that the Christian so easily adopts the standards around him; he takes on a grievance, he does not see the evil in himself, and very shortly he is employing the same technique as his pagan foes instead of spreading the good news. At all costs the Christian must resist resentment; and if he would do that he must resist facile classifications into camps of the evil and the good.

People sometimes ask what they can do to help in a small way to establish a new peace. They think in terms of outward activities, and the task appears infinitely greater than any individual could compass even with the help of God's grace. But it is necessary always to begin at home, to make the first steps with one's own legs. If we are to achieve anything in a wider sphere we must seek peace first by overcoming pity, the wrong sort of pity which is called a grievance. If the Church is persecuted and such men as Archbishop Stepinac are unjustly condemned, Christians must be ready to go out to their persecutors with love, not to withdraw in distrust and hatred. We look for peace, not pity; for grace upon men, not grievance in a clique; and every Christian can contribute to that by never feeling sorry for himself, nor yet sorry in this self-centred way for those whom, identified with himself, he sees crushed under the Russian boot.

THE EDITOR

THE SCRIPTURES AS WORD OF GOD¹

THE Scriptures are God's Word spoken. They are not simply word *about* God, or about his Word or about his saving work. They *are* his Word, and therefore his work: for his Word is creative; what it says it thereby does. (In Hebrew, *Dabar* means both Word and matter, affair, etc.) The words of Scripture do not point to what God does; they *are* what he does. And it is necessary not so much to follow their guidance as to participate in their Mystery. So it is, analogously, of a creative work of art. For example, a poem does not refer to something apart from itself which one must apprehend: it *is* something, into which one must enter.

In the words of Scripture a mystery of creation is contained. They are intrinsically creative. And what is there already created is the mind of the Prophet who utters them. For the prophet is one who conceives the Word of God in his mind (in his 'heart'), by the power of the Spirit, and brings it forth, utters it. He possesses, that is to say he is really possessed by, the Word of God. The prophetic utterance of the Word of God involves a divine work of creation; it means that the Word of God has in some sense become incarnate.

¹ Originally a paper written to provide raw material for discussion; and reproduced here without alteration.

What happens in the divine history, of which the Scriptures are not just a record but an embodiment or a sacrament, is to be compared to what happened in the very creation of the world. The mystery there displays the chaotic material of life being moved over by the Spirit and so enlivened that it becomes responsive to the Word of God and out of the womb of chaos the cosmos is born. *Dixit autem Dominus . . . et factum est ita. Dixit autem Dominus . . . et factum est ita.* And so it is with the historical world of God's gracious revelation. It is engendered in the Scriptures: they are that world come into being, or in process of coming into being. They are the Word of God being uttered in the flesh of man.

It was for Israel not simply to listen to words concerning God, but to participate in a mystery of the Word of God. The prophetic word *was* that mystery, was very Truth, as the Scriptures would say. It was for Israel to believe the prophetic word. And when they would not believe, that sign of the Virgin and Child is the perfect sign of the mystery of which faith is the enactment, the perfect sign of the thing that they refused. To receive the prophetic word—or to believe the Scripture—is to participate in a mystery in which the Word of God has been conceived and brought forth. Faith does not bring a receptive mind to bear *on* the Word of Scripture. Reception of the Word is part of the mystery *of* the Word. The relationship of Faith to the Word is a creational one. Faith is a hearing-and-doing. Faith cannot be without works, because the Word to which it is a conforming is itself a work of creation, a Word received and uttered. 'This is the work of God that ye believe. . . .' (*John 6 : 29.*)

Israel heard the words of the prophets, but without entering into the mystery of the Word. For that, they would have had to be like prophets themselves. 'Would that all the people were prophets'. 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet'. They heard the words, but they did not hear or receive the Prophetic Word as such, the creative Word.

And so that constant fundamental reproach: that whereas God has sent them the prophets, rising up early and sending, they have not heard them. And the tragic words describing the career of Issiah and of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel are taken up and applied to Christ in the New Testament.

But on the other hand there was God's promise that Prophecy would not fail. In this lay the Messianic Hope of Israel; in this, along with the Royal-Priestly promises. The spirit of prophecy would be poured out on all flesh; there would be one upon whom the seven-fold spirit would rest, of wisdom, understanding, etc.; one in whose mouth the Word of God would be a sharp and irresistible sword etc. 'And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Issiah. And he *opened the book*, and found the place where it was written: "The

spirit of the Lord is upon me' . . . ' The great Prophet had arisen; God had visited his people. (cf. *Heb.* 1 : 1.)

He was baptised, and the Spirit rested on him. 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him'. The Spirit 'moved over' the Flesh of him who was truly baptised, and the Word of God was given birth to, given perfect utterance to; so that whereas the prophets of old had spoken the Word of God with which they were possessed, the man who now speaks is *one* with the Word which he speaks. The Word has been made Flesh. As man he perfectly receives, conceives and utters the Word—which is not his own ('My words are not mine') but the Father's, thus conforming to the type of the prophet; being fashioned by, created in the Word that he utters. But here is the Fulness of Creation, here is the perfect New Creature. Because here is one in whom the Word of God is perfectly conceived and uttered. Because of his baptism, because of his sacrifice, he was able to take the Word of God into his heart. And so now the Word that *he* speaks is this Word of the perfect mystery of Creation. To believe *his* word is to participate in his baptism, in his passion, necessarily. For Faith is not the subscribing to some finished statement that Christ makes, but the conceiving and uttering of the Word of God in one's life in union with Christ.

The word of the prophets, and now the word of Christ itself embodies the divine work, the divine reality. The word of the Gospel, the word of Scripture, contains the whole mystery of Christ, is one with him in all the reality of his life. So it is that to proclaim the word of the Gospel or to proclaim Christ are the same thing. To believe the word of Scripture is to give birth to the word of God, is to participate in the life of Christ. It is a word that does not reach us at all except by this mystery of participation. So in our Lord's teaching, in his parables, for example, the undertone of mystery in which it is conveyed to us that it is only by sharing in his Passion that we can hear his word at all. His words are meaningless if taken as mere moral statements or religious propositions. To receive his word is to utter his word, for his word *is* divine word uttered in his life, a mystery of creation.

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So prophecy is fulfilled, the Scriptures are fulfilled, in the coming of this great Prophet. But it is not that Old Testament prophecy and Scripture now become obsolete, having fulfilled their purpose; or that they are merely serviceable for proof-texts, in the cause of apologetics. They were never a collection of texts; they were, and they remain, the word of God creating the world, by being uttered in the world, out of the stuff of human life. Christ's word does not supersede this word of the Old Testament. It resumes it and

fulfills it. When a sentence has been finished, the first words do not become obsolete. We do not pass now from the religion of a book, for example, to religion based on reality, the reality, that is to say, of Christ. The words of the Old Testament are equally a reality. It is a reality that has been fulfilled, a world that has been finished. And the word that contains this mystery of the world that is built up and finished in Christ, that is included in Christ's Body, is the word of the whole Bible, the Old and New Testament together. Christ in no way destroys the prophets; he subsumes them. A mystical body has come into being when Christ fulfills the Old Testament.

All that is to be abolished is any 'literalist' acceptance of the Old Testament, which would make the glory to reside in some unfinished portion of the whole. The glory shines from the flesh of Christ, but it shines back into the whole of Scripture, making it one glorious body, full of the holy Spirit. Thus it is that the spiritual sense of Scripture is established.

And the spiritual Israel has come into being; and so also Mother Israel, according to the spirit; though the mass of the Israelites according to the flesh do not know it, do not recognise it. Those who truly recognise it are of the Church of Christ, are members of the new Israel—which is no second Israel, only called Israel at all out of symbolic politeness or *pietas*, but the same Israel as it attains to its goal. The goal of man is to become spiritual!

So the life of the Church is through the assimilation of the whole Bible, which is Christ's whole word. If his word is in any way over against the word of the Old Testament it is only as in the counterpoint of a work of art. Though it is, of course, in conflict with the rabbinic interpretation of the Old Testament which is quite a different matter.

The Christian must go through the Old Testament in order to utter Christ's whole word. It is now conjoined to Christ, all its ways are opened, all its veils are removed: that is to say, for one who takes it spiritually, who enters into it with the word of Christ already sown in his mind. For that word to take root in all the stuff of his life, to be uttered out of his whole being, that descent into the Old Testament is necessary. 'The Kingdom of God is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, etc.'

The way through mere nature is not open to Christ. But there is a way through nature as it is moved over by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are that way.

Consider the doctrine of St Peter in his second epistle in the first chapter; comparing it with St Paul's doctrine in II Cor., chap. III. St Peter is treating of the mystery of the Transfiguration. In that

vision Moses and Elias had appeared, but had faded away in the blaze of the glory of Christ. There was left only Jesus. It is in him, in his Flesh that the glory is enthroned. Hear ye him. Of this mystery St Peter will continue to remind them, so long as he remains 'in this tabernacle' (cp. 'Let us build three tabernacles'!); and for after his death he will make proper provision—Scriptural provision, presumably. Only it must not be supposed that this fading away of the Old Testament ghostly prophets signifies the abolition of Old Testament prophecy, of the Old Testament Scriptures. On the contrary, because of this mystery of the Transfiguration, 'we have the word of prophecy made more sure for us'—established for us as a way to Christ. 'Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts'. That is to say, until Christ be formed and uttered in your minds, again and again. Certainly that 'until' must be taken in a positive sense; cp. 'She knew him not *until* she brought forth her first-born son'; where what is meant is that it was in her not knowing him, in and by her virginity, that she brought forth this child. So it is in and by the knowledge of the Old Testament that Christ is to be again and again conceived and born in our minds. *Donec fermentatum est totum*. . . . Those Christians had an Apostle to evangelise them. Yet they were sent back to ponder the Old Testament Scriptures.

St Paul is likewise treating of the Transfiguration with reference to the Old Testament—but to the Old Testament as capable of being falsely interpreted by the rabbis. For the Jews, he says, the glory is still reflected from the face of Moses, and their minds are still veiled. They do not, therefore, see the true glory of the Scriptures shining in the face of Christ. But as soon as they should turn to the Lord, this glory would flood their minds and flood back for them into the whole body of the Scriptures, which they would then know how to read in their spiritual sense. 'For the Lord is the Spirit'—that is to say, the Spirit of the Scriptures which gives life, as opposed to the Letter which kills (v.6).

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Christ before he died had given his word to his disciples, had sown it in their hearts, his word which is 'not mine, but the Father's who sent me'. They must keep that word and the Holy Spirit would so work in them that they would be enabled slowly to take it into all the stuff of their lives and give it perfect utterance, perfect birth. And so he leaves them, and there follows a period which is that of the Church's gestation. Christ is being carried in the womb of Mother Church. The searching of the Scriptures to which they give themselves is one with this vital process. They are not hunting up

proof-texts—at least, that does not at all express what they were really doing. They were conforming their lives to the mystery of the Scriptures, until Christ should rise in their hearts. When he has himself risen from the dead and returned to them it is in the Scriptures that he instructs them. 'Have you not read the Scriptures? *Nonne oportuit Christum pati?* They have Christ already in them, but before they can possess him fully, *at his word* they must launch out again into the deep, where they had before laboured so often and taken nothing. Else the word that they utter will not be Christ himself, Lord of all life, Lord of the world, but some half-abstract holy vision. Entering into the Scriptures thus is inseparable from entering into the mystery of his Passion. It was by his sacrifice that he had died to himself and lived and uttered the word of God. They put out all their false lights (all their false Messianic notions, for example, are extinguished) and they go down into darkness and chaos: but into that darkness and chaos over which the Holy Spirit moves. Until at Pentecost Christ is fully born in them, out of those utter depths. The word that they now speak is Christ, the full mystery of Christ. Christ's propnets have been formed, and soon there will be the New Testament Scripture. What the Scriptures contain therefore, in their fullness, is Christ as fulfilling all history, and Christ as assimilated by his Church. They do not speak about Mystical Body simply; the word of the Scripture is the very achievement of a Mystical Body—sacrament of it. Members of the Church already, we can only become *perfect* members of Christ by being baptised again and again in the Scriptures.

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Concerning Scripture and Tradition. The Scriptures give the very word of God. What Tradition gives us is the true sense of the Scriptures, the right understanding of them. It is not in the same sense a source of revelation. We are not presented with the anomaly of the Scriptural source providing us with the greater part of revelational truth, plus an appendix—of inferior verbal quality—containing a certain few truth which are there omitted. Formally speaking,² Tradition means that instinctive mind of the Church, that inspired sense of hers, which enables her to handle the Word of God aright, to be the wise Mother of the Word and Bride of Christ (cf. the figure of Wisdom in the Sapiential writings). It is a character that is maintained through the sacrament of orders. In Syriac the

² For in another sense, in a material sense, Tradition may be taken to represent all the body of theological truth formed through the ages which is not to be found *explicitly* in the Scriptures. But in reality it is Scriptural, and does not *formally* constitute a separate source of divine truth.

word denoting the Laying on of Hands is that same word used to denote the hovering of the Holy Spirit over the chaos. So that the interplay of Scripture and Tradition is simply the interplay of Word and Holy Spirit.

It is through her traditional, her spiritual, mind that the Church is able to discover truths in the Scriptures that do not lie on the surface and could not be deduced by any merely logical process—'For the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God'. And 'We have the mind of Christ' (I *Cor.* ii, 10 and 16). That the Church has the 'mind of Christ, the sense of the Scriptures, the spirit of the Scriptures, does not mean that she is free to utter new truths in the same style, as it were, of the same value; but simply that she is able to unfold all the most secret implications of the Scriptures. She has the connatural mind of the perfect critic, the inspired critic. And, *post factum* at least, it is ideally possible for any Christian to begin to discover in the Scriptures the working of these truths that she has perceived there without any explicit evidence to guide her.

On this subject one might do well to refer to Irenaeus (in his *Adv. Haer* I, ix, 4). He is complaining of the heretics' misuse of the Scriptures. These gnostics twist the Scriptures, he says, much in the way that certain impostors will twist the words of Homer to illustrate their theories. 'But he who is acquainted with the Homeric writings will recognise the verses indeed, but not the subject to which they are applied. . . . In like manner, he who retains unchangeable in his heart the rule of the truth which he received by means of Baptism, will doubtless recognise the names, the expressions, and the parables taken from the Scriptures, but will by no means acknowledge the blasphemous use which these men make of them'. The Church knows the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. She is the perfect critic of the Word. She receives the word into a mind over which the Spirit moves—always this same mystery of creation.

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The Scriptures and the Sacraments. The Scriptures themselves being as a sacrament one cannot but enquire about their precise relation to the seven sacraments. The book of Scripture lies open—on the altar. It was opened by the Lamb in the strength of his sacrifice of which the holy Eucharist is the re-enactment. So that the book is opened again and again for the faithful, as often as the holy Eucharist is enacted.

The Sacraments represent the Flesh humbling and purifying itself, dying to itself, so that with meekness it may receive the inborn word:

so that the word may be taken into the heart,³ that is to say, the spiritual womb of us. Without the Sacraments the word would remain an idea; and without the word the Sacraments would remain empty gestures. The words attaching to the Sacraments, called the form of the Sacraments, are the Scriptural word entered into the matter and born out of the matter—the matter of nature.

So to Nicodemus, wishing to discourse loftily about the word, Christ says: 'Unless you be born again of water and the Holy Spirit. . . .'

And so it was, as we have considered, that the disciples could not give birth to the word until they had entered into the mystery of Christ's death.

And of the blind man in the Gospel of St John (a type of one who has not received the light of the word) we read how Jesus said to him: 'I am the light of the world'; how then Jesus spat on the ground and made clay, and said to him: 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (*John* 9).

'Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water, *with the Word*'.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

³ Of Mary we read how, when she had conceived and given birth in the flesh to the Word of God, she then took 'all these words' into her *heart*, pondering them. . . . The 'heart' is the very deepest and truest self, not attained except through sacrifice, through death.