

the evening began. They all dance as though born to it, these Austrian peasants, waltzes, polkas and one-steps, with lots of going round and round and round, all very rhythmical. It was more subdued than it might have been, for the weather had been set fair for weeks and the peeling had gone on almost nightly at neighbours' houses, uninterrupted by rainy days for a rest. So all were a bit tired and went off home before one o'clock.

Waking early next morning was not easy, but delightful as soon as done. There was a warm sun already, so benign and kind, with none of the bone-chilling early mists of town Octobers. These we met at the bottom, in Ligist. But we had had our golden hour walking down the slopes of that hill-side, and still glowed with it.

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## CATECHISM FOR ADULTS: VIII. 'He shall come to judge'

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**C**HRI<sup>S</sup>T, who suffered, died and rose again, was exalted to reign with God. In the Apocalypse, St John sees him 'in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the son of man'. (I, 13.) He sees Christ in his glory and hears his voice: 'I am the First and the Last, And alive and was dead. And behold I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell (I, 17-18). In his resurrection and ascension Christ is shown to be the one in whom we were chosen 'before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians I, 4), the Word who was with God. The pre-existent word is identified with Jesus 'in whom we have redemption through his blood' and in whom the mystery of God's will is made known (Ephesians I, 7-9). Being glorified, having won the victory, he is now ruling with power—now 'all things are under his feet'. (Ephesians I, 22.) Now the eternal rule of Christ is revealed, in that his presence constituted, through grace and sacrament, a kingdom. He rules in the Church, which is the germ of the new creation, for the Church is the form that the rule of Christ takes in faithful souls. This rule of Christ is

not subject to the world, it is not dominated by the time of the historian or of the scientist. Christ is rather the measure of time in that each moment of our present is related to him, 'Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, and the same for ever' (Hebrews 13, 8).

Christ, the Word of God made flesh, exercises now his royal mediation, which is his 'everlasting priesthood' (Hebrews 7, 24), for he 'continueth for ever . . . always living to make intercession for us' (Hebrews 7, 24-25). Each and every now is always *the* time, for at each and every now the infinite sacrifice of love is brought to bear upon the soul.

The life of Christ is, for men, the decisive fact of history. In this sense it is the mid-point of history. It is the mid-point in the story of man before God. It is true that the Scriptures speak of before creation; 'the wisdom which is hidden . . . before the world' (I Cor. 2, 7)—the infinite mystery of God's existence. We exist between creation and the Second Coming—beyond which is the new heaven and the new earth, the richness of the divine mystery.

Our earthly history belongs to the time after creation, but not to the first period. In the first period man was prepared for Christ, then in the fulness of time; at the moment acceptable to God, Christ is born. For all time human history is after Christ, for each man lives his life after the victory has been won. We live now, in the last times, for the Christian lives in expectation of the end, which is the coming of Christ.

The doctrine of the Second Coming or Parousia asserts two great truths. It tells us that process and history belong to Christ, for not only is he the mid-point which gives value to human history, but he is also the goal of all being. Everything ends in him, and ending in him is remade. This is not to say that the Parousia is reached by an evolutionary process; we do not reach or bring about the Parousia. He comes, like the thief in the night, at the moment chosen by the Father: 'of that day and hour no one knoweth: no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone' (Matt. 24, 36).

The Parousia is the manifestation of the triumph of Christ in glory. It is distinguished from the First Coming, or Messianic revelation, which culminates in the Resurrection. Here, too, Christ is King, but it is the king riding on the foal of the ass; here, too, the last things are upon us: 'Now is the judgment of the

world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.' (John 12, 31-32.) The kingdom, which is established at the First Coming, is one of ministry and it looks to the future in its expectation of the appointed goal of all things in the cosmic showing of Christ's glory and power.

Christ, this seventh article of the Creed teaches, will come, as the prophet Daniel said, 'in the clouds of heaven'. In the conventional language of apocalyptic writings the Scriptures teach that the Son of Man shall come 'with much power and majesty' (Matt. 24, 30) for God has 'appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in equity, by the man he hath appointed' (Acts 17, 31). A day that is preceded by 'a revolt' and the revealing of 'the man of sin' (II Thess. 2, 3). It is almost impossible to fit the signs of the Parousia into a chronological pattern, if only for the fact that apocalyptic language does not allow of any real chronological perspective. What is quite clear is that all creation will find its rest in Christ, who as judge will be recognized by all, both by those who have died and by those who remain alive on the last day.

As judge it will be the function of our Lord, at the completion of the appointed time to restore all that has been destroyed by sin and to recreate the divine peace and harmony of the original creation; 'we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth' (II Peter 3, 13). Not only does the Christian have confidence in the final victory of Christ, but this victory is to him a source of comfort. His hope in Christ, which arises from the signs and wonders in the Messianic revelation, that proclaims the presence of God's Word, reaches out into the future. Chance, fate and even law are for him concepts of explanation of only limited validity, because it is in Christ expected that the mystery of the design of God will be revealed.

The Parousia is also judgment in the sense that the Son of Man 'shall sit upon the seat of his majesty and all nations shall be gathered together before him' (Matt. 25, 31-32). Human deeds are referred to their criterion, which is the infinite understanding of God. None the less the mystery is not impenetrable because the judge has himself indicated how human action is evaluated from the divine standpoint.

'Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger and you took me in: naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.' (Matt. 25, 34-36.)

This is the religion 'pure and undefiled' of which St James speaks, these are the deeds, which flowing from grace, keep a man 'unspoiled from this world' (James 1, 27). 'Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only' (James 1, 22), he writes, meaning that the Christian's love of God flows forth to all the children of God. This is 'fellowship', the family of charity, which is created by Jesus Christ. The love of God is impossible without some share in the divine prodigality and generosity, for which charity is the best name. Charity is like the love of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son; it cannot be limited or restrained. 'If any man say: I love God and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this command we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother' (I John 4, 20-21).

Without charity a man is nothing before God. Even miracles are nothing beside it. It is not difficult to see why. God is love, and by love, in generosity, sacrifice and sympathy, man comes nearest to God. By reaching out towards his brethren he finds not only his true self—that image overlaid by sin—but he also discovers himself as nearer to God.

At the judgment it is charity that will matter, and the real charity that issues in deed, that subverts the world-centred pattern of man's life. The Christ in majesty calls his own to share in his kingdom, not because of observances, but because 'as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me' (Matt. 25, 40). The operative words are 'did it'. This is the standard by which the nations, all men, are to be judged.

'Charity is patient, is kind, charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

Death, even the end of the temporal sequence to which we belong, cannot destroy this, for, even if everything else perishes, 'charity never falleth away'.