

of Germany, and the political as much as the religious, is the problem of Europe in *miniature*, and cannot be understood without mentioning the impact on Europe of the first division of the Carolingian Empire by the Treaty of Verdun in 843, and the effects of nationalist disintegration on the position of the Emperor as a 'Justice of the Peace' of Europe.

The choice of nine scholars—four British, one Belgian, three Frenchmen and one American—can hardly be regarded as representative; the omission of Spanish, German and Scandinavian contributions is a serious defect. The selection of the illustrations and of the series of interesting documents appended to each of the seven major divisions of this History deserve a special word of praise. But we cannot help regretting that an impressive scholarly effort has gone into the making of just another quantitatively bewildering work on European history. The Communist view of man is an aberration of the European inheritance but it is the only philosophy that appears from these pages to have made the necessary effort of shaping the past according to a new vision. The Christian view of man which is the heart of the European inheritance remains hidden in the humanist undergrowth.

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## CATECHISM FOR ADULTS—II: GOD

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**T**HE Apostles' Creed, like all creeds, is a formal summary of salient points in the tradition—in the *paradosis*, what is handed over in the spirit from the Apostles to the end of time. Though it was not drawn up by the Apostles it does represent a systematic elaboration of the trinitarian formulae and clauses found in the Epistles of St Paul. The evidence suggests that in the primitive Church the creeds take shape first in association with the interrogations which are part of the baptismal rite, and secondly in the catechetical instructions. Be that as it may, there is no evidence for fixed official creeds till the turn of the second century when the Roman Creed was formulated as a declaratory creed for catechumens—this is the creed which, with

some modifications, we know as the Apostles' Creed. This creed follows a basic trinitarian pattern—the first article treating of God the Father, the second to the seventh with God the Son, and the eighth to the twelfth with God the Holy Spirit.

Simple though the creed is in language and structure as compared with the creeds for bishops characteristic of the fourth century, each article states a mystery of faith—it is, says St Thomas, the task of an article of a creed to give guidance to the mind of the faithful on points where there are distinguishable reasons for asserting that faith here carries us beyond reason. Hence it is clear that creed-saying is an activity of faith and that the creeds are concerned to direct the faithful mind to supernatural truth.

The first article of the creed asserts our belief in 'God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth'. There is no doubt as to why this is the first article, for it tells of the ground of our faith, that God is ruler and Lord. The article does not merely assert that there is a principle which is the source of all form and existence, it is not merely exclusive of fatalism and agnosticism, of a trust in luck or belief in the final character of the statistical method; it goes much further than that, for it is not directly concerned to state a philosophic position that can be arrived at by an analysis of experience. It is a statement of faith; one which will, it is true, incorporate and make use of valid philosophic concepts and sentences, but which is not to be understood as an attempt to philosophize about God. What the article asserts is that the transcendent and everlasting ground of existence—that which the mind can only indicate by saying that it is 'the other', 'the uncreated', 'the light unapproachable', has revealed itself in and through history. It says that that which is beyond being, the remote God of the philosophers, discovers himself to man as the Holy One of Israel. All the instinctive longing of mankind, all the complication of myth, is caught up and purified in this showing forth which is the subject of the Scriptures. What is revealed is not the product of the longing nor is it dependent on human inquiry, though it fulfils the former and verifies the latter. The creature is confronted by the Creator, by 'I am who am'. God, in faith, impinges on the soul, not simply as one whose presence is indicated by the analysis of the objects of sense experience, but as the Maker of history and the Lord of Creation. He does not present himself as the

complement of creation or as contained within it, but as the *mysterium tremendum* in whose purpose alone is revealed the pattern of being and of life.

God is the object of faith; it bears upon him and upon him alone. All else is seen in him and the revelation of his purpose creates a new perspective for the soul. All things are seen, in faith, anew, from the Godward standpoint, and from that point of vantage all things are evaluated. This is what is meant by saying that faith is theocentric, a Copernican revolution by which the natural man is torn from his centre.

The God of faith is both known and unknown. He is known as our Creator and Lord, as dealing with the children of Israel, as speaking through the prophets, as renewing all things in Christ. His word comes to man, is received in faith so that man becomes aware of God's purpose. He is near and deals intimately with his people, but he is never confined by man. It is, wrote St John Chrysostom, 'an impertinence to say that he who is beyond apprehension of even the higher powers, can be comprehended by us earthworms, or imprisoned by the weak forces of our understanding'. Even faith is but a dark knowing, for no analogy can express, no concept, even illumined, can express the infinite. No image or any sort of likeness can represent the abyss of being and love which is God. Each statement man makes about him indicates at the best only a facet of his glory, and indeed, requires all other statements made by the theologian if it is not to mislead. The task of theology is to formulate these statements, to show their interdependence, to guide our thinking about God—its achievement is superb; but theology states better what he is *not* rather than what he *is*, and theology ends in adoration and silence. The realization that his thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways not our ways, lies at the very root of religion, for the God who is Creator, is lifted above the heavens and no man has seen him at any time.

In faith and in revelation, God speaks to man in a way suited to the limited understanding of man, but the very fact that it is his speaking of himself means that it must be to us full of mystery. Man's danger is that he forgets his own limitations, and lusting for clarity, substitutes an idol of his own making for the God of faith. True, man cannot be too clear in his thinking about God, but he can never afford to forget that our precious thoughts

are feeble before the Holy One of Israel. He is unique, there is no other instance with which he can be compared. His glory fills the temple of creation—it is seen reflected there, in the soul, in the lives of the saints, but none suffices to give us understanding of the 'infinite ocean of being', and in this life we do not see him as he is, but always mediately.

He is the 'Father *Almighty*'—*Yahweh Sabaoth*. It is not simply that he is able to do all things. The creed does not merely assert that there is an impersonal something which has the attribute of omni-potence. It says that he is all ruling and all sovereign: that he has shown his majesty in Creation and in his dealings with Israel. He confronts man as holy, as personal, as ruling and compassing all things. The emphasis is on his actual rulership. He is the measure of all things, so that there is no reality apart from him. He is all powerful, but is not sheer power, for his power is his wisdom; and though he is above all things he is not capricious but does all things well, according to the law of his wisdom and the patience of his love.

Ultimately the language of revelation is a language of mercy and love, and for this reason the creed says that he is the *Father Almighty*. The Almighty One reveals himself as Father—not only as source of all being, 'the Father of all things perceptible and indivisible', but 'our gentle and compassionate Father' as St Clement of Rome wrote. It is not that man constructs a picture of God as Father after the image of his human parent—this way only too often contaminates our idea of God—but he reveals himself as the Father in goodness, as the pattern after which all earthly parenthood is named. God deals with man as a good and loving Father, but the mode of his love bursts through the finite scheme; he is the Father of the prodigal son, he is seen in David mourning for Absalom, but above all he is discovered in Christ the Son.

Each of the three sections of the Apostles' Creed directs our attention to the mystery of the Trinity, through the consideration of one of its Persons. Here faith glimpses the relationship of God the Father, the unbegotten source, to the Eternal, begotten Son, and plunges into those spiritual depths in which God allows man to see something of the life of Godhead. In revelation God manifests himself as Father, as Son, as Holy Spirit. The Son is the Word, the Image of the Father, whilst the Holy Spirit,

proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father. This mystery of the life of God—three Persons in one nature—lies at the very centre of the life of faith, for this life is a sharing in the love of the Father for the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Drawn beyond the natural limits of his being, man communicates in the Divine mystery.

God is 'Creator of heaven and earth'. All being depends upon him and he created it from nothing. Properly, he alone is Creator, all other 'creation' presupposes his creation. He is absolutely independent of all things and yet he sustains them nearer to each thing than it is to itself. Nothing escapes his plan, for it is his plan that sustains all things in being. He cannot be circumvented or coerced—he is Lord.

The earth is his—man and all creatures; the heavens are his, all spiritual beings are his. Everything praises him in its being and each thing responds to his providence in its own way. Heavenly creation, all that which is imperceptible to man, serves him; all earthly creation, that with which man is familiar, exists to praise him. His creation is good, nothing is evil in itself. Only angels and men, because they were made free, can choose not to serve. Why then did he make them? We have no answer save the one he gives. Man—all free beings—are made to glorify God of their free choice: to image, to mirror his perfection. As faith deepens, and grace unites more closely, the mystery of creation becomes clearer and in Christ man comes nearer to the wisdom of God. The life of man is not just sheer frustration, a treadmill or a dream, it is being caught up into, and sharing in, the divine plan. Realism is to accept this freely, not because the odds are all on God's side, but because the soul responds to the touch of grace.

This creature man was made good, good in body and good in soul, but more than that, he was made holy, raised to the life of grace. He was made for the vision of God, but he preferred to live according to his own vision. He chose to centre his life on himself, and his act of pride excluded God. He fell and falling broke the bonds of grace and forged those of original sin. Man, in consequence of the sin of his first parents, is born without grace, still good in body and mind—but not good before God. He is born wounded in that the integrity of grace lost, his vision is blurred, his will weak, and his passions are rebellious. Nothing

is evil in itself, but all is prone to misuse. Man is helpless to fulfil the divine mandate, to be the image of God.

Man changed, but God remained God, the God of mercy, and St Augustine wrote, 'He did not make us and then leave us'. Man's spiritual death is transformed into life, and the sin becomes the 'happy fault'. No rebellion can overcome the creative love of God, who recalls man to himself—through patriarch and prophet, and in Christ reopens the Garden of Paradise.

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### OBITER

DAVID JONES. Like many outstanding British painters, David Jones is a visionary artist. For this reason his achievement defies analysis in a few words. Paradoxically, it is both limited and complex; his vision is as inimitable and eccentric as Blake's, Palmer's or Turner's. An artist of this kind depends less than others upon a varied pattern of external artistic influences on which to build his style. Indeed, they often hinder; without the mystical intensity of his thought, which demanded pictorial as well as poetic expression, Blake's admiration of Michelangelo might have fostered a painter like Vasari. The presence of stylistic traits akin to Paul Nash, and possibly Duncan Grant, in some of David Jones's early water-colours seem to be interpolations—small interruptions in the steady flow of his personal vision which reached its culminating point in the early thirties. Even the influence of Gill was a relatively transient affair visually, although it provoked a more lasting response in his mind.

On the contrary, it is not in the presence of the influence of some mature and sophisticated artist that we must seek the formation of his style, but in the drawing of a great shaggy bear that he made as a little boy of seven or eight (it is exhibited in the current show at the Tate) which provides the truest guide to his visual inclinations. Naturally, the dexterity acquired through constant practice, the enhancement of the intellectual and spiritual experiences of maturity, have modified its character. But in his finest poetic inventions, where pen and pencil are the dominant media, within the controlled and lyrically flowing contours the same fine, wayward, hairy lines take the place of a more conventional shading—in fact, perform a different function. They are like the changes of tone in a medieval tapestry which do not detract from its essentially two-dimensional quality.

Much of his imagery is extremely recondite and difficult to follow without prolonged literary research, but it is never 'abstract'. However strange the metamorphoses which his creatures and objects undergo,