

## CHRIST IN EXILE

MOST often perhaps we Christians picture Christ in glory, at the heart of the Trinity, surrounded by a multitude of the blessed. Yet His earthly life was of the utmost loneliness. The self-emptying of the Godhead, involved in the Incarnation, found its extreme in the desertion by God of His soul at that hour when it most desperately needed support. Alone He lived, and in the isolation and the horror of self-consciousness of the damned, voluntary victim of the pain of loss as of sense, He died.

His mystical body sometimes travels on its pilgrimage with more hardship than His physical body during the hidden years. But from the first we have had Him, and although reciprocally we too are His, yet while we have all to gain from Him, He has nothing from us. He has sought one to console Him and has not found any, since He could not. For the heroism of Jesus lies in the unicity of His act. It was not He who reclined His head on the breast of John.

Since we cannot repay Him, we Christians have become accustomed, with a cynical logic, to insult His divine heart by our cool, proprietary attitude to the love wherewith He continually engulfs us in the Eucharist. So for years on end of Church history we are content to misapprehend and grossly to underestimate the contemporary moment of the Redemption. God, all-knowing of what the act involved, decided the Incarnation, but not by some toss-coin, arbitrary choice of autocratic freedom, not to manifest His glory, as though the creation did not shriek and whisper that. Through being what He is, He became for us what we know, like unto us in all things except sin. But though in entering time He subjected Himself to the limit of a specific determination, became *a* human individual, yet the concomitant natural *traits* for mother and friends, with who knows what anguish did He renounce!

If He could not but be most closely united to Mary, that was on account of her supreme holiness, and the beloved

disciple was so for sanctity, not sentiment. But that He might have all men love Him with an increase, of which only death should fix the form and limit, He held himself aloof from His contemporaries. He will never again be so cold to the most depraved of poor fallen humanity as He was, repeatedly, to His immaculate mother. For as we leave the historical Incarnation ever farther behind us in time, so do we rush forward, though we know not the hour, to His coming, again, in glory. The Church, we know, shall be erected, and we are the stones. On us Catholics, negligible units, will He build. But even as in individuals, so in the whole, Catholicism must grow in fervour, ever asymptotically advancing to an adequate response to Christ, who first and from the first loved us, although from the first He knew the last and the worst of us.

To fulfil then the law of delay and change involved in process (for the Church is of time), that we may, one *and all*, grow, He starts from a grain of mustard, a handful of illiterates, and He withholds His love, that it may be the more desired, that it may be the more enjoyed.

Since the whole purpose of Redemption is nothing other than supernatural creation, the imparting of the life as lived by the Trinity beyond its source, so, with the Judgment, the mystical Christ will indeed return to Heaven, which is not primarily a place or a state characterizing individual souls but, simply, the life of the Trinity. With the Ascension, the Son of Man, victor-victim, rejoined the peace of the God-head. But the end was not yet. The pangs of His earthly life correspond to the outrage of the world before and after, and by their character more than compensate for that. Yet He ever lives to make intercession for us. So now in the year of His era 1938, far from Him in time we may be closer than ever before in charity, and let us remember, we are ever nearer too to that time when He shall fully reward faith and at last break His solitude and be one with us for ever. Surely I come quickly: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

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