

which oppresses men, and which denies to them the right and power to live as the sons of a loving God.

In the poor countries the Church has this same role to play. It has to be consistently and actively on the side of the poor and unprivileged. It has to lead men towards Godliness by joining with them in the attack against the injustices and deprivation from which they suffer. It must co-operate with all those who are involved in this work; it must reject alliances with those who represent Mammon, and co-operate with all those who are working for Man. Its members must go out as servants of the world, as men and women who wish to share their knowledge and their abilities with those whom they recognize as their brothers and their sisters in Christ.

There was a time when the Christian Church was persecuted and its members held in contempt and derision. Are the societies in which the Catholic Church now operates so just, or so organized for the service of God and Man, that it is unnecessary to risk a similar rejection in the pursuit of social justice? I do not believe so. I believe with Teilhard de Chardin that: 'A Christian can joyfully suffer persecution in order that the world may grow greater. He can no longer accept death on the charge that he is blocking mankind's road.'

## The Focussing of God by Geoffrey Preston, O.P.

The renewal of sacramental theology in the past fifty years or so has depended considerably on a recovery and development of the primitive insight that the primary and primordial sacrament is Christ himself, whose sacramentality is the ground and the culmination of all human existence in the world in time. It is because we are as we are (and it is good, 'very good', that we are as we are), because basically if not most interestingly we are men in virtue of a shared flesh and blood, unable to communicate or be men except as such, even with and before God, that we enact our human and our Christian existence sacramentally. We interpret ourselves to ourselves, discover what it means to be who we are and so find how to become who we are, by projecting ourselves on and realizing ourselves in external nature. By our bodily creativity, in words and symbols and the extraordinary variety of human art-forms we are able to *make* sense of our life in the world, to make its flux and chaos precisely meaningful, to focus the whole in a perceptible sign which in contracting the immensities allows us to live amongst them as those who are at home there. And the Jewish-Christian tradition

at its classical moments has maintained that a particular history has redeemed us more deeply into our bodies, into being more authentically at home in our flesh and blood and sexuality, in our passions and emotions and instinctual drives.

Redemption in this tradition involves an abolition of the distance and the inner space between man's best self and his historical embodiment in the natural and human world, an embodied realization of his deepest desires and most basic urges. In the Old Testament this is typically represented in the promise to the ass-nomad Abram of children and land, redemption from the need to wander and the threat of dying absolutely, redemption into Palestine and Isaac. The goal of the history of Immanuel is the personal embodiment of God, the humanity of God, Jesus of Nazareth, he in whom there dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, *Dominus noster humanissimus*, the man whom God lived and lives, in whom we wait for the redemption of our bodies. God in him is focussed to a point in becoming other to God; in him the Immensity which is God was cloysterd in the deare wombe of Mary. The baffling complexity of what it is to be human is in him transposed into a man who can be seen and heard and handled. He is the meaning for man of the source of man's being, he in his human activity becomes such a meaning, becomes the sign-ificance of man. In living him, God makes sense for us of the world of nature and of history, transforms the world into meaning; in living him, God himself becomes what it is really to be man. Jesus of Nazareth, we say, is the revelation of God.

### *The Focussing of Man*

He reveals God in the first place simply by being flesh and blood. The Catholic understanding of Jesus has always denied that he can be said to have become God. There is not and never was anything about him which has a significance which is not God. He is God for us, the face of God, even in simply being flesh and blood, with all that flesh and blood means in terms of continuity with his mother, which means with the Jewish race and Jewish history, which means with all mankind, which means with the world of nature, with the dust from which man was made to evolve. Just in being man, Jesus was involved in and gave meaning to all that. The Word of God was made flesh, was made human, was made history, was made world. He was created into the creation, and by that showed that creation was always through him and for him as at a particular time and place in parable and miracle, in word and gesture, he became the poet of creation as he released and realized in his own bodily expressiveness the world's possibility of being for us.

Jesus recapitulated in himself the long evolution of human history, but had also his own history to live out, his own destiny to live out. Ultimately that history was to take him outside human history and the given range of human possibilities, into a new history on the

other side of his death, a new history in which for the first time the ultimate human possibilities were realized. It is the Jesus who has passed through death into the only altogether authentic humanity who is the goal of the history of Immanuel, of the progressive en-man-ment of God. So it is the risen Jesus, accessible in the founding documents and in the basic gestures of the messianic community, who is God-*for-us*; and he is that in being the new and only true Man by being the Act of God. But revelation involves its being perceived, the word uttered and heard. Jesus in his own person is God speaking and man answering, man speaking and God answering; he is the dialogue itself. He is the one Immediator between God and man, to borrow a happy phrase of Timothy McDermott. He not only declares the covenant between God and man, but he is that covenant, as Barth has reminded us. He is God's meaning for man and man's meaning for God, the one in whom God finds men and men find God. In that the possibility and the requirement of living sacramentally is set, in Jesus as the dialogue, the conversation, the meeting, the atonement of God and man. There is no other name given amongst men whereby we must be saved except the name of Jesus, by Jesus, that is, as made what he is by a particular history and biography, the result of relationships and interactions with his parents and his friends and his enemies, the product of his childhood and youth and adolescence, of having to wrestle with the space between people's expectations of him and his own understanding of who he was and what he was for. The name of Jesus is Jesus as made what he is by the history he shares with us and by the new history which he makes for us, which he is for us.

### *The Language of Sacraments*

Jesus, then, is placed in the order of signs, he is the sacrament of God, the primordial sacrament, the way God reads the world. And the Church, his way of being in the world, is the same sacrament, both God's revelation and man's response, like Israel both the gift of God and man's acceptance of that gift. All the life of the Church enters into the sacramentality which is Jesus, as the traditional language indicates. We still pray to God about the sacrament, the mystery, of Easter, or of the transfiguration, or of the incarnation, for example. The seven sacraments of the medievals are certain privileged points at which we can see the whole life of the Church as sacrament, as the universal sacrament of salvation. And this is true for the Church as institution and as event. The seven is the seven of the symbolism of number rather than of arithmetic, the sign of fulness rather than of quantity. But in all these uses of the word, when we speak of sacraments we are considering ways in which God and man speak and reply to one another, deeds of God which are human activities, expressive moments which reveal the imaging quality of the whole Christ.

Speaking not just in words and sounds and phonemes, of course, but speaking in the words which are human gestures, and gestures whose soul and sense are articulated words. Eating and drinking and washing and anointing and making love and caring for one another and forgiving one another. What could be merely useful becomes Christianly significant. In such an achieved conversation more is in question than an exchange of information, and as much can be done by silence as by words. The atmosphere and the mood may substantially modify what is said and done: Polanyi's tacit dimension. It is the whole celebration that matters, the entire nebula of meaning of a pre-theological character which nevertheless can be theologically elucidated. Which indeed must be theologically elucidated if the rite itself in its wholeness is to retain its effective force.

Living the sacraments must precede theologizing about them, but to opt for enacting them at the expense of theorizing about them is to choose a conservative stance which ultimately stultifies the very celebration. Such conservatism may be prepared for any number of changes, of improvements in the way liturgy happens, yet still refuses to challenge current styles in a truly fundamental way in the name of the perpetual novelty of the gospel. It will not raise sufficiently serious questions about the assumptions on which the contemporary pattern is based. The reality of the primordial sacrament which is Christ certainly cannot be exhaustively expressed in words, and needs the enactment of the sacramental rite; not any one of the ways in which the meaning of the rite can be formulated, not any one of the many possible frames of reference of the rite is sufficient. To understand theologically necessitates participation in and not merely observation of present or past styles of celebration.

Such participation involves the whole man, social, economic, sexual, historical. Aesthetic, ethical, psychological and historical factors are inextricably bound together here, 'blood, imagination, intellect running together'. There can be no decent theologizing about a sacrament except by a man who does so participate and finds himself called in question and condemned and pardoned by his daring to be so involved. As Luther put it, 'it is by living, nay by dying and being damned that a theologian is produced, not by thinking, reading and speculating'. But the thinking and reading and speculating are necessary too. If proper talking about the sacraments requires that they be properly celebrated as a condition of such talk being even possible, equally there can be no proper celebration without serious thinking and talking: 'one thinks feelings and one feels thoughtfully' (Brecht). Indeed the theological reflection is an intrinsic dimension of the celebrating itself, whether expressly or implicitly. In the celebration thought and feeling and action are integrated.

In such an integration, were it possible for it to be altogether achieved, there would be an absolute co-incidence of style and

meaning, the medium would simply be the message. So it is with Christ. But the present lack of coincidence of the believer and the Lord has its counterpart in a distance between style and meaning, medium and message. The meaning and the message outstrip the medium and the style. The message is proclaimed in a style (symbolic, ethical, reflective) which falls short. And an honest celebration allows for this; it does not aim too much at trying to make the symbolic dimension, for example, appear closer to the ideal than is really the case in the ethical reality. Equally, though, good celebration recognizes that the enactment of a sacrament is not just self-expression on the part of believers, but the faithful producing themselves as such, as an actor does in his own creative activity, believers putting on Christ. This they do by allowing the words and gestures of his self-realization to become theirs in their attitude of faith, of contemplative listening, and of care for the inherent modalities of the particular sacramental activity. They try to perceive what the primary human activity is in its own right and as assumed into the self-realization of the Word of God, as John Cage would have us listen to the sound rather than through the sound of his music. *Ex opere operato Christi* the invitation is always given, and the sacramental act is always the revelation in Christ of the reality of man in a world and before the God who is for him.

#### *Catholic and Apostolic*

Such listening happens in the context of the Christian community past and present. If the ground of theological articulation of the significance of the sacraments is their celebration, sacraments in their 'intellectual, emotional, mythopoetic immediacy', that celebration also has its setting and its grounding in the history of faith. No faithful celebration can cut quite loose from that sphere, from that universe of discourse and behaviour which is shaped by the scriptures of the Church, its traditional ways of acting out what it has received, and the present situation. Tradition, that sense of the total past as now, is an inalienable ingredient of any valid Christian enactment of the sacraments. Tradition has its monuments, too, documents and artefacts, which must not be alienated from the present congregations of believers; rather should they be brought into the present environment of faith.

So too the local congregation needs to take care that it is not alienated from the wider perspectives of present Catholic life, even if that can apparently happen by a deeper fidelity to a more significant tradition. Each congregation is defined not only by what it says about itself and others, but by what others say about it. The Christian community as Catholic as well as apostolic has an altogether necessary role in providing each group of believers who incarnate it with the fundamental symbolic apparatus with which they can have access to the gospel and thereby interpret their own existence in the

Church and in the world before God. The sacramental art-forms in which believers make sense of their existence require an organized discipline and a willingness to submit to rules and standards; inspiration is not enough, and without a fair degree of craftsmanship can become simply pernicious. *Homo faber* who alone is met by and communicates with the creator God needs a measure of patience and slowness in experimentation with new styles or revived techniques if his handiwork is not to be just whimsy. Manners, 'a culture's hum and buzz of implications, its half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value', can be ignored only at the peril of a particular church failing to be in love and charity with the Church universal. Yet equally, as the recent Council reminded us, 'when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observance of the rules governing valid and licit celebration'. One element of that something more is a reflective understanding of what Christians are about when they celebrate the one sacrament which is Christ in one or other of its modalities.

He it is who reveals a whole reality inaccessible to other means of knowledge. In him nature and history are humanized, as God is en-man-ed. What that ultimately means does not yet appear, and the final appearance will itself be the meaning. But each of the aspects of the present life of Christ in his Church which are made accessible, though not transparent, in the seven sacraments, can already (even in their very transitoriness) speak significantly of the ultimate meaning which is God himself. Following articles will try to suggest how each of the seven significant moments in the life of the Church expresses and realizes what God is for us as in faith we allow ourselves to be interpreted to ourselves through the medium of activities which are our own and God's, as God in us creates a new universe in and out of a medium which he has created for his own self-realization, Jesus of Nazareth.

## **Man in the City**

### **by Thomas A. Markus**

This paper asks some questions about man and nature from one point of view, that of an interest in the city. It puts forward a few current concepts of the city with emphasis on recent social studies. It asks to what extent the making of cities and living in them is 'natural' to man; to what extent they have always been a deliberate statement about man's relationship to the world of nature (is there a conflict here?); and it tries to show the direction in which cities are developing and the degree to which these developments may be