

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION : UNFOLDING AND REALISATION

Judeo-Christian religion is unique in many ways. One of its most notable differences for anyone who knows primitive or, for that matter, more developed religions lies in its *historical* character.

In the first place, Judaism and Christianity have a conception of history which no other ancient group shared with them. For ancient pagans, Greek as well as Semitic, man's history described an eternal circle, always returning to the point of departure only to set out on the same cycle all over again ; and this conception was expressed in the many forms of what Professor Mircea Eliade of Chicago University has called the 'myth of the eternal return' (*Cosmos and History*, Harper Torch Book 50, New York 1959). For the Old Testament (and the New) man's history—or, rather, Israel's and the Church's—moves in a straight line. Gen. 12:1-4 describes the first great divine intervention in the life of Israel's ancestors : 'The Lord said to Abram, "Leave everything for the land that I will show you, and I will make your posterity great"; and Abram left as the Lord had told him to do.' From that moment the history of Abraham and his descendants becomes a rectilinear movement towards a prosperity that lay decades, even generations and centuries, in the future.

But we must say more than that a rectilinear movement had begun. *God* had set it in motion. In this lies the second distinctive mark of Judeo-Christianity as an historical religion. History—Israel's and the Church's—is a straight-line movement effected and directed by God, the Lord of history : 'Leave all and *I will make* your posterity great.'

We must go still further. Not only did God direct Israel's history, but in the very direction He gave He revealed Himself. Here lies the third and fullest sense in which Judaism and Christianity are historical religions. The Greeks (or at least their philosophers) concluded the nature and attributes of divinity from their speculation. The ancient Mesopotamians devised their deities mostly by personification of natural forces or phenomena. The God of Israel and of Christianity revealed Himself to men by progressively fuller self-manifestations in His successive interventions in their history.

We say, 'revealed Himself.' But we must explain. This divine self-revelation did not consist simply in the Deity's manifestation of *truths* about Himself. Such an intellectualist notion of revelation we derive from the Greek background of our Western civilisation.

Knowing for the Semitic world did not mean a disinterested and detached intellectual grasp of reality ('possessing the form of some other *as that other's*,' as the scholastic philosopher says); it meant vital and intimate experience of some other person or some reality. So it was that the verb 'to know' could serve as the regular euphemism for the intimacies of married life: 'Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore him a son.' The successive divine interventions in Israel's history, then, did not merely enable Israel to understand God's nature and attributes better. They were rather so many successive divine irruptions into the world of man which enabled man to experience the Divinity more fully. Man came away from each of these experiences not only with a fuller mental grasp of God's nature, but changed, transformed. In short, the history of the Old Testament and New Testament periods is a connected series of transforming—or, to use the equivalent biblical word, saving—divine self-revelations to men. Or, if we prefer the term become popular in exegetical circles today, it is a 'salvation-history,' a *Heilsgeschichte*.

Suppose we now turn to the Bible and trace in summary fashion the progress of this saving, divine self-revelation. With Abraham, God revealed Himself to a family. He broke the history of this little group of Mesopotamians out of the eternal circle and set it off on a rectilinear movement into the future. By so doing He presented Himself as a deity powerful enough to break the unending cycle and good enough to point the movement He had initiated towards a glorious future. What else did Abraham—and Isaac and Jacob—know about this God? It is hard to say. Did the Hebrew patriarchs consider Him a person? Did they consider Him simply a superhuman force manifesting itself now personally (through oracles given at the various shrines they visited), now impersonally (in storms and other natural phenomena)? Did they clearly distinguish Him from the divinities worshipped by the peoples of the land over which they wandered? He actually bore the name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon, 'El.' Of course, the name is regularly qualified in Genesis by an additional title connecting its bearer with this or that particular shrine or incident in which He had manifested Himself to men: El Elyon, El Bethel, El Shaddai, El Roi. This would seem to distinguish the God of the patriarchs from the simple, unqualified El of Canaan. And yet the Canaanite Baals usually had such surnames. It must be admitted, of course, that the Genesis accounts of the patriarch's doings with God are noteworthy for their total omission of any reference to divine exploits and shortcomings like those of the Canaanite El. But did the patriarchs themselves exclude all idea of divine adventures? Gen. I-II and Old Testament poetry

actually include a number. Hence, we really do not know how elevated the patriarchal notion of deity was.

However limited may have been the patriarchs' appreciation of the God who had intervened in their history, they could grasp the fundamental facts of His power over history and His direction of it to their good ; and their acceptance of these facts changed their lives. Their 'yes' to this divine self-revelation we (and Genesis) call faith : 'Abraham believed God'—faith, which is a commitment to Him for what He reveals Himself to be. This was not merely an intellectual assent ; it was practical too—a total commitment. It sent them wandering as semi-nomads in a foreign land, living in expectation of the fulfilment of God's promise, the coming of a glorious future.

With Moses God revealed Himself to a people—or, rather, by this self-revelation He effectively turned the swarming tribes of Abraham's descendants into a people. The God of Moses told Israel His name (and for the ancient Semites the name defined the reality), and He led them out of Egypt to make a covenant with them.

Though exegetes dispute the precise meaning of the name 'Yahweh,' most feel that it refers either to the divine transcendence or to the covenant-making. It refers to the divine transcendence, for example, if it signifies 'He is what He is,' that is 'the unknowable,' or if it means 'He makes to be,' that is 'the creator.' It refers to the covenant-making (and much is to be said for this position) if it signifies 'He is there,' that is, to observe His part of the covenant.

The covenant with Yahweh initiated a new relationship between the Divinity and men. We tend to conceive of the ancient Semitic covenant in terms of the modern contract. Certainly it *was* a bilateral agreement, but it did not merely confer mutual rights : it established status. By a covenant persons entered into a quasi-familial relationship ; by the Sinai covenant Yahweh, so to speak, joined the family of Israel.

Yahweh, the God of Moses who wrought a mighty deliverance of the Israelite tribes from Egyptian captivity, and then amid thunder, lightning and earthquake bound Himself to them by a covenant, revealed Himself clearly as a *personal* God very *different* from other deities. He showed Himself as a surpassingly *powerful* person. He proved Himself an extremely *good* person. Yahweh's personality and His difference from other gods appeared in His new name and His freedom from connection with any particular natural phenomenon, shrine or divine manifestation. Israel's grasp of His complete separation and difference from other deities showed itself in very early Old Testament descriptions of Him as a 'jealous' God, intolerant of the worship of other divinities by any partner to His covenant. Yahweh's power

and transcendence stood out in the mighty wonders of the exodus, in the awe-inspiring theophany at Sinai, in the providence He showed and the aid He gave during the years of desert wanderings, and during the invasion of Canaan. Israel's grasp of His transcendence manifested itself in the absolute prohibition of any image representing Him. Yahweh's immense goodness proved itself in His deliverance of the captive tribes from Egypt and in His willingness to enter into a covenant with them. Israel's appreciation of this goodness of the covenant-God showed itself in their assigning as His great attributes *hesed* or 'loyal attachment' (the covenant virtue *par excellence*), *rahamim* or 'tender affection,' and *hēn* or 'active favour' (Hebrew terms that have unfortunately been indifferently rendered into our modern languages as 'mercy' and 'compassion').

No more than Abraham's faith, was Israel's acceptance of Yahweh a merely intellectual assent. The Sinai experience transformed them much more thoroughly than the divine self-revelation to Abraham had changed the life of their ancestors. Not only did it bring them out of Egypt, form them into a people—Yahweh's own—and send them on to the invasion of Canaan. But it gave them a moral code, the decalogue. Israel's acceptance of the God of Moses—their 'yes' to the covenant God—involved a commitment to His covenant. They could be partners to the covenant only at the cost of moral lives. And it would not take them long to realise that they must be righteous because He Himself was a righteous God.

With David and the prophets God formed His people into a unified society—first a kingdom, then (in a somewhat less strict sense of the word) a church, that is, a society whose principal unifying bond is religious (as opposed to ethnic, political, economic, etc.).

With the glorious establishment of the monarchy under David, who was both the ideal Yahwist and the ideal king, it might have looked as though the forward movement begun with Abraham had reached its term—above all, when God canonised the dynasty by the prophet Nathan's promise to David that it would endure indefinitely. But the glories of David's days faded fast : within decades after his death far-from-ideal successors not only split the people into two rival kingdoms but even began officially to promote apostasy from the God of the covenant by introducing or encouraging pagan cults. The struggle of Yahwism against paganism was carried on chiefly by the prophets—first the great non-writing prophet Elijah and then the writing prophets. In this struggle God's Old Testament self-revelation reached, we might say, its fullness.

The confrontation of the God of Moses with pagan deities led, first

of all, to the full appreciation of Yahweh's uniqueness. The pagans' gods were finally called 'vanity' or 'emptiness,' no gods at all, and their idols the helpless figments of man's own making : Yahweh alone was God.

Not only the oneness but, secondly, the power and righteousness of the covenant-God appeared in their full splendour as the struggle went on. Amos, the very first of the writing prophets, declared Israel's God so righteous that in the face of His people's abominable conduct He must certainly repudiate the covenant. The prophet declared Him so powerful that He could and would use mighty pagan nations as His instruments to destroy His people. The bitterness of exile furnished all the Israelites direct experience of the great might and utter righteousness of their God.

The struggle brought them, thirdly, to a clearer appreciation of Yahweh's goodness. Hosea, the second of the writing prophets, gained from a personal tragedy a penetrating insight into the divine benevolence for Israel. The prophet's deep love for a wife who had proved unfaithful led him to the then unheard-of extreme of bringing her back to himself. This personal experience enabled him to realise that, though driven to exile His people by His righteousness, Yahweh could not leave them dispersed. Restoration must follow destruction ; glory must follow humiliation. Even the overwhelming divine righteousness must yield to divine love. Hosea's preaching of a God passionately in love with His people, like a husband deeply in love with an unfaithful wife, must have been startling, if not shocking, to his contemporaries. The comparison had never yet been used, as far as we can tell, and after Hosea only a few of the other prophets among all the Old Testament writers dared to employ it. But shocking or not, it was greatly consoling to the devout among the people, coming as it did on the eve of the fall of the northern kingdom. The restoration, when it finally came, gave all the Israelites direct experience of this greatness of divine love.

Later prophets took up the message of these early preachers, the absolute oneness, the unlimited might and transcendence, and the utter righteousness and boundless goodness of Israel's God became overwhelmingly clear.

Once again this fuller divine self-revelation transformed the people who accepted it. Full assent to Yahweh's oneness effectively suppressed in the post-exilic period in Palestine the idolatry that had plagued Israel in pre-exilic days. Recognition of the Lord's utter might and righteousness inspired a religion mindful of observing the least details of His law. Acknowledgment of His boundless goodness expressed itself in total, even passionate, dedication to the covenant-God. Deuteronomy, a

book composed during the prophetic period, well summarised these points and what they meant for the religious Israelite of the period in a text still recited twice daily by devout Jews :

Listen, O Israel : Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. You must love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commands that I give you today must be fixed in your heart. You must teach them to your children, talk about them when you are at home and abroad, when you lie down and get up. You must tie them as a sign upon your hand and as a mark upon your forehead. You must write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9)

But all this was simply preparation. The saving, divine self-revelation was still not complete. Of this, Israel became even more painfully aware in the centuries following the exile. The divine self-revelation was obviously still imperfect because Israel's salvation was still evidently incomplete. During the decades of exile and especially during the following centuries of subjection to foreign rule in Palestine, the people meditated on the glories of David's days which *they* had destroyed by their sins and which they had never regained. This meditation made them acutely conscious of the moral misery that still afflicted even the most dedicated among them.

Jeremiah had already perceived this in the last years before Jerusalem's fall. Meditation on his words and the experience of the humiliation of the exile and the post-exilic period gave the same perception to the people at large. The salvation from Egypt had not saved the people from their own sinfulness. The intimacy of the covenant relationship with Yahweh had not given them a fully and definitively transforming experience of God :

Days are coming—oracle of Yahweh !—when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. That covenant of mine they broke, and I had to show my mastery—oracle of Yahweh ! But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel in later days—oracle of Yahweh ! I will place my law within their very being and will write it upon their hearts : I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they have to teach one another to know Yahweh, but all of them will know me from the least to the greatest—oracle of Yahweh !—for I am going to forgive their abomination and remember their sin no longer. (Jer. 31:31-4)

Less than four decades before the final destruction of the Jerusalem temple a Galilean carpenter began to preach a message that in many ways sounded like traditional Judaism. But to those who received his fullest instruction and reflected on it carefully, it really differed profoundly.

God, he was saying, is a Father and has a Son—or, rather, God

wants to become our Father and will do so if we become one with His Son through reception of the latter's Spirit.

Nor was this divine paternity merely a beautiful metaphor (like Hosea's use of the marriage metaphor to describe the Sinai covenant). To become God's child by union with His Son meant to begin to live God's life. The coming of the Son's Spirit would effect a real transformation not only in a man's attitude towards God but in the very least actions of his everyday life : they would have to reflect God's own activity, and God's activity is love. This is what St Paul wrote to the Galatians :

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to deliver those subject to the Law so that we might receive adoption as sons. And the proof that you are sons ? God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, ' Abba, Father ! ' . . . Now I say you must walk by the Spirit, and . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love . . . (Gal. 4:4-6 ; 5:16, 22)

Finally, acceptance of this vital union with God would work the fully and definitively saving transformation of man : there would be not only present freedom from sin along with possession of divine life but eventually final resurrection. ' He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his indwelling Spirit within you,' St Paul wrote to the Romans (8:11). Or again, St John explained, ' Dearly beloved, we are God's children now, but it has not yet become manifest what we shall be. We know that when he is made manifest [at the parousia] we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is ' (1 Jn. 3:2).

In Jesus then—for he is the Son—we have the final and full saving self-revelation of God. The prologue to the Fourth Gospel tells us as much, when it declares that God's Word—that is, His self-expression or self-revelation—came first into the world by God's creative activity, but ' the world did not know Him,' then to Israel in the form of the Mosaic Law, but ' His own did not receive Him,' and finally ' became flesh ' so that He might give ' to as many as did receive Him power to become children of God ' (Jn. 1:10-14).

But God did not make His final and full self-revelation simply in the incarnation of His Son. The incarnate Son resembled other men so fully—in all things, sin alone excepted (cf. Heb. 4:15)—that even his apostles did not clearly appreciate his identity until the very end of his mortal life. In short, Jesus as he lived his earthly life among us did not fully reveal the Father. He told men about God and mirrored the Father in his own conduct, but they understood only partially, and they did not receive the transforming Spirit that would lift them from their fallen state. The full transforming revelation of God came in the

passion and resurrection. The crucified and risen Jesus is the full and final, saving, divine self-revelation.

To understand this affirmation we must appreciate, on the one hand, the life of God which was to be bestowed upon man, and, on the other, the nature of sin from which man was to be saved.

The life of God, we have already noted, consists in love : a sincere and active benevolence that goes out to all men, even sinners. During his public ministry Jesus accordingly pointed out that his followers would have to love even their enemies, do good to those who hated them, pray for those who persecuted them (Mt. 5:44). But the only divine example he could offer for imitation was God's making His sun rise on the evil as well as the good and sending His rain on both righteous and unrighteous (5:45)—or again, his (Jesus') own kindness towards sinners. In the passion and resurrection, however, we have the overwhelming and undeniable manifestation of God as love. 'God proves his love for us,' wrote St Paul to the Romans, 'in that while we were still sinners [his enemies] Christ died for us' (5:8). After all, who 'has greater love than the one who dies for those whom he loves' (Jn. 15:13) unless, perhaps, it be the one 'who does not spare but delivers up his very own son' (Rom. 8:32)? Or, as St John wrote in his first epistle, 'In this has God's love for us been manifested : God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might enjoy life through him. In this lies the love : not in that we loved God, but in that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins' (4:9f.).

So much for the life of God that was to be bestowed upon man and why the Cross was its full manifestation. Now what of the nature of the sin from which man was to be saved? For the New Testament sin is self-love—the kind of self-love which, as St Augustine wrote in his *City of God* (bk. 14, ch. 28), goes even to contempt of God and which works at building the city of this world. It turns the sinner in towards himself while charity, the divine life, would turn him out towards his neighbour. 'Love not the world [the world that is opposed to Christ],' wrote St John. 'If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the yearning of the flesh [weak human nature, for self-indulgence], the yearning of the eyes [for self-satisfaction] and the haughty airs [the self-exaltation] of wealth—is not from the Father but from the world' (1 Jn. 2:15f.).

Since unredeemed man is sinful, turned firmly towards self, self-denial or self-renunciation naturally recurs throughout the Gospels as the indispensable condition for union with Christ or for charity. 'If anyone tries to save his life, he will lose it ; if he loses it for my sake, he will save it' (Lk. 9:24). 'Whoever does not take up his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple' (Lk. 14:27). And in St Luke's

summary of the Sermon on the Mount (6:20ff.) : 'Blessed are you poor . . . you hungry . . . you who weep . . . when men hate you . . . for the sake of the Son of Man'—self-renunciation, the sermon's first half ; then its second : 'But I say to you who are listening, Love !' There is no living God's life to the full except at the price of total self-renunciation.

So much for the sin from which man was to be saved and for the need of self-renunciation to be saved from it. But why was the Cross necessary for Christ to manifest this ? Our answer lies in what happened by the incarnation. God's Son had come into our world of sin 'born of a woman, born under the Law' (Gal. 4:4), 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3), 'like us in all things, sin excepted' (Heb. 4:15). The only way he could pass from the world of sin to the state that was properly his as Son was the total self-renunciation of the Cross. So 'he humbled himself . . . even to death—indeed, to death on a cross—and therefore God exalted him' (Phil. 2:8f.). He 'became Son of God . . . in power by resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1:4). By raising Jesus the Father fulfilled Ps. 2:7, 'You are my Son : this day have I begotten you' (Ac. 13:33). By his passion and resurrection he 'passed from this world to the Father' (Jn. 13:1), completely beyond the reach of sin and all its effects. 'Christ raised from the dead no longer dies ; death no longer holds dominion over him. For the death he died, he died once and for all to sin, while the life he lives, he lives for God' (Rom. 6:9f.).

When the apostles saw the risen Jesus victorious over death, then they knew that he was not only Son but God : *divine Son* in the fullest sense of the words. Thomas on seeing him expressed the faith of them all : 'My Lord and my God' (Jn. 20:28). The apostles then grasped fully that God has a Son in the strictest and most literal sense (a truth which, when the Spirit's divinity was perceived, was our dogma of the Trinity). When they reflected that Jesus had *willingly* undergone the Cross, then they understood that God is love. When they recognised that he had *had* to come to full estate as God's Son by the Cross—had 'had to suffer and enter into his glory' (Lk. 24:26)—then they understood what living God's life with him involved. They could do it only at the cost of self-renunciation : death to sin or self, like and with Christ in order to live God's life as God's sons.

Abraham's acceptance of God in faith changed the patriarch's life. It turned him into a semi-nomad wandering about a foreign land. The Israelite tribes' acceptance of Yahweh's deliverance from Egypt and his Sinai covenant thoroughly altered their existence. It formed them into a free people and bound them to live up to the moral code which was their part of the Sinai pact. The people's acceptance of the God who

forged them first into a kingdom, and then, by exile and the subjection that followed it, into a church, profoundly transformed them. It pledged them to a passionate and whole-hearted attachment to the God of the prophets, an attachment that expressed itself in careful observance of prescriptions regulating the most minute details of their life. But acceptance of God's final and full self-revelation produced the most far-reaching and complete transfiguration of all. It made men into God's sons (or rather God's Son) and committed them to making every single act of their lives an expression of the divine life of love within them, at the price, of course, of unending self-denial. It committed them to sharing ever more fully in the glorious divine life of the risen Son of God at the cost of sharing ever more completely in his Cross : as St Paul explained to the Romans, ' we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him ' (8:17).

The Christian still had Abraham's faith ; indeed, the Church, following St Paul (Rom. 4:11f.), calls him ' the father of our faith.' But this faith no longer means accepting God merely as the one who breaks our history out of the eternal cycle of fallen human existence and points it towards a glorious future ; Christian faith means accepting God as the loving Father who in Christ's passion and resurrection lifts us out of the merely human sphere and draws us on to the eschatological glory of the final resurrection.

The Christian, true Israelite, still enjoys the results of Yahweh's deliverance of His people. But the Christian redemption is no longer simply a deliverance from the slavery of idolaters and idolatry (Egyptian or otherwise) ; it is a more far-reaching deliverance from servitude to sin and its effects (above all, its chief effect, death) by sharing in Christ's exodus from man's fallen world (cf. Lk. 9:31), Christ's passage—his new passover—from this world to the Father (Jn. 13:1).

The Christian, citizen of the kingdom of the greatest of the Davidic kings and member of the Church—or rather the very body—of Christ, stands committed to just as extensive an observance of divine law as the obedient disciples of the prophets. But the many laws have all become one, and complete observance of this one commandment of love means living God's life to the full. Thus nothing has been lost. All that God did at the earlier stages of His self-revelation endures and has been subsumed—or, if we may use a biblical word, fulfilled : brought to perfection or completion—in Christ.

Our tracing of the progress of God's saving self-revelation through Old Testament and New has run on to some length. But our consideration of its final stage in Christ has already provided us with much of what we need for the next question we must examine : how, in the

Church and especially in her liturgy, we respond to that divine self-revelation.

As we have already seen, our whole Christian life from the moment it begins with our baptism until it reaches its fullness at our final resurrection is simply a progressive sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ. Before our incorporation into Christ, that is, before we entered into vital union with the crucified and risen Jesus, 'we were dead by reason of our transgressions' (Eph. 2:5). In our baptism we performed our first effective act of renunciation: 'Do you renounce Satan? . . . And all his works? . . . And all his display?' This renunciation was effective not because any merely human act can turn man from original or mortal sin. It was effective because it was followed by the sacramental intervention of Christ, enabling us to share in his passion and resurrection. 'Do you not know,' wrote St Paul to the Romans (6:3f., 6), 'that as many of us as have been baptised [the word means 'immersed,' and the rite in Paul's time included full immersion in water] into Christ have been baptised into his death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, so we too may walk in newness of life? . . . Our old self has been crucified with him to render inert our sinful nature so that we may no longer serve sin.' We have renounced the selfish life of fallen man to rise with Christ to the life of son of God. (No wonder—we might remark parenthetically—that baptism is a paschal sacrament, administered by the early Church principally during her Easter vigil and still usually administered today on our weekly commemoration of Easter, Sunday.)

Our whole Christian life from that moment of our baptismal regeneration is a growth in divine life, which is necessarily at the same time a growth in sharing in the passion and resurrection of Christ. Unfortunately the old self has not become completely inert. Our natural appetites are still afflicted with the selfish tendency we call concupiscence. Our bodies are still mortal, and death is an effect of sin. It is even possible for sin to regain control. Therefore, St Paul continues, 'sin must not reign in your mortal nature so that you obey its concupiscences, nor must you offer your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness' (Rom. 6:12f.). Everything done the better to control or the more effectively to diminish our selfishness is a greater share in the self-renunciation of the Cross—all chastising of our bodies and leading them into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), all bearing of 'labour and fatigue, frequent vigils, hunger and thirst, frequent fasts' (2 Cor. 11:27), all sincere repentance for failures (Lk. 17:3f.), and especially the healing that comes in the sacrament of penance. Everything done to extend the dominion of love over our lives means a fuller realisation in ourselves of Christ's resurrection, a fuller living of the glorious life of a

child of God—or son of God : all prayer of praise or gratitude (Col. 3:12–17), in the liturgy especially but in private prayer too, all feeding of the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, offering shelter to the homeless (Mt. 25:31ff.), all forgiving of offending brothers (Mt. 18:15ff.), all apostolic labours (Col. 1:24f.), even eating or drinking or doing anything else for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Of course, we complete our passage with Christ from this world to the Father only by our own death and final resurrection. By a Christian death we make that final self-renunciation, that effective assent to being dissolved to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23), by which we pass forever from our present state. By the final resurrection we attain to full life in Christ when in all the members of his body, death, the last effect of sin and enemy of God's plan, is put under his feet 'so that God may be all in all' (1 Cor. 15:21–8).

Although our whole Christian life with everything in it forms our passage to the Father with Christ, there is a particular act in which we most effectively accomplish it—the Mass. At the supper table Jesus took into his hands the loaf and the cup and gave them to the disciples with the words, 'This is my body given on your behalf. . . . This is my covenant blood poured out for the many' (Lk. 22:19 ; Mk. 14:24)—that is, 'This is my Golgotha body and blood.' Then he added, 'Do this repeatedly in memory of me' (1 Cor. 11:24f.). In obedience to this command, of course, we repeat it daily at our altars 'in memory . . . of the most blessed passion, the resurrection from the grave, and the glorious ascension into heaven' of Christ (*Unde et memores* of the Roman Missal). We feed upon his crucified body and blood, 'showing forth the Lord's death' (1 Cor. 11:26). But since the crucified Christ is the risen Christ, since because 'he humbled himself . . . therefore God has exalted him' (Phil. 2:8f.), it is the risen Christ too upon whom we feed. Like the disciples at Emmaus we recognise the risen Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread (Lk. 24:35). We recall the past, his passage to the Father. But we do so to share in it, to pass more effectively and completely to the Father with him, and we do it repeatedly 'until he comes' back, when he will bring all these efforts of ours to their final consummation. The Eucharist, because it enables us to share ever more fully in Christ's passover, brings us closer and closer to the final resurrection, of which it is therefore the pledge : 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day' (Jn. 6:54).

The immediate fruit or effects of the eucharistic meal are, naturally, a greater share in the divine life of the crucified and risen Christ, that is, a greater degree of selfless love (in which, of course, the divine life consists). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church Fathers saw

the Eucharist as the source of Church unity. They were merely following St Paul, who insisted, 'Because the bread [we eat] is one, we, though many, are one body' (1 Cor. 10:17). All of us at Mass, joining Christ more effectively in his passage from the world of sin to the divine life of charity and doing this together, cannot escape being drawn closer to one another: the love that increases within us naturally goes out first to those to whom we are closest in him.

But this paper is fast becoming a biblical theology of the Christian life. Enough has been said to show the difference between God's salvific work in the centuries that stretched from Abraham to Christ and those that reach from the apostolic age to our own. From Abraham to Jesus, God was revealing Himself (in a saving, divine self-revelation) gradually more and more fully—gradually irrupting, so to speak, more and more fully into the world of men. In Christ that revelation is complete. From the apostolic generation till the world's final day that full self-revelation of God which is Christ is being accepted not merely intellectually but practically by men, and, by the Church's preaching, being put within the reach of more and more human beings. And our total acceptance of the crucified and risen Christ as the full irruption of divinity into our life consists in our effective agreement to share in his paschal mystery. By this acceptance we agree effectively to pass with him from the world of sin and selfishness to a life—a glorious, divine life of love—where God alone is everything. Our whole life forms part of that passage, but, begun in our baptism, it is accomplished most effectively in the liturgy—above all, in the Mass.

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THE EMMANUEL PROPHECY AND ITS CONTEXT (concluded)¹

Is Emmanuel Ezechias?

As already mentioned, the view that sees in Emmanuel Ezechias, the son of Ahaz, has as yet failed to gain strong support among Catholic exegetes. The theory, however, has certain advantages to commend it. Ezechias was of the Davidic dynasty and a pious king, much lauded by the sacred writers. This view has no difficulty in fitting the oracle into its historical context. Steinmann believes the later prophecies of the book of Emmanuel on the illustrious scion of David (9:1ff.) and

¹ cf. *Scripture* 1962, pp. 118-25