

win over the world, in virtue of the absolute mastery with which he has taken possession of the keys of death and hell. Hence the risen Christ is, though invisible, for ever the first and most active personage in human history.

By what title would he inherit such power? Undoubtedly in virtue of his bloody sacrifice. The passion is inseparable from the resurrection, in the Apocalypse as in the whole New Testament.

'I was dead, but behold I am living . . .' (1, 18). 'I was dead'—a rapid bringing to mind of the bloody passion, but it suffices. This is obviously no new teaching. The redeeming passion is clearly at the heart of all New Testament Christology, and our book does not seem to dwell upon it particularly. Rather it evokes the passion always in the context of the triumph Christ won by it. Thus the King of kings and Lord of lords of chapter 19 will appear 'clothed in a garment dipped in blood' (19, 13), just as he is presented under the characteristics of a sacrificed lamb in the apotheosis of chapter 5 (v.6). Even in his sufferings it is Christ triumphant whom the message of Patmos reveals for their comfort to the persecuted Churches.



## THE NEW ISRAEL

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**H**ATH God cast away his people? God forbid! . . . God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew . . . Even so at this present time there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace.' Thus wrote Saint Paul to the faithful at Rome: to those who had accepted Christ as the promised Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of mankind. For Christ did not found the Church independently of Israel but used the faithful of that nation in the establishing of it, as the prophet foretold: 'For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make to stand before me, saith the Lord: so shall your seed stand and your name.' (Isaias 66, 22.) During his lifetime he prepared his new Kingdom out of the material of the old, and if the old seemed to reject him it was he who in reality rejected those who

refused to acknowledge him as Christ and Lord. So he had charged his Apostles, saying: 'And whosoever will not receive you: when you go out of that city shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.'

If at the moment of his death there was only a tiny minority of Jews faithful to him, yet upon these men fell the seal of God's blessing, and the responsibility of bearing within themselves everything of Israel that the Master had not specifically rejected, plus much which was new. It was at Pentecost, the feast on which the Jews with great festival celebrated the granting of the Law unto Moses, that the Kingdom finally was established as a visible entity with the Spirit of Truth as its perpetual defence and guide. Yet the Christians still went up to the Temple to pray and to preach Christ, the fulfilment of God's promise, yet not to offer sacrifice because Israel had now a more perfect Sacrifice, that of Calvary, which for fear of their unbelieving brethren they celebrated in private 'from house to house'. To the pagan eye there was at first little difference to be discerned between the non-believing Jews and their faithful brethren, so that the citizens of Ephesus did not distinguish between Alexander the Jew and the Christian Apostles. The Apostles did not think of the Church as a rival to Israel but as its continuation, so that to this day it is one of the fundamental claims of the Church that she is the true and historic Israel of God, founded, not to supersede or replace the old, but as its real continuation according to the eternal plan of God.

The Christians no longer obeyed the Mosaic Law in the letter but now in the spirit those parts of it which had not been rejected by Christ. Many of the old customs were still observed out of love for the traditional things: Saint Paul circumcised Timothy because his mother was a Jewess, though he thought that it was in no way necessary to salvation and expressly forbade it to those Gentiles who were trying to come to a compromise between themselves and the Judaisers in order to escape hardship and suffering. Certain customs, however, were expressly retained in order to make it easier for the Jew to accept the Gentiles into the Church, so Peter at the Council of Jerusalem declared: 'It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things

strangled and from fornication: from which things keeping yourselves you shall do well.'

To understand just how much of the old Judaism we, the true Israelites, are rightful heirs to, it is necessary to have a brief look at some of the aspects of that dispensation. The Jews of old were a theocratic nation governed by a priestly council under the presidency of an aristocratic High Priest. This council, the Sanhedrin, which consisted of seventy-two members who were formally installed by the imposition of hands, held spiritual sway over the entire domain of Judaism. The High Priest was the chief of the Jewish priests and the only one of them allowed to enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple. He must be of legitimate birth and without personal blemish, and was considered to be the spiritual head, under God, of Israel. He was consecrated to his high position by the pouring of oil over his whole person, signifying complete dedication.

The ordinary priests held exclusively the right of offering to God the sacrifices of the people in the Temple at Jerusalem. They must be descendants of Aaron and be free from all physical defect. The Temple at Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish national and religious life, and there was offered the sacrifices of the people. Burnt offerings, expressing entire dedication; sin offerings, as expiation for sins; and peace offerings, also called thank offerings, which as well as being animal sacrifices were also a kind of eucharist of which God had warned his people: 'But the soul that eateth of the sacrifice of the peace offering that pertains unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.'

The Scribes were men to whom had originally belonged the job of multiplying copies of the Law, but in time they had become not only copyists but also scholars and expositors. They were given the title Rabbi by the people who regarded them as the lawful exponents of the Law, though in effect they lacked any divine commission to teach such as had the Apostles from Christ. Thus it was said of Christ that he spoke with authority and not as the Scribes, who had none.

The Scribes had the choice of belonging to either of the two major ecclesiastical parties, the Pharisees or the Sadducees. Scribism was identified more with Pharisaism than with Sadduceism for though there were Sadducees learned in the Law it was the

Pharisaic party that accepted it to the full, and were its practical interpreters.

The Law had originally been confined to the requirements set out in the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, but from these the Scribes had built up a complicated structure of observances applicable to every possible situation that a man might discover himself in. It was in keeping these laws to the very last detail that constituted holiness in the eyes of the Pharisees, so that they taught: 'the multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed'.

The greatest Jewish feast was the Pasch, at which was commemorated the exodus of the Jews out of Egypt under the protection of God, and their safe passage through the Red Sea. This anniversary lasted for eight days during which the only bread eaten was unleavened. The Paschal lamb was roasted entire and eaten standing, at a special meal, after which cups of red wine were drunk, although this was a later addition made in thanksgiving for the harvest. 'And taking the chalice he gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this.'

The second great festival was Pentecost, at which the Jews commemorated the granting of the Law to Moses on Mount Sion, when the Lord had descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof had ascended as the smoke of a furnace, the whole mount quaked greatly. (Exod. 19, 18.) To celebrate the beginning of the new civil year there was held the Feast of Trumpets, on which day ceremonial trumpets were blown and special sacrifices offered up in the Temple.

Another great feast, which lasted seven days, was the Feast of Tabernacles, held in memory of the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert when they lived in tents. During these seven days the Jews ate all their meals in booths or tents made of boughs, while in the Temple special sacrifices were offered up in thanksgiving for God's mercy upon his people.

If these were the major feasts, the Day of Atonement was the great fast, upon which day the people did penance for their transgressions. On this day alone of all the others in the year the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and there offered up prayers to Jehovah. Then upon a goat were symbolically laid all the sins of the people, the beast afterwards being led out into the wilderness to die. Thus was Israel cleansed from sin by sorrow and the sacrifice of the innocent.

For three years Christ, manifesting his power, worked among the Jews, showing them where they erred and preaching to them true holiness. He gathered around him a small company of fellow Jews to whom he taught by word and example the way in which God would have all men walk. These men he trained to wield the power which until then had belonged to the Sanhedrin: namely, to judge their fellows. Therefore he charged Peter, their head: 'And whatsoever thou shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven.' But, even more, he gave to them the power to *forgive* sins.

When with his last gasp passed away for ever the authority of the Sanhedrin, its spiritual responsibilities became invested in the Apostles, to be visibly sealed and revealed in them beyond all denying, at Pentecost. So St Peter, when brought before the council of the Jews, stood fearless before them, confident in the knowledge that he bore the authority of which they, his questioners, had so recently been divested. And more, faithful to the promise of Christ concerning the office of the Holy Ghost, he knew that he could not err in what he said, whereas these men who questioned him had erred, even from the time of their initiation.

As the Jewish leaders, preoccupied with their own personal advancement, had surrendered to the Scribes the office of interpreting the scriptures, so Christ, in whom all things are made new again, returned to his Apostles that most responsible function. Consequently we see St Paul in his epistles interpreting correctly the sayings of the prophets.

The offices of both High Priest and Sacrifice our Lord took upon himself, entering 'once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption'. Thus as had been preserved in a golden vessel within the Holy of Holies a particle of the heavenly manna, so Christ lives now, our living eucharistic Manna, upon our altars. Christ himself became our Thank-offering, establishing peace between God and man. Therefore St Paul echoes the Levitical injunction when he writes: 'But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord' (I Cor. 11, 28-29.)

Christianity is called the religion of joy, and rightly so, for

whereas the Jews celebrated the Pasch once a year only, we are festive each time the Mass is offered: it being by the sacrifice of Calvary that our exodus out of the spiritual Egypt was effected.

The passage through the Red Sea we commemorate at Baptism, and Yom Kipur when we express contrition and receive absolution for our sins. No more is the scapegoat sent out to die in the wilderness, since Christ was sacrificed with our sins upon him outside the walls of Jerusalem.

At Pentecost we commemorate the descent, in the midst of a mighty wind and with fire, of the Holy Ghost, and the establishment of the new covenant.

As our history begins with the selection of the Jews as the chosen people of God, so St Paul holds up for the example of the Christian communities to whom he writes the saints of the old dispensation. 'And Abraham staggered not by distrust: but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God' (Rom. 4, 20). St James in his epistle writes: 'Behold we account them blessed who have endured. You have heard of the patience of Job and you have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is merciful and compassionate.' Also: 'Elias was a man passible like unto us: and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth. And it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again. And the heavens gave rain: and the earth brought forth her fruit.'

If in these faithful men of old, we are meant to see the prototypes of Christian saintliness: so in the holy women of Israel we find an ideal of which Mary is the perfect manifestation. For example, we may come to a greater knowledge, through Solomon's ideal of perfect Jewish womanhood, of Mary, who fulfilled it more perfectly than even that wise king could ever have hoped for. If once it was Esther who saved the Jews, now it is Mary of whom Esther was only a type. We may also learn more about the Mother of God through the examples of Judith and Anna. Indeed, Anna's prayer of rejoicing at the birth of Samuel is too much like the *Magnificat* for anyone who cares to read it not to notice the similarity. 'The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.'

The Church then is not to be thought of as a new tree with the believing Jews grafted on, but rather as an old one renewed, with the Gentiles engrafted in and the unfaithful Jews cast out.

'He shook his raiment and said unto them, "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles".' Being then true heirs of the ancients and living like them, as we are, in troubled times, with them we can confidently repeat: 'Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep: the Lord is thy keeper.' God cannot change his mind.



## THE LITURGICAL YEAR

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IT seems reasonable enough to have a Church calendar. It seems obvious that the chief events of our Lord's life should be arranged round several pivotal feasts and the whole neatly distributed throughout the year. All healthy lives have a rhythm in harmony with the seasons of the year. We plant, cultivate, harvest, let the soil pause in a rest, then begin over again. We mark off anniversary dates of births, deaths, victories, catastrophes. Some are family affairs, but those of national importance are celebrated with a regularity and a protocol which is a test of our patriotism—lest we ourselves forget or lest we fail to pass on the torch to the next generation.

But the Church Year is called the Liturgical Year because it is more than a commemoration cycle. It is one of the four inter-related parts of the liturgy, one of the channels through which the Church communicates to us not the history of the Mysteries of Christ but their very essence. As one great liturgical writer has said very clearly:

... every single event in the life of Christ on earth belongs not only to him personally, but to all men. Because Jesus is God and his actions are therefore divine, we speak of the events of his blessed life as *mysteries*. By this word we mean to indicate the difference between the events or actions of his life and those in the lives of ordinary men. For every word and deed of Christ is alive with divinity. And because he is the Head of mankind, the 'first born of many brethren' (Rom. 8, 29), the