

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Come To Me

“To hear the teaching of the Father, and to learn from it, is to come to me.” This ranks as one of the shocking claims Jesus makes to the allegiance of his listeners. To put it simply, he is saying: *If you truly want to know God, you have to come to me. I’m the only way.*

What About Buddhists And Hindus?

You can tell Jesus isn’t a man of our times. We hesitate to call anything essential or necessary. Examine the genteel programme of our established church: you will find few claims to be essential to salvation. No-one seems to believe that any Church could or should consider itself *the* Church: the phrase “One True Church” is held to apply to no single communion in the world; maybe it exists only in the mind of God. We want to accept the notion that the way of a Buddhist is just as valid as the way of a Christian, and we’re all going the same way in the end, etc.. With this I have problems.

Christ Is Unique

We should treat these ideas as dangerous to our grasp of the truth. No human mind can invent a way to God which is absolutely definitive for everyone. But that isn’t how we think of Jesus Christ. His authority to lead us to God doesn’t come from his human insights, or philosophy, or mystical brilliance; as he said (Jn 8:27): *I do nothing of my own accord: what I say is what the Father taught me.* If you believe that Jesus is the word of God, then it’s no longer open for you to say that any other wise man is “equally valid”. To put it precisely, if any human wisdom wants to reach God, it must eventually reach Christ: and Christ will always be the door to the sheepfold, the point of entry between what’s human and what’s divine.

Truth And Humility

How are we to proclaim the utter centrality of Jesus, without appearing to be bigoted and sectarian? It’s a big problem. The only way we can solve it is by beginning to live the Christian life in a way that silences criticism: to let ourselves be dominated by the divinity of Jesus, whilst reproducing in our own bodies the pattern of his humility. St Paul says: *we avoid putting obstacles in anyone’s way...and we prove we are real servants of*

God by resolute perseverance in times of distress...with the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left. What makes the Gospel inaudible and invisible is the way we have of replacing the divine motive of Jesus with some human motive of ours. Then we start recruiting all the forces of our nature to the cause of Christ – well and good – and before we know where we are, we’ve consecrated our own ambition, harnessed our selfishness, even our hatred of others, and become capable of anything “on behalf of Jesus”, even though we have long ago ceased to resemble him, to listen to him, or to let him be Lord. That is when people accuse us of bigotry, and they’re right. We don’t care, of course, because we simply tell ourselves that we are prophets and martyrs, who always attract the hatred of the world. A particularly effective trap!

Come To Me

I think the moral is very clear: there is never a moment, for a Christian, that can safely be left unbaptised. Every instant of our life has its effect on the whole enterprise, just as every single life affects the whole human family. The ancient habit of rising early to make our morning prayer is still vital. If we don’t do it, then the day wears on with Christ unremembered, and with the limiting motives of the world taking his place, as we meet others, take decisions, commit our resources, commit ourselves, and allow ourselves to be recruits to the pagan way of life, trying desperately to save ourselves, to think well of ourselves by comparison with others, and to feather our nest with the unsafe comforts of the world that knows no God. *Fr Philip*