

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

In The Beloved City

Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God. In his birth as a man, Wisdom has come home to the human family. We do not think of Jesus as a rare genius, a human being with special gifts. His “gifts” are his very nature, his eternal being. It is he himself who is bestowed on us. God has nothing further to give or to say to us. All the fulness of the glory of God is in him; that is why we must turn away from all other stars and systems, all other paths of knowledge or virtue, and let *the true Light who enlightens all who live* be our Teacher and our illumination.

Live In The Light

Our religion does not invite us out of reality, but into it. This is one of the last messages Jesus gives in John’s Gospel. He doesn’t pray for his followers to be removed from the world, but that they should live in the world without belonging to it; and then he asks the Father: *Consecrate them in the Truth: your Word is Truth*. So we have a tension to endure. We’re living in an environment to which we don’t belong; its rules and visions may be far from ours. The world tries to make us its own, by offering us bribes, by telling us lies, by packing our time and our thinking with its concepts and theories. Trapped in its treadmills, we find ourselves drawn into its plans and projects; and little by little it can tie us up and file us in its systems. Suddenly we become impregnated with the world’s way of thinking and acting: our religious understanding will begin to seem far-fetched and irrelevant. Our *consecration in the Truth* will then look pretty thin, as we pay our dues to the world and are paid back by it accordingly. Jesus always warned us that we cannot serve two masters: in this matter, love must be single, as must the human heart be.

Where Is Jerusalem?

Where, then is the “beloved city” in which God gives rest to Wisdom? Is it another of these eternal realities that will only come true when this world is ended, and the universe we know rolled up and put aside? I don’t think so. If it were so, the Incarnation of the Son of God would have been a very temporary business – a little over three decades, tradition says; and that would reduce the Church to a community of nostalgia, always looking back to a beautiful moment increasingly forgotten. What happens in Jesus’ life is a *human*

fact, a real part of history; that means that human life itself is now something new.

Rewriting The Rules

We say of some great people that they offered us a new dimension, a new yardstick by which to measure humanity. We say this about athletes, artists, teachers, politicians, mystics, saints. All of these pale into insignificance beside Jesus Christ. He showed us a life whose dimensions we have only glimpsed, a grandeur without limits which makes the mind reel in the attempt to respond. This is because he embodies the whole Wisdom of God. His is “a new sort of humanity”; and he always spoke of this fact in *inviting* terms. “I have come that you may have life that is lived to the full.” “Come to me, learn from me, and you will find rest for your soul.” “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.” It’s vital that we don’t mistake the realism of his words. He is asking us to enter, not into a dream-world, but into the meaning of a world of fact, a world which his incarnation made *flesh*. His history on earth was part of our history, as much as Beethoven, as much as Louis Pasteur, as much as Hitler. What we mean by *humanity* has to take account of him, as of all the others who aspire to be included in humanity. But none is as much at home in humanity as Jesus, *on whom the Spirit rests*.

Behold, I Make All Things Afresh

His reality is in fact the foundation-stone of a new human city, a new Jerusalem, a life totally open to the good will of the Father. There, in that city, God has given Wisdom rest: there God says of humanity: *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. What must we do then? We must live in that blessed city where Wisdom reigns, firmly refusing to live by the thin ways of the world. We have got to find him room to be born, to make a place for his reign to come on earth. Nothing is too high for this Saviour, we cannot surpass him by any hope or vision of ours. We must do the deeds which belong to his believers. He is with us. *Fr Philip*