

October 9, 2005
Saint Tikhon of Moscow

Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

Among the doctrines of the New Testament most neglected these days, I submit, is that of Christ as Mediator. Well, perhaps "neglected" is too strong. Let's say "severely reduced."

An indication of this reduction, I believe, is the widespread failure of contemporary Christians to mention or even to think of the mediation of Christ when they speak of Creation, either of its structure or of our understanding of that structure. In other words, I believe that Christians nowadays rarely regard Christ with respect to cosmology and epistemology. Since, however, we are to love God with our "whole mind," it is surely not legitimate to remove Christ from either concern.

First, let us consider cosmology, which addresses the question, "How are things put together?" Several places in the New Testament provide starting points for a Christocentric cosmology, I suppose, but 2 Corinthians 4:6 will do as well as any: "God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In this text, we observe that Paul identifies the Creator in Genesis as the same God whose light shines out from the face of Christ.

To enter into the mystery of this text, we may first consider the light of Creation as presented in Genesis. Just what is that light of which God, in His first recorded words, said "let there be light"? This biblical verse certainly does not mean the light of the sun, for this was the very first day of Creation, and the sun would not be created until the fourth day, Wednesday.

This light in Genesis is, according to all ancient commentaries, both Jewish and Christian, the intrinsic intelligibility of all God's handiwork. This verse is the Bible's first assertion that Creation is full of, and formed by, the divine thought. It is not chaos but is structured in light and permeated with meaning, *logos*.

Now it is Paul's thesis that this very light of Creation is disclosed on the face of Christ. He contends that it is through Christ that the mysterious, otherwise invisible light of Creation is rendered manifest. The knowledge of God in Christ reveals this light "in our hearts."

This, I submit, is one of the very important but often neglected senses in which Christ is the Mediator. It was with reference to Christ, too, that St. John asserted, in his own remarks on cosmology, "He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him." John, then, agrees with Moses about the light in Creation. Accordingly, we should begin with Jesus, "the One from whom the two greatest Wise Men began: Moses the Originator of Wisdom, and John, its consummator" (St. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 1.10).

In sum, according to the theology of Paul and John, Christ is our Mediator even in the sense of the world's formal composition.

And this thesis brings us to the epistemological question, "How can I know this meaning at the heart of Creation?" Paul and John address this question as well. For them, Christ is not only the mediator *of* Creation, the Word in whom all created things subsist and have their being; He is also the intelligible light by which His own mediation is perceived. That is, Christ is not only the cosmological foundation but also the epistemological principle, through whom all things created are known to God and may be understood by men. Coming into the world, says John, He enlightened every man (John 1:9).

For this reason, it is the thesis of the Bible that the true and ultimate intelligibility of the world is concealed from those who do not know Christ. On this point, let us stay with St. Paul, who prays that we may "reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are *concealed* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

Observe that in Christ the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are said to be "concealed"--*apokryphoi*. Jesus too spoke of this concealment: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have concealed (*ekrypsas*) these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" (Matthew 11:25). God's Logos within the world is first a work of cryptography and then of disclosure.

The lens of Christ, then, provides the "correct vision"-the "orthodoxy"-of the world, including its origin out of nothingness and its final transformation unto immortality. The meaning of all things created is concealed in the person and life of Jesus and revealed to the little ones that entrust themselves to His sole mediation.

The structural principle and the final destiny of Creation, then, are manifest at a specific point in history, which point is known by the name

Jesus Christ. Ultimately, no view of the world is really correct, truly orthodox, except through the lightsome lens of faith in the mediation of the man Jesus Christ.

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