

August 4, 2013

The Sunday Before the Transfiguration

Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

Consciousness and Revelation

On many occasions in recent years, I have argued that all theological reflection begins with, and must be rooted in, the identity of Jesus. In making this point, however, I do not mean that theology is simply reflection on a revealed proposition objectively known.

On the contrary, I contend that the identity of Jesus is inseparable from his self-consciousness. That is to say, who we Christians believe Jesus to be cannot be considered apart from who Jesus knows himself to be.

Perhaps we should begin by reflecting that self-knowledge is not objective; the self is not known from without. Self-knowledge is an extension and activity of the self; it is, by definition, subjective. It is necessarily tautological—that is to say, self-knowledge is its own predication. The knowledge of one's self is inseparable from being oneself. Self-knowledge is intrinsic to, and an extension of, self-being. For this reason, we know that Jesus' consciousness of his identity comes from his identity.

Moreover—and here we move from psychology to theology—this self-knowledge of Jesus is what the Father discloses to believers: "Blessed are you, Simon Johnson, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven." This revelation, given by "my Father," is the ontological and experiential basis for Peter's creedal proposition; it is the source of Sacred Theology.

For this reason, Sacred Theology must include the experience, the *sensus*, of Revelation. In other words, there is no what of Revelation apart from the living event of Revelation. What is revealed by the Father must not be separated from the conscious experience of its revealing. Sacred Theology starts when the mind embraces the experienced reception of the Father's revelation.

Strictly speaking, nothing human—flesh and blood—adequately prepares the mind for this revelation. It comes entirely from within God. Only the Father can disclose the identity of His Son, because the Father is the eternal source and origin of this identity. Whatever the Son has, he receives from the Father. In

truth, the Son's only contribution to his identity consists in his receptivity. Of himself the Son can do nothing (John 5:19, 30). Of himself he has no authority to speak (7:17; 12:49; 14:10). Although the Son has a will of his own (5:21; 17:24; 21:22), he is careful not to do his own will (5:30; 6:38). All these negatives indicate something essential to the Son's relationship to his Father: its receptivity; the Son is "begotten by the Father."

This Son, whose being is eternally received from the Father (17:5), became the incarnate instrument of the divine salvific will in this world. The Son's eternal knowledge of his Begetter took on human form in the Man Jesus Christ. Remaining the Word, he adopted the historical process of a human subjectivity. The "I" of the Son assumed existence and self-consciousness in a human mind.

Thus, the Word's existence as a human being replicated, manifested, and translated into earthly form his eternal engendering from the Father. Neither in heaven nor on earth has the Son anything not received from the Father. In the Incarnation, the Son's eternal reception of his engendered being acquired an earthly expression. Jesus' existence on this earth was a human translation of the Word's eternal generation; he had only what he received from the Father.

This is what the Christian Church means by the insistence that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). To "be saved" means to become a child of God, and there is only one person in history fully conscious of himself as the child of God. The Word alone knows the One who begets him from all eternity.

But because he knows this Father in a human mind—in a human self-consciousness—there is a new possibility for the human race. That is to say, the fully-knowing Son may choose to share this personal knowledge of the Father with those who, in faith, come to him: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:27-28).

©2013 Patrick Henry Reardon

All Saints Orthodox Church

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

4129 W. Newport Avenue / Chicago, IL 60641

Church Office: (773) 777-0749

<http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/>

Father Patrick Henry Reardon, Pastor

phrii@touchstonemag.com

Pastor's Daily Biblical Reflections:

www.touchstonemag.com/frpat.html

Pastoral Ponderings:

http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/pastor/pastoral_ponderings.php