

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

THE INCARNATION (Continued.)

7. The figures of Christ are the persons or historical events which, under divers aspects, foreshadow the attributes of the Saviour, His mysteries and His works. The following are the principal :

Adam, the father of the human race according to the flesh, represents Jesus Christ, its Father according to the spirit. Hence the Saviour is called by the Apostle the Second Adam.

Abel the just, whose blood, spilt by his brother, cries aloud for vengeance, is a figure of Christ, the eminently Just One, whose Blood, spilt by the Jews, His brethren, cries for mercy.

Noah, constructing an ark to save his family from the Deluge, prefigures Christ establishing His Church for the salvation of the faithful.

Melchisedech, priest and king, in offering bread and wine as a sacrifice, is a type of Christ in the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Isaac, carrying the wood for the sacrifice of which he was himself the destined victim, is an image of Jesus Christ carrying His Cross, on which He was to die a victim for our sins.

Joseph, sold by his brethren, and become the saviour of Egypt, is like Christ, who was sold by Judas and delivered up to His enemies, thus to become the Saviour of the world.

Moses also is a prototype of Christ. He delivers the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, leading them through the Red Sea, in which their enemies the Egyptians were afterwards swallowed up. He also gives them the law of God, and causes manna to rain down from heaven, and water to spring from a rock, and finally conducts his people through the desert to the Promised Land. Jesus Christ, by His Precious Blood, makes us pass from the slavery of the devil to the promised land of eternal life.

The Paschal Lamb, the marks of whose blood on the door-posts of the Israelites averted the blows of the exterminating angel, foreshadows the Lamb of God, whose Divine Blood preserves our souls from death.

The Sacrifices, the Ark of the Covenant, and all the worship of the old law, Aaron the high-priest, the Levites, and all the sacerdotal tribe, are figures and images of what was to follow in the Christian religion, namely, the Priesthood, the Sacrifice of the new law, of Calvary, and of the Eucharist.

The Brazen Serpent, the sight of which healed the wounds of those who had been bitten by the serpents of the desert, is an emblem of Jesus crucified, whose merits and example heal the spiritual wounds of all who believe and hope in Him.

Samson, carrying on his shoulders the gates of Gaza, where he was imprisoned, resembles Jesus Christ rising from the dead, victorious over sin and death, and by His resurrection opening in a manner the prisons of death for the deliverance of men.

David, King of Jerusalem, where he established his throne, tried by persecutions and outrages, triumphant over Goliath and the enemies of his people, is a figure of Christ, the King and Founder of the kingdom of God or of the Church, the Conqueror of the devil, triumphant also over all the persecutions of His enemies.

Solomon, the peaceful king, full of wisdom, glory, and magnificence, built a temple to the Lord. Christ, the Prince of Peace, the King of wisdom and of glory, built up the living and eternal temple of the Church of God.

Jonas, cast into the sea for the salvation of the vessel, buried in the whale, and cast up again alive on the shore after three days, represents Jesus Christ condemned to death to save us, and rising again to life on the third day.

Elias, taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot in the sight of his disciple Eliseus, prefigures Jesus Christ ascending into heaven from Mount Olivet in the sight of all His disciples.

II. Life of Christ on Earth.

8. The promised Redeemer, for 4000 years the Desired of men, was born in Bethlehem about the year 42 of the

reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Herod the Idumean in Judea, and the sixty-fifth week of Daniel the Prophet.

According to the prophecies, he had for His mother a virgin, the Virgin Mary, of the royal blood of David. He was circumcised according to the Jewish law, and called Jesus, meaning Saviour, which name was given to Him by God Himself, by the mouth of the angel Gabriel.

He led at first an obscure and humble life, hidden at Nazareth in the cottage of Joseph the carpenter, who was His foster-father, and under whom He worked like a simple artisan, thus giving to the world a great example of obedience, humility, and industry.

At the age of about thirty years Jesus quitted Nazareth, and went to the banks of the Jordan to receive baptism from the hands of His precursor, St. John the Baptist, who was an extraordinary man, a great prophet, whose birth was miraculous, and who was listened to by all Israel.

John the Baptist made Jesus Christ known to the people, declaring that the Messiah was come, and that Jesus of Nazareth was He. He proclaimed that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and that he himself was only the precursor, who went before Him to prepare His ways in their hearts.

At the same time Jesus Christ began to shine with His own splendour. His simple and modest appearance in no way distinguished Him from ordinary men; but the brilliancy of His holiness, His doctrine, and His miracles was resplendent.

The words which came from His mouth bore the impress of superhuman authority and wisdom, such as no man before Him had ever manifested. His life was the perfect example of the doctrine He preached: everything in Him was humility, abnegation, meekness, patience, beneficence, and charity. His miracles were innumerable, and He worked them in favor of all who were in misery. The blind, the deaf, the paralytic, and other sick were cured; the dead, were raised to life, and the possessed were delivered from their tormenting devils. All who suffered came to Him: He rejected none; but for their relief He bestowed and worked innumerable miracles, as Isaiah and the Prophets had foretold.

It was clear that all the prophecies were fulfilled in His person, and that He was, as John the Baptist declared, the Christ, the promised Saviour-King of Israel.

Jesus preached the coming of the kingdom of God, and, as a requisite condition for entering therein, penance and the remission of sins. In a word, He taught all the doctrine of Christianity as we have it in the Gospel. He was soon followed by a great number of disciples, who wished to hear from His lips the words of eternal life. He chose from amongst His followers the twelve Apostles, whom He attached to His Person in an inseparable way, and instructed with a special care, because He destined them to be the preachers of His doctrine all over the world, and the foundation-stones of His Church. Soon He established His Church. The Apostle St. Peter He made the corner-stone, to him He confided the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to be transmitted by him his successors.

The Christian religion proclaims doctrines which satisfy the highest aspirations of the human intellect and gratify the legitimate cravings of the human heart. It solves those problems which baffled the researches of the most profound philosophers of pagan antiquity, and which bewilder the investigations of the thinkers of our day who are not guided by the light of revelation.—Cardinal Gibbons.

AN APPEAL FROM THE BACKBLOCKS

At Tuatapere—a bush township in Southland—Mass is celebrated in the most westerly part of New Zealand. The few scattered Catholics are making a bold endeavor to raise funds for a much-needed church but realise their difficulties without assistance from outside. They therefore appeal to the generously disposed readers of the *Tablet* to help them in their enterprise.

Subscriptions may be sent to the undersigned—Presbytery, Riverton—and will be acknowledged in the *Tablet*.

(Rev.) D. P. BUCKLEY.

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