

In one of the most inspiring, but also confronting, passages in the bible, God calls the prophet Isaiah, through a Vision of himself in the Temple. This event, which was the beginning of Isaiah's ministry as a prophet is recorded in chapter 6.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" And he said, "Go and say to this people:

'Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand.'

Make the mind of this people dull,

and stop their ears,

and shut their eyes,

so that they may not look with their eyes,

and listen with their ears,

and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed.”

Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;
until the LORD sends everyone far away,
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

Even if a tenth part remain in it,

it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled.”

The holy seed is its stump.

The vision of God that we receive in the Temple, in each celebration of the holy Eucharist, both calls us, and confronts us. The story of Isaiah, is our story, too.

Like Isaiah, we are called to witness to God, amongst a people who are simply blind to God. For whom even the name God is simply ‘like a blank face’.

And yet anyone with an interest in the future of our modern western society, has an interest in the replanting of that society in the pot of the Christian religion from whence it came.

Before the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, human civilization understood the need for religion, within the social order. Accepted religious unity as the basis of social unity. After the religious wars, with the shattering of religious and

social unity, the opposite conclusion was now drawn. Now, social unity was sought, without religion. And the modern era was born.

In seeking a new foundation for human society, the thinkers of the modern day settled on human nature as the new basis of society. Humanity took the place of God. Usurped God, as the Creator of the world.

'And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.'..Then the Lord God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever' – therefore God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.'

The message of the cross is foolishness to the world, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. The Good Friday liturgy proclaims the Passover of God - The tree of defeat became the tree of victory. Where life was lost, there life has been restored.

In the ancient world, a spirit of triumphalism, kept the people away from recognising God's Messiah, when he came. In the modern world, too. In the many this-worldly teachers of salvation, on the one hand. In modern atheism, on the other.

Jesus Christ is the image of God. An image that cannot be lost on humanity through suffering. But is lost, at the Fall. The Fall into the original temptation to want to be God. The Fall into sin. Of the human creature, taking for itself, the glory of God.

Jesus Christ, in his glorified, resurrected body, is the image of God. The true nature of the human race. The true destiny of the human race. The true future of the human race. A true nature, destiny, and future, that has now irrupted into the world, in Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnate Son of God. In whose death God has reconciled this lost world of modern secular humanity to himself. And in whose risen life God has unveiled to the world, its true nature, destiny, and future.

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Only with the return to the Christian religion, will that crisis of legitimacy be overcome, that continues to hang over the future of modern western secular society. And that falls upon us, like a hammer, with the realisation that the legitimacy of society, can come only, from the relation to God.

We know this, of course, in our own individual lives. None of us are justified, by ourselves. We are justified, by God alone. The same is true, for the world. It cannot justify itself. It can be justified, only by God. And the doing of his righteous will, revealed once for all to Israel on Mt Sinai. Revealed as binding upon every nation under heaven, in Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God.

'I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other god, but me. Love one another.

As the risen Son of God, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God. Now seated at the right hand of God in heaven, all authority in heaven and on earth now belongs to him. And his message to the modern world today, as it stands at the crossroads, is clear:

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall!'