

# Christ: B. C., Before Cosmos, A. D., After D-Day

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN  
(Fourth in a Series)

I can hardly wait for someone to write a Life of Christ, which will see Him in a greater span of time and space, than three and thirty years and a Palestinian area about the size of Delaware. Our Lord is the only One Who ever had a pre-history and a post history; He existed B.C., or Before the Cosmos, and He will exist A.D., or After D-Day, when there will be ultimate history with a new heaven and a new earth.

We derive most of our knowledge of Christ from the four Evangelists and too little from the Letters of Paul. It is well to remember that Paul described the pre-historical or the Cosmic Christ because some of his converts were astrological, astronomical, whirling in imagination in cosmic space. In fact, so much so, that like some thinkers today, they dwarfed Christ Who walked the earth.

The Colossians, particularly, and also the Ephesians had no rockets, but their eyes were on the "elements of the universe." Mixing up Jewish and Greek ideas, their philosophy was that matter was evil. God, therefore, could have had nothing to do with either sky or earth. These gods of the heavens must have come into being through lesser spirits which were cooings or serenades from Deity. Christ, then, could not be God, because He had a body. The Ephesians added to this query, where was the cosmos going anyway, since the Divine was irrelevant to spacetime?

Now pick up your Scripture, and read the answer of St. Paul in his Letter to the Colossians 1/5.

## Christ The Exemplar of Creation

1. Though Christ had a mortal body, He is elikon or the "visible expression of the invisible God." If you want to see what God is like, look to Jesus. Divinity lives in Him enfleshed. Our vision or knowledge of the Father is in His Son. He brought God so near to us as to make Him sensible—men saw, heard and touched—an acting, weeping and suffering God. As He said at the Last Supper: "The Father and I are One."

Paul's argument about Jesus was: All through your history you emphasized the Wisdom of God which was called the image of God; the Greeks too based their philosophy on the Logos which put order into the universe. Well, Christ is this Wisdom, this Logos, this elikon or portrait of God in your human situation.

## Christ the Creator

2. The cosmos did not come into being through some lesser god. It came into being through Christ Who, as the Word of God, was pre-cosmic. "He existed before creation began, for it was through Him that everything was made, whether spiritual or material, seen or unseen." Priority of existence belongs to Him. "He is," not "He was." (John 8/58)

## Christ the Goal of Creation

3. The cosmos, everything in space and everything in time was created for one reason — for Him. The primeval gases, the fissioning of atoms, the formation of galaxies and planets and eventually the earth, the slow evolution of life and the rise and fall of kingdoms existed for only one reason: to become the scenery, the setting and finally the stage on which He would walk with the flesh taken from a Virgin. "In fact every single thing was created through and for Him. He is the first principle . . . of the whole scheme of creation." In order to have Christ there must first be man, in order that there be man, there must be an earth and sun and stars and moon; in order that there be a cosmos, there must be a Cosmos-maker. As Paul told the Corinthians: "There is one Lord Jesus Christ through Whom all things came and through Whom we exist."

The God of the first chapter of Genesis is the Babe in the first chapter of Matthew and the Creator of the universe in the first chapter of Colossians. As Isaiah said: "He measured the waters in the hollow of His Hand, and meted out heavens with a span." He, by "Whom all things were made", is the same One Who, as the flesh, had "nowhere to lay His Head."

## Christ the Coherence of the Cosmos

4. He not only made the universe but He also gave it order, laws, harmony and inner consistency. How could scientists ever have discovered what they call the "law of nature" if Someone did not put order there. Scientists are not authors; they are proof readers of what Someone else wrote. What is behind gravitation among the planets, the law of valence, the combining and replacing power of elements in chemistry? What is behind metabolism in plants, instinct in animals, reason in man? Christ — "He is the upholding principle of the whole scheme of creation" (Col. 1/16).

Christ gives nature consistency, cohesion, holds things together, makes a cosmos instead of a chaos, or very simply, He puts love or attraction everywhere. Every brain has its thought power from Him: "The real Light which enlightens every man." (John 1/8) "Life from nothing began through Him, and life for the dead began through Him, and He is, therefore, justly called the Lord of all." (Col. 1/18)

## Christ the Reconciler of Creation

5. In a previous article, we said that there was disorder as well as order both in man and in the cosmos. Man needed to be made whole again. Man was like Humpty-Dumpty who fell from the wall. But so does the cosmos have to be remade, but only after the final judgment of man.

Who is the reconciler of both man and the cos-

mos? Christ! "It was God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in him, and through him to win back all things, whether on earth or in heaven, into union with himself, making peace with them through his blood, shed on the cross." (Col. 1/20) The humanity of Our Lord bringing all creatures and humanity around it, unites them to God in a bond which never existed — a bond which has its origin in the mystery of salvation. All things in heaven and on earth, unnumbered worlds so thickly strewn as to appear as nebulous masses, are pervaded by His harmonizing influence.

"Christ is all that matters." (Col. 3/11) "Through the Son, God made the whole universe, and to the Son He has ordained that all creation shall be subject." (Eph. 1/10) "For God has all things created through Him, and it is through Him that all things exist." (Col. 1/16) "All things that exist in heaven or earth shall find their perfection and their fulfillment in Him." (Eph. 1/9, 10; Isaiah 45/17; Apoc. 21/5)

## Few For Many

But how little the cosmos at present seems to belong to Christ! How few of humanity are really His disciples! And did He not ask that when He would come again: "Think ye, that I shall find faith on earth?"

True, there is but little recognition of the Cosmic Christ, the Incarnate Christ, the Christ the Head of His Body the Church, but remember that in Scripture or in the Divine arithmetic, the few can stand for many: One just man would have saved Jerusalem; ten just men would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. For Scripture, totalities are deemed to be present in a representative part — a part for the whole, as Israel was chosen for mankind, the priest is called to be the representative of men. Even mankind was saved by a small remnant, Noah and his family. A minority serves the majority.

Every totality is concentrated in its first origin. The offering of the "first fruits" of the earth to God was a symbol of offering the whole harvest. The consecration of the firstborn was the offering of all children and the family. "If the flour is consecrated to God, so is the whole loaf, and if the roots of a tree are dedicated to God, every branch will belong to Him also" (Rom. 11/16)

Now apply this to the Theology of the Cosmos. Christ is called the Firstborn in three areas:

- 1) Firstborn of all Creation (Col. 1/5; Heb. 1/6)
- 2) The Firstborn of Mary (Luke 2/7)
- 3) The Firstborn of the Dead (Col. 1/18; Apoc. 1/5)

The first applies to His Divine Nature; the second to His Human Nature; the third to the Total Christ or the union of Himself and all men in the Resurrection from the dead.

We shall consider here only the "Firstborn of Creation." Paul here speaks of three interlocking centers, all revolving around Christ: the center of all creation; the center of all humanity; and finally the center of the new heaven, the new earth, the ultimate Pleroma of man in Christ and Christ in God.

"Firstborn of Creation" does not mean in time, but in honor and purpose. Everything that we explore in space, dig on earth and manipulate with our hands is His and was created for Him and through Him.

## Did Our Lord Exercise His Lordship Over Creation

True, Our Lord did not exercise this mastery over creation while on earth except to ask for an ass, saying: "The Lord has need of it." This was the only time He exercised property rights over the Created. Hungry, He created no food; thirsty, He drew no fountains from the hills. All property was His and yet He was homeless — a stranger's cave for birth, a stranger's grave for burial. But the little bit of earth that man gave Him in which to be buried received earth's most serious wound, the empty tomb.

It matters not how far we go back in billions of years or how the original gases or particles were pulled together as in a watch, and not haphazardly pulled together as in a junk yard — all this was done "through Him and for Him."

Christ fills all things not by His substance as if He were in the nebula as sugar is in coffee. He is in the cosmos as Shakespeare is in Hamlet, in every character, in every line, in every drama, and yet Shakespeare is still transcendent and outside his works. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off . . . Do I not fill heaven and the earth?" says the Lord. (Jerem. 23/23, 24; Nehemiah 9/6)

He is in the cosmos more than a painter is in His canvas. He is the urge, the spiritual inner drive, making the multiple one, acting as valence in chemicals, as gravitation in matter, as metabolism in plants, as instinct in animals, as reason in man and as grace in Christians.

Next week "Theology of Space" will touch on the new universe which is conditioned as the "New Man in Christ."

# LETTERS to the editor



Editor:

A year has passed since R. Sargent Shriver told a group of churchmen that unless they stood up to the human crisis in this nation, especially the crisis of suburban apathy and backlash, they stood good chance of being ministers to "temples of irrelevance."

A new year begins with the same challenge to our ears, and perhaps signs of hope that the ecclesial community is girding itself for the engagement with injustice and human need.

White suburbia needs yet to be awakened to the fact that it is responsible for the condition in the cities.

White suburbia needs yet to be pried from the "cyclops" and taught to touch the skin of the poor.

White suburbia needs yet to open its ears and hearts to the crying in the urban blackout.

We note in our suburb community that where there once existed a "hot bed of apathy" there now grows a vicious glowering possessiveness.

Hand guns are being sold in suburban drug stores. An energetic minister has both lost a great deal of his congregation and has been the object of bitter words because of his insistence on the Gospel of love. Defense strategies against blacks are being discussed at cocktail parties. It makes one afraid to walk suburban streets at night.

Psychologists can whittle away at the communal guilt of the suburb, by proffering understanding of security drives and the like. But until the problem of fear and hatred is acknowledged, confessed and forgiven, it will remain a monstrous thing.

We urge our Churches to call for such conversion, to stop hiding behind the rationalization that telling the truth will "turn off" more good people than turn the others on. It needs to be said that "if a man says he loves God yet hates his brother, that man is a liar."

—Fleecer Leaver, Pittsford

Editor:

I was surprised that you would print that harsh letter on parish liturgical problems by Mr. Dykesman (Courier Journal, 1/10/69), citing his feelings about bad music and "inadequate leadership of an impersonal priest."

But I agreed with all his contentions that the way to active congregational participation will not come until the pastor supplies leadership which cares about quality and will experiment within approved limits to add meaning to ritual.

When will a pastor try to please various groups by having different forms of worship at different Sunday Masses?

Why not use some imagination to schedule on each Sunday a Latin Mass with English Scripture readings but no participation, a folk Mass with guitars (if the music and instrumentalists are more than "adequate"), a Mass with new hymns and finally a Mass with traditional hymns? The hour set for each Mass-form would vary from week to week in a four-week cycle.

People who "always go to the same Mass" would have weekly variety of worship, or could change their Mass-going hour from week to week to attend the type of liturgy they best responded to.

Of course, this gimmick of scheduling would not directly improve the quality of the liturgy in each of the various Mass-forms. But the pastor could challenge the people who began to attend one or the other Masses regularly, that if their group was

getting what it liked it should act together to improve the style and broaden the meaning of the Mass-form they attended.

—Louise Moboly Jones Elmira

Editor:

In a letter to the Courier (Jan. 10), John Albert Sykesman gives three reasons for his personal spathy at Sunday Mass: 1) The shape of the churches and the size of the Sunday crowds; 2) The "inadequate leadership of an impersonal priest"; 3) The low grade, unprepared, and badly executed music.

His complaints are indicative of the thinking of our time. It is a trend which places emphasis on externals rather than essentials.

I believe that unless the teaching emphasis of our pastors and liturgists is placed on giving the Catholic layman a better, more living, and more profound understanding of the essence of the Mass, the spiritual life of the people will drastically decline.

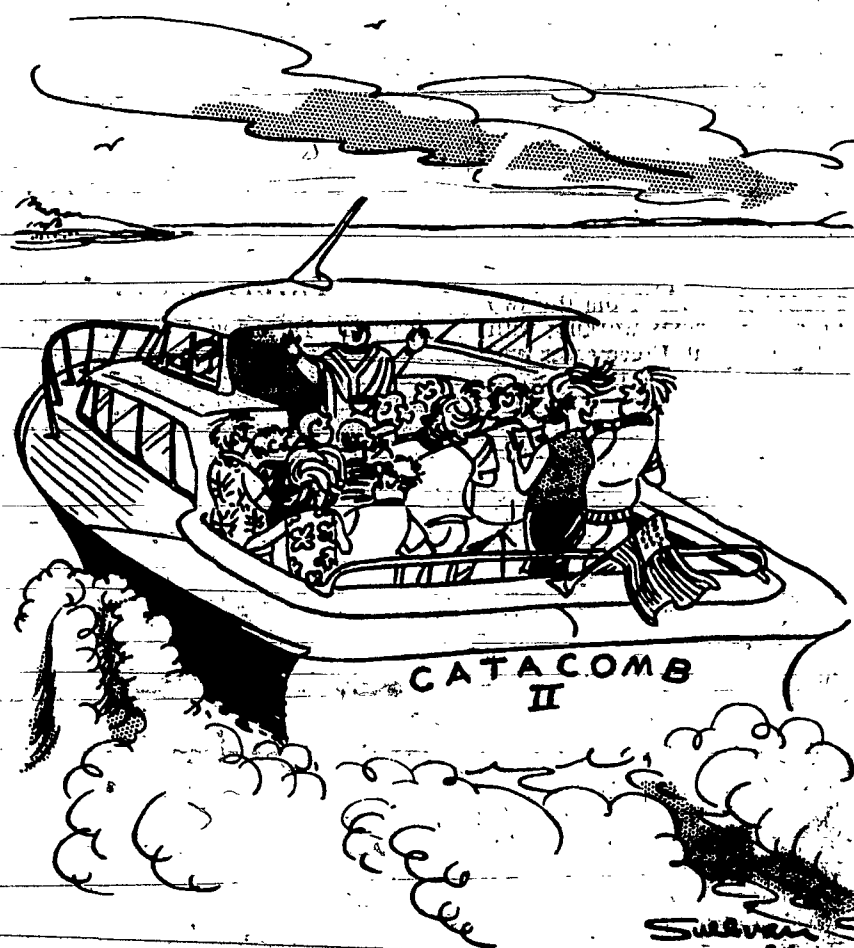
Catholics go to Mass for one reason — and for one reason only — BECAUSE CHRIST IS THERE. That Christ is there makes the Mass meaningful — not the new liturgy, congregational singing, guitar music, or lay participation.

Only a knowledge, understanding, and realization of the living presence of Christ in the Catholic church will ever bring Catholics to church.

A Catholic woman once wrote: "To keep house means to exercise day after day, a woman's peculiar talent for doing the same thing unimportant things over and over again. I am not content with this; I want to say a word that will pierce the heavens and do a deed that will shake the earth."

"At church a Deed is done and I help do it; there a Word is said and I help say it. My Word reaches the heart of God and my Deed redeems the world. Consequently, I go to church not to listen or to get, but to give and to do. Spiritual satisfaction? Say rather, spiritual effectiveness."

—L. O. Dickinson, Rochester



## Word for Sunday

### Our Unworthiness Should Save Us

By Father Albert Shamon

Sometimes one gets the feeling that religion is not for men. Yet the one person in the Gospel who elicited Christ's admiration was the paragon of manliness in the ancient world — a Roman centurion.

The Roman legion was probably the most magnificent fighting unit the world has ever seen. One of the keys to its invincibility was the centurion. He was a man who obeyed the mere nod of his commanding officer. He led the phalanx into battle. He was so devoted to duty, that when Pompeii was excavated the Roman centurion was found standing at his post.

The military habits of the centurion in the Gospel fed his faith. War had not hardened him. He loved his child who was now on the point of death. Used to acting decisively, he sent for help to Jesus. Bighearted (he had built the synagogue in Capernaum for the Jews) he did not ask for a cure; he felt it enough merely to tell Jesus of his son's mortal malady. Used to unquestioning obedience, he asked Jesus to say only a word.

"I am not worthy to have you enter my house. Just give an order and my boy will get better."

His words have been immortalized in the Mass — a fitting tribute to the man who had built the synagogue in which our Lord had made the promise of the Eucharist. He is the only man in the Gospel who thought himself unworthy that Jesus should come to him. He is the only man in the Gospel who thought his home unworthy of Jesus' even though it

perhaps ranked among the best in Capernaum. Yet this fact did not keep him from going to Christ.

So our own unworthiness, if we really believe it, should not keep us from Holy Communion. Rather it should impel us to Christ so that we may become worthy.

How wise it is to accept God's plan in life! How often fields afar look greener. We wish we had more money, more talents, more friends — what we could do for God! Tommyrot! Consider the centurion: What a raw deal he got in life! He must have been an A-1 soldier, for only the best field soldiers ever became centurions. Then to get sentenced to

corrupt Galilee, practically on the frontiers of Rome. And among Jews, who always stuck like a bone in the Roman throat. What an assignment!

But the centurion was obedient. His net to reason why, his net to do. Had he not been obedient, had he not gone to Galilee, were he not quartered in Capernaum, had his own household not known the rewards of mortal sickness, he never would have met Christ!

So whatever our circumstances are, we can draw good from them. The fault, so often, is not in our stars — in our circumstances, our jobs, our assignments in life — the fault is in ourselves!

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# New Battl

By ALEX MACI  
The newest apostolic mission is to heal in a Christian way the kind which wear away at the soul.

That's the reason for Galilee House, a lodge, nestled on 15 acres of forest near Cayuta, half-way between Elmira.

Galilee House is directed by John Gormley and Gauthier as part of Secular Mission in which serve formerly neglected in the central counties.

"Galilee House is an 'ertry center.' Father this week describing progress.

"Aquely aware of limitations we have spirit is just as grave our society as the material poverty of a and underprivileged."

"Our apostolate, others who join us longer — is to develop life here with this 400-equipped spiritual truly for our mission rural areas."

The priests, aided by Charles Leach, for of the Mt. Sav

# Local

By ARTHUR P.

Three priests serving Diocesan Mission lvia, report progress of the people's greater ployment and health.

Results to date: a business, and a medi

Father Peter Deck hailed these as significant in a comm peasants where the i is typically slow.

Father Deckman, for more than two ye American mission, is cation month at his l see Park Blvd., before his "parish" — will like an average parish ter Diocese, he hints

He brought greetings other Rochester priests him — Father Paul Father Edward Gold is called St. Joseph. Jose Obrero.

(A fourth Rochester or Thomas O'Brien, more than two years until his return last, been assigned to the lar Mission for sex County.)

While here, Father "spreading the word ery and difficulties

# Auxiliary Bisho

"Imposition of l Baker, native of there. At Right

# Father In Scot

The Rev. Robert was ordained a M Saturday, Jan. 18, in Assumption Church, he received his f munion.

Officiating at the his second such ce weeks, was Auxiliary nis W. Hickey.

Father Baker, son James E. Baker of lished to the West