

Dare I say that in the Transfiguration of Christ we see our own transfiguration, and, as in Christ, a transfiguration from within: a metamorphosis, a change of form certainly but not from without, as something imposed, as when we are made to conform to the will of another. No, this transfiguration is an outworking of who Jesus already is -the true image of God, God's only begotten true image – and we are made in that same image but have lost it through sin, or rather concealed it through sin and are lost even to ourselves, confused by all those other forces which try to conform us to other images instead. This is the theme of that great document of the Second Vatican Council 'The church in the world of today' (Gaudium et Spes) the first part of which asks that most fundamental of questions '*But what is humanity itself?*' - echoing Psalm 8 which we hear in the Grail translation as

*'what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?'*

And this question is as vital today as ever, as is the Church's teaching on it, because we are so easily led astray, so gullible, so willing to surrender our inherent dignity as human beings made in God's image, to other powers from both right and left in the name of 'progress' and the promise of a world of peace and prosperity if only we would 'conform'. Here it is in the words of Trotsky all those years ago

*'What is man? He is by no means a finished or harmonious being. To produce a new improved version of man – that is the future task of communism. Man must look at himself as a raw material or at best as a semi- manufactured product, and say: 'at last my dear homo sapiens I will work on you'.*

(p447 Natasha's Dance by Orlando Figes)

This led only a little later to the compelling idea of 'the human robot' - a word, not coincidentally, from the Russian (and Czech) verb 'to work' rabotat (p464 ibid) and to the idea of 'bio-mechanisation' where the human being becomes more and more machine-like to conform to the machine rather than the other way round- and images of Amazon and other capitalist incentives to conform immediately come to mind. The Church of course has also been guilty of the desire to impose conformity from above, from outside, rather than from within – and there lies the deepest irony of it all, that it's only from within that we can be conformed to the image of Christ and , frustratingly for some, this cannot be of our own doing – it's a grace won for us by Christ's death and resurrection, a chipping away of that veil of sin that obscures our true glory, made in the image of God or, once more, in the words of Gaudium et Spes:

*'It is the Church's belief, that Christ who died and was raised for everyone, offers to the human race through his Spirit the light and strength to respond to it's highest calling; and that no other name under heaven is given to people for them to be saved.'*

The disciples have a foretaste of this at the Transfiguration – it's an answer to the mystery of humanity which we surrender at our peril – whether to right or left.

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