

If one wants to let God in one has to lower ones defences, or indeed get rid of them altogether. This is to see today's Gospel in the light of the first reading from Genesis, where we see those first defences being put in place, and in the light of the passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians which follows immediately on from his acknowledgement of weakness as God's point of entry, the way through which the grace of the Holy Spirit can make us strong – the way in which Jesus has defeated Satan on the Cross, or in Paul's own words

“ we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own”.

In this light we can I think see Jesus as the one who became both “ sin” in an analogical sense, the weak point in us, and the plunderer, the strong one who enters to dispossess us of our sins- to overcome all those defences that the divided self has put in place since Adam and Eve first allowed the devil in. When God asks Adam and Eve “ *Where are you?*” this highlights this divided self, this new state in which the human being is now to be found, or rather not found to itself. There's a distinction now between our inner and outer selves, between the visible and the invisible, which wasn't there before. We know ourselves to be different from one another and different from God. We start to dissimulate, to lie, to pass the blame. We know shame and seek to hide it from each other and from God. We are no longer ourselves. The whole world of “insiders” and “outsiders” and the making or stressing of distinctions between people has appeared: male, female, Jew, Gentile, rich and poor, this nation or that, brother, sister, mother. And with that come all the language games and subtle social mannerisms to keep people in their place and identify one subset against another. We could cite many examples of this. In a wonderful biography of Nicolas Pevsner, Susie Harries references Susan Sontag's analysis of ‘camp’ as a style of language and living to set oneself apart from others, in this case John Betjeman against the very uncamp Pevsner because “ *camp*” *relies heavily on the private code and the inside joke..... from the moment of his first arrival in England, Pevsner had been highly sensitive to the distinctions between “insiders” and “outsiders”- as a young academic in Birmingham striving to master ironical understatement and the English joke, visiting Oxford and trying simultaneously to penetrate the drawl and pick his way through the web of allusion and High Table vernacular*” (page 329)

You get the idea, and we could apply this just as well to ourselves as priests using theology - speak to keep ourselves at one remove from you lot, or as Catholics to distinguish ourselves from all those other lesser races - such as the Anglicans, or the Baptists, and so on or as Christians to distinguish ourselves from the “*massa damnata*” of everyone else. There, I'm doing it again already. But Jesus doesn't do this. He speaks in a language which overcomes all distinctions, restores us to that one original image in which we are all made

“*Where are you?*” he is in effect asking the scribes and Pharisees, and all of us, who are trying to hide from God, or one another, by all those various masks and mannerisms which keep us safe in this fortress or that.

“ *Where are you?*” he asks as a question not for himself but for us. He knows full well where we are and will do everything he can to restore us to ourselves, that undivided self where the visible and invisible are one.

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