

really be a disciple of Christ, when nothing of my body is left to be seen by the world. Beseech the Lord for me that by these instruments I may be turned into a sacrifice to God. I am not giving you orders like Peter and Paul. They were apostles, I am a convict; they were free men, I am still a slave. But if I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus Christ, and in him I shall rise again free. Now I am learning in captivity to desire nothing.

(*To be concluded.*)



GAMALIEL

(*Questions to be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.*)

Q. I was recently asked to baptize a child Mervyn. Is this a Christian name? If so, who was St Mervyn and how does he go into Latin? My P.P., who would only allow the name if coupled with something like Peter, suggested *Merovinus*, whom he postulated as the ancestor of the Merovingian Frankish kings, just as *Carolus* was of the Carolingian.

CURATE

A. I looked up Mervyn in Gumbley on Christian names, and not finding it there I consulted the learned author himself, Fr Walter Gumbley, O.P. He writes:

The Latin form accepted at Woodchester (where a Dominican novice has just been clothed as Brother Mervyn) is *Marianus*! I take it to be a Cornish name identical with Merwin, first abbess of Romsey, Hants, *floruit* A.D. 967. The name appears as Merwin, Meruvina, Merpwyn, Mervenna, Morwenna, Merryn, *et alia aliaque*. Patroness of Morwenstow, where a not completely defaced wall-painting shows a gaunt female clasping to her breast, with her left hand, a book or scroll; the right hand being raised in benediction over a kneeling monk. As ladies can take the names of gentlemen saints, why not conversely? So *Mervennus*?

Another suggestion that has been made to me is that 'g' and 'v' being interchangeable in Celtic languages, Mervyn is the same as Morgan, so that the Latin form would be *Pelagius*.

Q. Our Lady is called the Mother of God. One may be asked how to define this correctly, and one would like to know how to answer these questions. She cannot obviously be mother to God the Father; nor can one say to God the Son, for he was 'with the Father from the beginning'. If you say she was mother only to his humanity, you are splitting his personality into two; if you say she was mother to God-made-man, that might be correct, except that as there are two natures in the second Person of the blessed Trinity, that might imply that he always had the nature of man, but that Mary gave him the human body for that nature to dwell in. In this connection, may I say that my own mind always objected to a statement sometimes heard in sermons, that it was entirely *unnatural* for God to become man, as unnatural as for one of us to become a dog or any other kind of creature. I am sure this is not so, because God made us expressly in his own image and likeness. Therefore there was an affinity, and he couldn't have become anything else.

This brings me to something asked of me only the other day: 'Is it not possible that there are other incarnations of God on other planets? Christ was one manifestation of God; why shouldn't there be other sorts of manifestation?' I couldn't deal with this effectively.

C.E.T.

A. Our Lady is the mother of God because she is the mother of Christ, and Christ is God. She is the mother of God the Son, because it was God the Son who became man. So far from splitting the personality of Christ into two, this title of our Lady affirms the unity of his personality, and was asserted at the Council of Ephesus (431) against the Nestorians, who maintained that there are two persons in Christ, one divine, the other human, and that Mary is the mother of the human person only. But if there is only one person, the Son of God, who has two natures, then Mary being the mother who gave him his human nature, who bore 'the man Christ Jesus', is thereby the mother of God. It is rather inaccurate to say that there are two natures in the second Person of the blessed Trinity; there are two natures in Christ, who is the

second Person incarnate. God the Son took a human nature, and it is not *in* him, so much as joined *to* him.

It was non-natural, rather than unnatural, for God to become man, in the sense that it was not a necessity of the divine nature that he should do so. It was a free voluntary act that God in his merciful wisdom decided to perform, but need not have done. God could have become anything else he liked, an animal or a stone; there would have been nothing inherently contradictory in this, and we can put no limits to what God can do. But as far as we can see there would have been no point in it.

So to your last question the answer is that it is possible that there are other incarnations of God on other planets. But the Christian revelation, which is our only source of information about God's incarnation on this planet, says nothing about it, because it is, as yet, none of our business. The only purpose we know of in God's becoming man is to save man, and other possible incarnations have nothing to do with that.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ANGLICAN ATTITUDES

DEAR EDITOR,

I am an Anglican who appreciates your usually eirenic tone, but in the August-September issue Dennis Salt, writing about the Catholic Evidence Guild in the Potteries, comments on certain customary Anglican attitudes with an obtuseness which cannot serve the cause of peace.

First there is the reference to 'Church Re-union Week' and the Anglican vicar who apparently did not realize that the re-union meeting would 'lack something' without a speaker representing the largest Christian communion. In fact no Anglican priest who keeps the Church Unity Octave ever overlooks the need for Roman Catholic participation. We long for it, but when we try to get it our experience is very variable. I have a two-sentence letter from a Roman Catholic chaplain in a university blankly refusing my suggestion, as Anglican chaplain, for a scheme of participation in 'Church Re-union Week'. His successor in the