

Advent 2017

Some principal points to remember:

Advent is the apocalyptic season.

Apocalypsis in Greek means unveiling, disclosure, revelation.

The central disclosure in apocalyptic theology is the active, powerful intervention of God.

“Those who say in their hearts, ‘God will not do good, nor will he do ill’” (Zephaniah 1:12)

God *is* acting and *will* act to reclaim the territory now largely occupied by the power of evil

His action in the present is largely hidden in the suffering of the Church

His action in the Last Day will be cosmic and universal (“every eye will now behold him”)

Advent is the season of the Second Coming, not just preparation for Christmas.

In Advent, the emphasis is on the future that God will bring to pass (note the hymns).

God is the acting subject.

It is his action from first to last, not ours.

Our role is to join what God is already doing

Therefore, an *apocalyptic ethic* calls for discernment on our part:

What is God doing? and how can my Christian community participate?

Struggle and conflict is the motif.

“The style [of the Bible] is of the battlefield rather than the cloister.” (Northrop Frye)

When Christ came into the world, he entered territory already occupied by hostile forces

--these forces will not give up their space without a fight.

--that is the meaning of the exorcisms in his ministry.

Advent may be called the Time Between:

We live between the first Coming of Christ and the Second.

Analogy from World War II: The invasion (like D-Day) has already happened, therefore the victory (like V-E Day) is assured.

--However, there remain many battles to be fought (like the Battle of the Bulge).

--There is much territory to be reclaimed.

God’s apocalyptic is fought with different weapons.

In God’s apocalyptic war, the attitude to the enemy is different.

The enemy is *evil itself*, (the Powers of Sin and Death), *not individual people*, because we are all enemies of God in one way or another.

Essential signs of the Christian warfare:

It results not only in victory and justice but also in forgiveness and reconciliation.

The meaning of Christian suffering:

If you live in occupied territory, **you can be a collaborator or you can be in the underground resistance, but you can’t just be neutral.** And so St. Paul wrote to his favorite church, the one in Philippi: *It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now ear to be mine* (Philippians 1:29-30).

- Nico Smith as example