

Sunday 27th November 2011

Christianity is apocalyptic

Even conservative commentators are beginning to use the word “apocalyptic” to describe the times we live in. The financial crisis (eurogeddon may not be far away!) and the so-called Arab Spring have come upon us out of the blue. And then there are doomsday scientific predictions such as global epidemics.

Today is Advent Sunday and this festival of Advent reminds us of the even more apocalyptic reality of our faith and Christian experience. The New Testament uses the word “apocalyptic” to describe the threefold coming of Jesus - at his coming to earth and in his coming into our lives in the Holy Spirit and his coming on the last days. We have a mighty apocalyptic reality in the Christian experience that is more of a match for the so-called apocalyptic events of our times.

Our English translations of the Bible usually use the word “revelation” to translate the Greek word “apocalypse”. In 1 Corinthians 1:7 “apocalypse” is used by St. Paul to describe the second coming of Jesus: “Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for **the apocalypse** our Lord Jesus Christ .”

In 1 Corinthians 14:26 Paul again takes up the word “apocalypse” in connection with messages from God to the congregation through the gifts of the Holy Spirit: “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, **an apocalypse**, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.”

In Romans 1:16-17 St. Paul adopts the word “apocalypse” as a reference to God’s cataclysmic invasion of this world in the Christian experience: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is **apocalyptically** revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Peter Pimentel